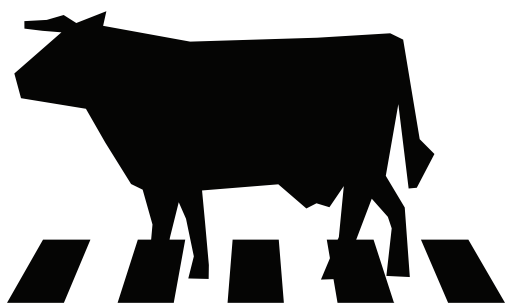
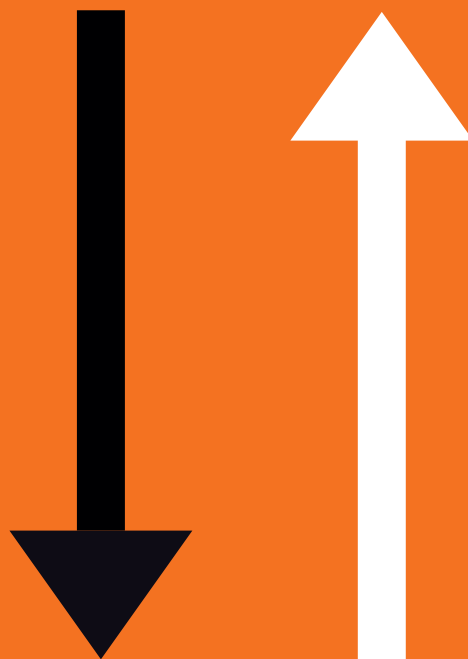
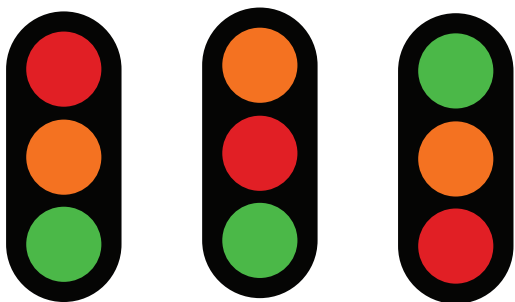


KLAXON 10



KLAXON 10

Dissent in the City

(when art lives in town)

URBAN EXPRESSWAY

Dissent in the City

Antoine Pickels and Benoit Vreux

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URBAN EXPRESSWAY

Dissent in the City

Antoine Pickels and Benoit Vreux

Performing art in public space is undeniably consensual, for it operates in shared space. The artists often anticipate or avoid conflict, encouraged by the cultural and/or political organizers who invite them to perform. At a time, however, when the institutionally preferred *modus vivendi* is to claim consensus in order to avoid being challenged, it strikes us as critical that artists not forget the vital role that disagreement, and even conflict, plays in democracy. We also need to point out the fact that once artworks leave the secure confines of art venues to venture into shared urban space they will be exposed to the risk of disagreement... even when consensus is sought. This 10th issue of *Klaxon*, largely inspired by encounters and performances at the SIGNAL festival in Brussels during September 2018, focuses on non-consensual approaches and issues raised by disagreement over or via artworks.

The text by Tunde Adefoye, a US-born activist and theatre dramatic adviser based in Flanders introduces some disagreement with the very notion of artistic disruption. Recalling the major role played by disagreement in promoting social and political rights—especially when expressed by black women—the author questions the latitude that exists in which to disagree... granted in effect to those who belong to racialized minorities. He moreover questions the legitimacy of any artist belonging to the dominant mainstream who aims to “disturb” with artworks recalling the wounds and humiliations suffered by the excluded, thus inflicting twofold violence on the very people s/he purports to represent. Power, from Adefoye’s perspective, and accordingly that exercised by creators, ought to be benevolent.

But one can be provocative and base one’s artistic work on disagreement without hurting anyone. The example offered by Afghan feminist performer Kubra Khademi is encouraging in this respect. Her performative installation *Eve is a Seller*, herein chronicled by the art historian Véronique Danneels, succeeds in introducing into the multicultural context of a popular food market a discourse on the right to express female sexuality in public space that at once disarms the bigots and wins over the public with humour. As we have seen, working in quest of disagreement does not necessarily mean supporting the violence experienced. As evidenced by the Trojan work of the curator Joanna Warsza, who for several years has regularly created areas of friction via proposals involving public space that have caused controversy. Emilie Houdent examines this approach by way of three projects that took place in St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Munich, to reveal how the disagreements generated by these public works effectively opened up space for negotiation, which elude the art system in the strict sense of the term. Negotiation is not negotiable for *les gens d’Uterpan*, whose choreographic pieces regularly involve the use of public space—without a prior request for a permit. This was the case with their street performance *Défilés* that took to the streets in Brussels in September 2018, and which culminated in the arrest of participants, who found themselves in breach of the law for having marched in the middle of the public thoroughfare. Here, the disagreement ultimately resulted in a critical discourse on our freedom to use our cities and the accompanying security procedures. Jacques André, one of the participants, compiled a series of testimonies that will be the unique trace of this deliberately undocumented action. Not in physical public space, but reinvented daily during the five months of documenta in Kassel and Athens, and concurrently on the Internet, *Social Dissonance* by the Basque artist Mattin experimented tirelessly with the friction between individualities suddenly exposed to each other and summoned to listen to each other, by mean of his simple device, albeit one based upon discomfort. Joel Stern, the sound art researcher returns to this experiment he has lived through twice to point out its radicalism and troubling power.

We will wrap up this issue with an article on the controversial work of the Dutch artist Dries Verhoeven *Ceci n'est pas* whose work was also strongly criticized in this issue's opening article by Tunde Adefioye. Verhoeven's piece, which sees contemporary allegorical figures displayed in glass booths installed in public space—in this instance on a shopping street in Poland—invariably provokes debate due to the provocative nature of the figures depicted and by their resonance, which constantly differs according to the local social climate. The curator Kasia Torz provides a detailed account of this experience on a number of paradoxical fronts.

These few examples indicate, if proof were ever needed, that art in public space can no longer be reduced to the consensual dimension mentioned at the beginning of this article. Perhaps, it has reached a certain maturity, often shared by the public confronted with it, a public who likes to find reasons therein to initiate an exchange thanks to their disagreement. Is this a further sign of the re-appropriation of urban space as an effective forum for political debate?

Cifas.be/en

signal2018.com

MAIN STREET

Reflections on Being a Troublemaker The Fiction in our Disagreement

Tunde Adefoye

In September 2018, the good people at Cifas asked me to give a talk at their annual SIGNAL festival. I was supposed to talk about disagreeing, but upon the appearance of the promotional material that labelled myself and my counterpart Joanna Warsza as ‘troublemakers’, I decided to focus on what it means to be a troublemaker. Indigenous people, womxn, queers, Blacks, punks, the poor, religious minorities, Arabs, disabled and Blacks again, always the Blacks. Just a few of the groups whose disagreeing has cost them dearly, depending on what part of the world they or their forbearers occupy/occupied. This of course is just a snapshot of those that we have seen as troublemakers throughout history. In certain circles it is seen as cool to disagree and be a troublemaker. What is significant is to look at what individuals are permitted to disagree about and who are those labelled as troublemakers. Even more crucial, whose lives are put at risk for daring to disagree? A disclaimer I give more often than not; I am a toe on the neo-colonialist, toxic-patriarchal, imperialist, capitalists known as the United States of “Amerikkka.” And I mean the left small toe that can barely grow a toenail and often thumps with pain due to wearing shoes that are/were inadequately too small. So as that toe, I have to mention most of my examples, theories, are based in the US. That said, my practices in the last five plus years are deeply rooted in the old colonial ways of “Errope”. So, one could say, I have both new money and old money but in the grand scheme of things I have no money!

Whose lives are put at risk for daring to disagree?

Where was I? Reading the autobiography of Assata Shakur. What she makes painstakingly and heartbreakingly clear is that an internationally recognized troublemaker does not become a troublemaker overnight. She grew up in the 50s and 60s in the US where oppression of Black folks was still obviously State sanctioned. But of course because white folks will be white folks, even back then you still had outright segregationists saying they were not racists. You know, those well-meaning, left-leaning types. But I digress. To get back to Shakur’s autobiography, she helps us understand how a beautiful, fragile young Black “grrl” whose grandparents instilled in her to be proud of her Blackness and to stand up to and take no mess from white folks in the Southern state of North Carolina where it was not an obvious lesson to teach a young Black “grrl” before she reached puberty. So, with this type of pride she ignored all signs reading “whites only,” to the shock of the white folks there, and went for example into a cinema’s ground floor to get herself an Elvis poster. She recounts this in *Assata. An Autobiography*:

All the kids at school thought Elvis Presley was cool... and that summer, when I went down South, I went to see one of Elvis Presley’s movies. In Wilmington, at that time, there was only one movie theatre where Black people were allowed to go... Once you bought your ticket, you went up a long staircase on the side of the theatre to the second balcony, the ‘coloured’ section... The movie was like all the rest of Elvis’s movies—forgettable! When it was over, I went downstairs. All the white kids were leaving with pictures of Elvis Presley that they had bought... I knew it would be absolutely no use to go to the ticket booth and ask the woman

anything... So I walked right on past her, straight into the white section of the theatre. What a surprise it was! It was like the movies in New York. They had soda machine, a butter popcorn machine, and all kinds of candy and potato chips and things. Upstairs in the 'coloured' section, they had some old stale plain popcorn... The moment I walked in, all the action stopped. Everybody's eyes were on me. I walked over to the counter... Before I could open my mouth, the salesgirl told me, 'You're in the wrong section; just go outside and go up the stairs on the side.'... 'I want to buy a picture of Elvis Presley' I repeated. 'They don't have any upstairs.'... I took my picture and went prancing out into the daylight... The looks on those crakas' face... I had a good time, laughing all the way to my grandparents' restaurant...⁰¹

01. Shakur, Assata. (1987). *Assata. An Autobiography*. United Kingdom. Zed Books Ltd.

Because why can't a Black pre-teen desire Elvis on her wall just as much as a daintily dressed Blonde girl? It is also that same pride that pushed her to join the Black liberation movements and eventually found herself faced with a million dollar bond and an awaiting death sentence for a murder that evidence has shown she could not have committed. I am not here though to fight the case of Assata. But an important thing to note in 1970s Amerikkka: a Black womxn was (and still is) seen as a threat, especially if she is vocal and intelligent. Just look at the difference in how the press has talked about Melania Trump as against the way they sometimes vilified the Yale graduated law professor former Barack Obama mentor, and current Mrs Michelle Obama. Anyone remember the monkey-faced photograph the Flemish newspaper *De Morgen* used in 2014 to welcome the Obamas to Belgium?⁰² Thank you Flanders for showing us what well-meaning, left-leaning white folks think of intelligent Black womxn that dare, even in a minor way, to disagree and challenge the status quo. But there I go again getting distracted. Before I go too far, I would like to go to Michelle's husband's ancestral homeland—Kenya—where Wangari Maathai was put in prison for her political views. As well as challenged for speaking out and taking action against the mono agriculture that stripped the rich soil of nutrients in order to provide England with tea.

02. *De Morgen*, "The Daily Herald", March 23, 2014.

Move a little West to Nigeria. Many may know Fela Anikulapo (roughly translates as the "one who has death in his pocket") Kutí. But many might not know Funmilayo Ransome/Anikulapo Kutí, his mother, who put that death in Fela's pocket. The first woman ever to drive a car in Sub-Saharan Africa, (if we are to believe Bill T. Jones musical *Fela!*), she was also, amongst other things, a troublemaker, teacher, women's rights activist. One who the Nigerian government saw as a threat and eventually in the late 1970s, soldiers threw her out of the second floor window of her son's home in the Kalukata Republic.⁰³

03. Kalukata Republic is the name Fela gave to the plot he occupied in Lagos. The attack was also and perhaps the first reprisals for a record Fela had just released.

Going further North we land in Egypt where in the 80s Nawal El Saadawi, a physician/psychiatrist, once the director of the Egyptian Ministry of Public Health, was put in prison. This was partly because of her feminist views, starting the organization Arab Women's Solidarity Association, and her writings, including *Woman at Point Zero*.

In the 1990s, Professor Philomena Essed had to flee Holland due to death threats on her life because of writings that exposed in a very real way the daily racism that plagued her country and still burdens the Lowlands. To the United States of all places. Things are bad when you give up a stronger welfare state for the sun of Southern California. Or wait, is it the other way around?

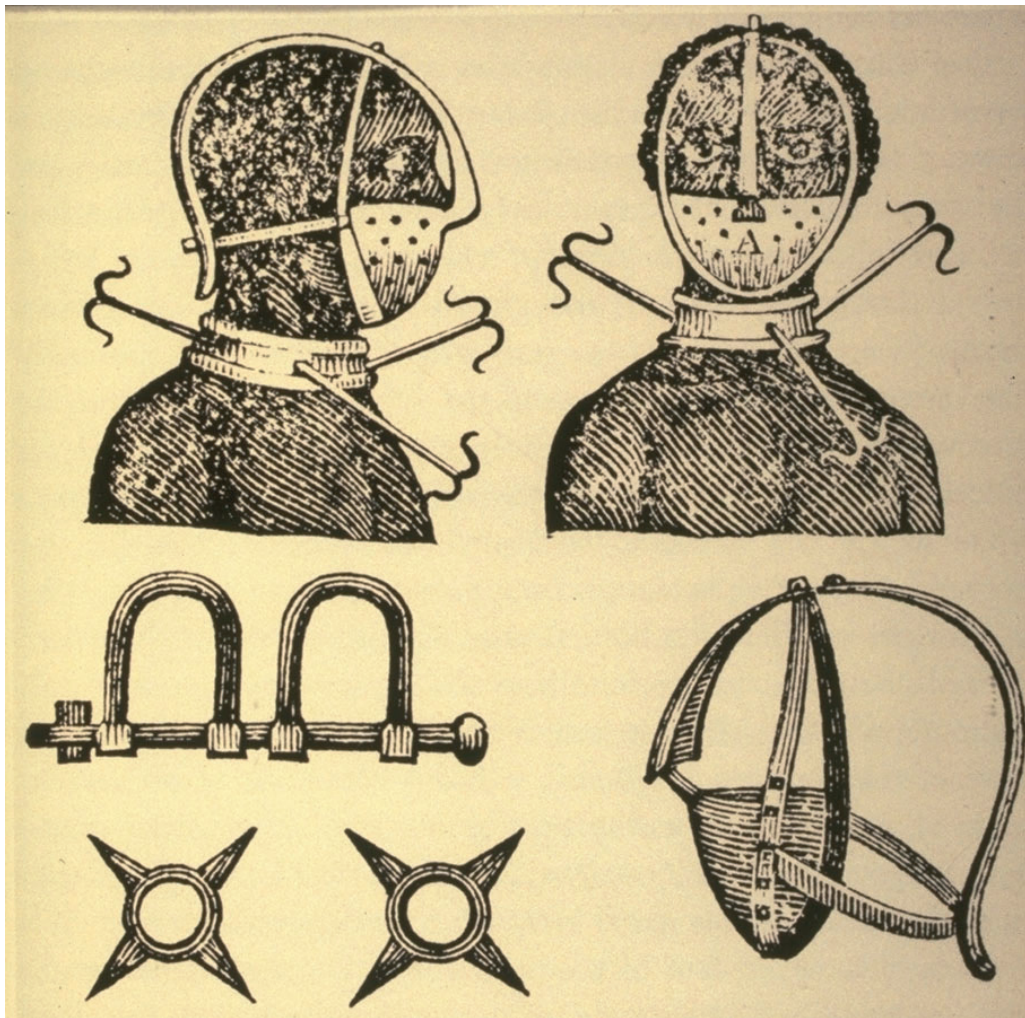
Let us cross the Atlantic to Honduras where Berta Caceres was murdered for the work she was doing to protect hers and her people's environment, Suspects in her murder include former military officials paid by top executives working for the company that was building the dam Caceres was protesting and making trouble about.

Who is permitted to disagree?

I am in no way comparing myself to these brave and courageous individuals but I would like to briefly outline my experience in the last two years working in a white institution. It has become my aim to use intersectional feminism, critical race theory and decolonial\ postcolonial ideology to engage the work we did and do as part of the artistic team at the KVS, the 'city theatre' of Brussels. Together with accomplices and informed by the community, creating projects such as *SLOW* (Slam Our World) bit.ly/2T8O53k and *Beyond the Binary*. bit.ly/2WbeAXO That critical perspective also reached into the Flemish cultural sector at large. But what happened when I inadvertently criticized what was happening on the masters' plantation? In short, I wrote an article called *Een Zee van Witte Mensen* (A Sea of White People). An article published in the Flemish newspaper *De Standaard*. It caused an unexpected storm, for I wrote it to be an emotional offering of what I, as a Black individual, experienced as violence at a festival that is purported to be "the" place to be, and attracts circa 35,000 visitors per year. Instead, what I wrote was taken as a critique. Individuals from the Flemish cultural sector took up arms! The director of the festival wrote an article/letter in *De Standaard*, directed at me, while an ally of his, another white, cis-heteronormative male and director of an institution in Gent, wrote an article supporting the festival and the work they do. One of the articles, entitled, *Diversiteit is meer dan kleur* (Diversity is more than color), served not only as a reproach of what I had written, but also as a way to inform and educate me, for of course I did not understand intersectionality and only could be aware of my Blackness. Fortunately, I had allies like Joachim Ben Yakoub⁰⁴ and Lara Staal⁰⁵ to name a few. But what it came down to was what the illustration on the next page shows.

04. Joachim Ben Yakoub received his doctorate from the University of Gent where he focused his research on the use of public space in Tunisia after the revolution. He is a frequent contributor to the magazine *Rekto:Verso*.

05. Lara Staal is a freelance dramaturg. She previously worked at Frascati Theatre in Amsterdam. Now is associated with NTGent. She is a frequent contributor to *Rekto:Verso*.



Slave Mask
Thomas Branagan

The Penitential Tyrant; or, slave trader reformed

New York, 1807 (p. 271).

Pinterest, Image Reference: NW0192

I needed to be punished by my master because one of his slaves had gotten off the plantation without permission.

So I, in essence, needed to be punished by my master because one of his slaves had gotten off the plantation without permission. And the master had to reprimand me for this misstep, “learning to write” using the masters tools, but speaking my own truth. This makes me think of white feminists who berated the Black feminist of the Nyansapo Festival, in Paris, for excluding white folks from certain spaces/events during the festival in 2017, and consequently were punished by the mayor of Paris. When in fact they were just tearing a page out of the Combahee River Collectives playbook of the 1970s, or that of Audre Lorde’s in 1980s Berlin. With the main focus of such efforts in fact being, for example, “training seminar on antiracism reserved for victims of institutional racism or racialized minorities—excluding by default white people.”⁰⁶ Instead of being able to focus on those efforts a “white” feminist, Mayor Hidalgo yet again is costing feminists of colour more emotional energy and labour through the act of taking up space and threatening to file a lawsuit against them. Yes, thankfully, they were able to hold the festival, but the damage had been done. It was already unfortunate that the *Guardian* article was about the potential sanctions against them and not really about the content, progressiveness, and the importance of such a festival and space for womxn of colour. Womxn of colour, who in their daily lives as lawyers, filmmakers (Amadine Gay, one of the festival organizers is a filmmaker), teachers, nurses and so on, have to spend their time trying to explain to white people how they are not a threat and are constantly facing aggression, erasure, and so on. And when they ask for a bit of space and time to be with other womxn of colour in the context of a festival that is open to all, they are criticized and threatened with legal sanctions.

06. Agence France Presse. (2017, May 29). *Paris mayor demands black feminist festival that ‘prohibits’ white people be banned*. Retrieved from bit.ly/2qrgKGo

What does it mean when certain groups ask for space to in essence disagree in peace? As a (crucial) side-note, these kinds of spaces might actually be encouraged for many men, myself included, to rethink/recalibrate and disown toxic masculinities, in this #MeToo era. We also need to think about what we are going to do now, when not only men like Junot Diaz are being called out, but also feminists/victims like Asia Argento. How can we call out individuals for their wrongs, hold them accountable but at the same time create a sort of healing where the perpetrator in some cases is not just thrown out of the community but does something to transform the community that they have hurt and betrayed? One of the founders of Black Lives Matter, queer civil rights activist and Strategy and Partnerships Director for the National Workers Alliance, Alicia Garza puts it this way, “In the movement I want to be a part of, we will be clear who our enemies actually are. We will resist throwing each other away. Accountability is not the same as revenge. Individuals are not systems. Individuals perpetuate systems through consent and through force. That means that individuals have a choice to make about whether or not they will collude with systems that are tearing us apart.”⁰⁷

07. Garza, Alicia. (2017, September 5). *Alicia Garza Speaks on Building Power to the AMC2017 Opening Ceremony*. Retrieved from lemde.fr/2Czc4BE

How can we create a sort of healing where the perpetrator does something to transform the community that they have hurt and betrayed?

Furthermore, our positioning in articles, books and speeches are useless unless we set action behind them. In the book *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* Sara Ahmed reminds us, “I also came to realize that documents, once written, acquire lives of their own...I began to appreciate the importance of focusing not so much on what documents say but what they do: how they circulate and move around.”⁰⁸

08. Ahmed, Sara. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

“Shocking” Artworks

On another note, it is intriguing to survey different types of works being created on the European continent as a necessary critique and response to the growing right-wing and nationalist fervour. The sense of urgency of an artist such as Siniša Labrović’s to create relevant and poignant work is driven by the danger that the rhetoric of right-wing leaders in Europe and their policies pose to a number of nation-states and persecuted minorities, including new immigrants and especially the Roma population. In one of his performance pieces, Labrović is naked on a square, not only as an artwork but as a protest. Considering the context and the country—Croatia—it kind of makes sense to make this type of work. One has to think though of how this type of art piece can be a trigger for some, especially those who exist on the periphery of our societies. A young womxn of color, a coach for other younger teenage dancers for the organization Urban Woorden, once told her dancers sitting in the STUK (House for Dance, Images and Sound of Leuven, a town near Brussels) cafe, “If a male artist ever gets naked in front of you, during a performance, that is not art it is sexual harassment.” This point of view needs to be further reflected on. By creating an incredible piece of art one can also create an incredible trigger. We need to think about how we can trigger and what it does to certain individuals. How our desire to create shocking works with a determined socio-political result can also serve as trauma for certain groups. Furthermore, how some can suffer post-traumatic stress disorder that resurfaces based on the work we create. It is one thing to try and shock and confront a Vladimir Putin, as the womxn of Femen did in 2013 when he stood next to Angela Merkel in Hannover, but it is something totally different when the work we create serves as a trigger for say a group of poor local villagers in Congo, à la Renzo Martens’ *Enjoy Poverty*. An even better example can be found during the Whitney Biennial 2017. A painting by Dana Schutz stirred observers in very different ways. Many loved the piece and lauded it for its boldness, daring to show the violence done to a Black fourteen year-old Emmett Till in the 1950s US and the correlation that it had to the devaluing of and violence perpetrated against Black and Brown bodies by the US State. On the other hand, you had another group—who didn’t accept that a white artist be considered as legitimate to approach subjects relating to Blackness, should address the issue. This group was triggered and felt a sense of post-traumatic stress, memories of a very recent past and very real current violence that State sanctioned police and prison guards commit, specifically targeting these Black and Brown individuals. As a result, Parker Posey, a Black artist, protested Schutz’s painting by standing in front of the artwork, blocking the view of those intending to see the work. In essence, reminding us that one’s intention to make art that can provoke can be a powerful trigger of another’s pain. In her essay, *Eating the Other*, bell hooks explains it this way,

Certainly from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the hope is that desires for the ‘primitive’ or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the *status quo*. Whether or not desire for contact with the Other, for connection rooted in the longing for pleasure, can act as a critical intervention challenging and subverting racist domination, inviting and enabling critical resistance, is an unrealized political possibility. Exploring how desire for the Other is expressed, manipulated, and transformed by encounters with difference and the different is a critical terrain that can indicate whether these potentially revolutionary longings are ever fulfilled.⁰⁹

⁰⁹ hooks, bell. (2015). *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. New York. Routledge.

One’s intention to make art that can provoke can be a powerful trigger of another’s pain.

This eating of the other is especially apparent when one observes the type of work curated/commissioned by say, a Metropolis in Copenhagen. bit.ly/2ti6Zvc Specifically looking at Dries Verhoeven's *Ceci n'est pas* previously programmed at the yearly extramural festival.¹⁰ Upon visiting the Metropolis website I was most perplexed by *Ceci n'est pas de l'histoire*. A work that has a Black man in chains in a glass box with peanuts strewn all over the floor of the box. The Metropolis website infers that this piece was placed on a main square in Copenhagen in order to confront the Danish people with their colonial legacy, because as some Danish have rightfully asserted, they do not talk enough about that history. That last point is all well and good, "Errope" still has to reckon with its colonial past, but this is not the way to do it. There are more creative ways to inform, and, if need be, shock people into confronting their past wrongs as a society. In May of 2018, I was in Copenhagen for a meeting and was most excited about how I would spend the last day of my time in that city, which was to make what felt like a pilgrimage to the statue *I am Queen Mary*, inspired by Mary Thomas. Thomas, a "troublemaker" along with two other "queens", organized a revolt in 1878 called the Fireburn in former Danish colony St. Croix. The imposing statue stood in front of a former sugar depot, facing the harbor of Copenhagen.

10. The last article in this issue, by Kazia Torz, is about *Ceci n'est pas* by Dries Verhoeven, and more specifically about its activation in Poznań.

Why a white male's vision of colonial history has so much more value than those of two Black womxn?

Sadly, many white residents of Copenhagen have not yet visited this impressive and historical statue made by two Black womxn—Jeannette Ehlers and La Vaughn Belle. According to Belle, "This project is about challenging Denmark's collective memory and changing it."¹¹ I cannot speak for the organizers of the Metropolis festival but I wonder why a white male's vision of colonial history and the collective memory has so much more value than those of two Black womxn portraying a rebel and former slave sitting with spears in her hands, ready to fight? Could it be that this type of troublemaking by a Black former slave is less desired; especially if it is being recounted by contemporaneous Black womxn artist?

11. Sorensen, Martin Selsoe. (2018, March 31). *Denmark Gets First Public Statue of a Black Woman, a 'Rebel Queen'*. Retrieved from nyti.ms/2GG90aW

Double Violence

Recently, I often reflect on the double violence that art, performances, and cultural productions perpetrate against certain communities. Simply, the double violence can occur when artists use or enter a community that is already oppressed or on the margins of society and the artist purports to help them by shedding light on an issue the community might be experiencing. But as an effect the artwork leaves the community betrayed, scarred, triggered and maybe even traumatized. The above-mentioned Schutz and Martens' works are examples of this type of double violence. Additionally, growing populations of second–fourth generations of communities with immigrant backgrounds are living in Western European cities. Populations who not only have to get more space to tell their own stories but who the current dominant cultural elites dictate what stories they can tell and with what resources, need to take more and more into consideration. This, in order to decrease the chances of an *Exhibit B* getting funded in the first place. Protests against *Exhibit B*, Brett Bailey's controversial and disturbing human zoo exhibit were mainly by people of African descent in London. Due to the protest, the planned exhibition was eventually cancelled, but it did get a stamp of approval and a letter of

support signed by sixteen white heads of some of “Errope’s” art elites, including Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Edinburgh International Festival, International Theatre Festival DIALOG, Festival d’Avignon and Barbican Centre in London, to name a few. Because what speaks of colonialism better than white folks telling descendants of formerly enslaved people, “relax its just art and free speech.” Unacceptable, especially since this took place in cities like London, Brussels, in 2014. Or, take another cis-white man’s vision of colonial history, *Het Leven en de werken van Leopold II* bit.ly/2WbBILd (The Life and Works of Leopold II) being replayed in 2018 in the KVS (City Theatre of Brussels), including blackface and a leading role for Leopold II (as played by the revered Flemish star Bruno Vanden Broecke), without putting the concerns of the afore-mentioned communities as a priority. These communities are far from homogenous in their opposition nor are they a passive group. Not only do we have individuals who made clear to the KVS, that replaying “...Leopold II” was not ok, but you have also had others being vocal and using art as a way to shine light on certain unsightly cultural practices. In London, you have the Sorry you Feel Uncomfortable collective who use poetry, spoken word and film to challenge the cis white heteronormative discourse that dominates the art and cultural landscape. In Copenhagen, Black Lives Matter protested Sort/Hvid’s *White Nigger/Black Madonna*, for among other things, using blackface in the performance.¹² In Holland, the performance artist Quinsy Gario created *Zwarte Piet is Racisme*, an art project/protest to underscore the problematic nature of *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete), the colonial practice that Holland and Belgium have a hard time of letting go of. Thanks to his arrest in Dordrecht, to the work of many other Dutch inhabitants, and to the ensuing international media attention, as well as the UN urging the practice to cease, the *Zwarte Piet* tradition is on its way out.¹³

12. Peterson, Chris. (2018, May 31). *Has a Danish Theatre Company Gone Too Far with Blackface Play?* Retrieved from bit.ly/2MqotfD

13. Sengupta, Somini. (2015, August 28). *U.N. Urges the Netherlands to Stop Portrayals of ‘Black Pete’ Character.* Retrieved from nyti.ms/2D6AwJy

As Garza reminds us, we also need to think about power differently, “How we transform power so that power never harms another person, but instead power ensures that everyone has what they need and nothing they don’t need. No movement has ever been built without people who have disappointed you. That’s because movements themselves are the places where people are called to transform in the service of their own liberation and the liberation of others.”¹⁴

14. Garza, Alicia. (2017, September 5). *Alicia Garza Speaks on Building Power to the AMC2017 Opening Ceremony.* Retrieved from bit.ly/2CN3zTR

We also need to think about power differently.

Power is an enabling tool and not just a tool that has the potential to cause double violence or any violence for that matter.

What do we really mean when we label someone a troublemaker? I am asking us to think critically about who we allow to disagree and how we treat certain individuals when they disagree. Not only referring to what our governments do but we should also think about what space we create, especially in the arts and cultural sector, for those unlike us to disagree. To take a page from the womxn I started this article with, what does our disagreement and troublemaking really mean if we are not putting our privileges, careers, and even our livelihood on the line?

BIOGRAPHY
Tunde Adefoye



Tunde Adefoye, born in Los Angeles, earned degrees in Women's Studies, Molecular Biology and a Master's degree in Bioinformatics. He ended up in Belgium for a PhD in Chemoinformatics at the KULeuven. There, he founded the poetry group Urban Woorden, with some local and international students, which was awarded with the Culture Prize for Cultural Education by the Flemish government. Since April 2016, Tunde is working as a city dramaturg as part of the artistic team lead by Michael De Cock at the KVS (Flemish Royal Theatre) in Brussels, searching how to use Brussels as a conceptual canvas to create a discourse with different aspects of the city. In the meantime Tunde has also done dramaturgy for various projects. In 2017, he curated *Beyond the Binary*, an evening that focused on the intersection of queer identity, ethnicity and gender. He also gives lectures at colleges and universities on topics including Black Erasure, Decolonization of the Arts, and Intersectionality.

Photo: Hugo Lefèvre

REMARKABLE EVENT

Eve is a Seller Kubra Khademi's Feminist Fruits

Véronique Danneels

I get somewhat concerned when I hear Kubra Khademi talk about her performance project that will take place the following day at the Marché des Abattoirs in Anderlecht.¹⁵ The young artist is determined to replace Eve, *the primordial woman, everybody's mother*,¹⁶ in concrete form. Obviously, her re-enactment is meant to kill for good the figure of the woman punished by the patriarch, who was forced to flee the Garden of Paradise where she had discovered, savoured, and tasted the fruit of knowledge. This mythical discovery, propagated through colonization across intercontinental cultural histories, is applied to all the world's women: they are often cursed, almost always guilty, untrustworthy, and, on top of that and in accordance with divine law, give birth in pain.

15. Anderlecht is a working-class municipality in the greater Brussels Region. *Eve is a Seller*, the herein described performance, was presented in the framework of SIGNAL, festival of urban interventions organized by CIFAS on 22 September 2018.

16. Definitions of Eve heard from passers-by at the market on that Saturday morning during the performance.

The modern-day Eve, as incarnated by Khademi, is an autonomous woman belonging to the mercantile system and to the system operated by those heavy-lifters within the market. The performer presents herself as a seller, from seven to two o'clock this Saturday morning in September, in Belgium's largest and most cosmopolitan market, and one of its most attractive markets as well, with its unbeatable prices, both in terms of food and clothing. Amidst the professionals at the market, Khademi ad-libs assertively as a market gardener. Like others in that trade, she is selling edible products, yet her wares will undergo special treatment to tempt potential customers. At Khademi's stall, vegetables and fruits are cut in such a way and arranged so as to imitate the organs of the human reproductive and lactiferous systems. In cruder terms, Khademi displays sexualized, pulsating, lush, moist, and glittering fruits and vegetables, either in pairs or in interpenetrating poses.

The public is led to look, think, and discuss.

While not without risk to display such wares at the market, Khademi nonetheless has properly assessed the situation and can run quickly. She knows what she's letting herself in for, having already sized-up her public, the merchants, the wares in the neighbourhood and at the market during her scouting tour. Her stall is meant to be provocative. The narrative developed by this half-botanist, half-mystical, young, slender Asian-like unravel codes and gender relations. The public is led to look, think, and discuss. In fact, Eve the seller is present amidst all this morning hustle and bustle to blow up religious, political, and moral taboos that reduce women so abjectly and absurdly to obedience, to silence, and to invisibility. This feminist attitude has enabled Khademi to do what she has done over her short career, one whose potential and at times extreme setbacks she continues to assess.¹⁷

17. TEDx Talks talk bit.ly/2FUwvfA

In 2015 in Kabul, she escaped by the skin of her teeth when performing *Armour*. All she did was to cross a tiny fragment of public space on foot, wearing armour that accentuated her buttocks and breasts. Immediately insults started flying from a growing number of men who surrounded, threatened, and criminalized her. This double-edged simple gesture—or this simple outfit—not only propelled Khademi onto the performing arts scene but also forced her into exile to France.¹⁸

The sexually allusive device used in Eve's fruits and vegetables at the Marché des Abattoirs reassures my faint concern. For it is not a matter of promoting Eve in the neo-liberal soup, but rather of keeping her as a living model of subversion, liberated from blind and useless obedience. Such is the singular Eve, conceived as the prefigurement of Western literature by Hélène Cixous:

Not only did the Bible began with a narrative of theft, all literature does; work after work, they all begin with theft. Every author is an ex-thief (...). For Augustin of Algeria, they were pears appropriate for the pigs. For Rousseau, apples enclosed in a pantry that he tries to fish out through the cracks in a screen (...) Derrida, once red-handed with a cluster of grapes. Another time, we see him stealing figs. He invents the poetics of Sexual Difference there between the cluster and the figs. For Genet, it's a cluster, too, but fake. And for each of them it's a matter of stealing words.

First, we steal a fruit, and then write about it. After the dirty deed. Books are the fruits of theft. For that to work we have to be caught in the act. So, everything begins: here he is, the said criminal. *Dicriminel*. We make him ashamed. Wonderful alchemy of shame. See Rimbaud.¹⁹

Eve confuses the gaze, the limits, and logic of those who think they know.

It's funny and it's true. And likewise for Khademi who, like the authors Cixous studied, she can neither repress the pleasure of transgression nor that of repeating it. We see where this will lead: "small causes, great consequences," as Cixous wrote. We laugh, yet we also realise that Eve the thief and/or the seller²⁰ is contriving to confuse the gaze, the limits, and so-called logic of those who think they know how to contain her.

Circulation, Tension, Expansion

Circulation, tension, expansion are the three movements that characterize the performance *Eve is a Seller* at the entrance to Hall 6 under the marquee market halls on Saturday, 22 September 2018.²¹

Morning CIRCULATION of cold drafts and silent people around the stall mounted by Khademi. In a sober white tunic, she stands behind her table, much smaller compared to those of her colleagues on the day. At first, she incessantly arranges her cart of fruits and vegetables, exposing her wares, letting colours collide. She transforms her stall into a series of still-lives. She assembles the pairs. She cuts the melons in half, sprinkling them with pomegranate juice; she crowns cauliflowers with lychees and inserts pepper heads between two radishes, two grapes. Suddenly, Eve blows on some gourds and potatoes, balancing out an explicit, funny, and poetic presentation. Across the white tablecloth, the pairs form splendid domes, while the unique forms assert themselves as either phallic or vulvar when pomegranate juice bloodies their flesh. Strands of fennel delicately placed on squash

18. Kubra Khademi was born in 1989 in Iran, where her Afghan parents had emigrated. In 1998, the family were exiled to Pakistan, where Khademi completed her schooling before leaving to study Fine Arts in Kabul in 2008. She quickly obtained a scholarship to study at Beacon House National University in Lahore, Pakistan. (Go to their website and request a scholarship to study there). In this dynamic Pakistani university, Khademi was trained in the art of the miniature and discovered her talent for performing. In 2013, she returned to Kabul, worked as a costume- and stage-designer, and supervised film scripts. She took part in a few exhibitions until the scandal surrounding *Armor* erupted, after which she had to flee the country to continue living and working in Paris. *La Porte Peinte* website.

bit.ly/2WaKL9K

(accessed December 2018).

19. Hélène Cixous, invitation note to SEMINAIRES, Philosophy / Art and Literature. Obstetrics of Literature: *Le Recriminel de Maman* (II), University of Paris 8 / Doctorate of Women's Studies, February–March 2001.

20. After all, thieves and sellers—or the male variant thereof—depended on the same protective deity in Roman times, Mercury.

21. Yes, these three movements are adopted from Matisse's lexicon, whereby he wants to place the periphery at the centre of our focus, to prevent our gaze from being immobilised, thereby enabling us to see the painting rather than to simply look at it.

or gherkins are reminiscent of pubic hair, while curly leaves recall multiple vaginal lips as the aubergines root in-between.

TENSION. The initial exchanges between Eve-the-seller and her potential customers are elicited only through glances. The seller smiles, hands behind her back, proud of her wares. The public looks at the table, looks at Khademi/Eve, looks at the table again as they walk away, stop a little further on, look-back again, then finally smile at the void or at the salesgirl, all the while astonished and on their way. Some dare to question: — “I don’t know if I’ve understood?” — “What is there to understand?” — “But what on earth is she doing?” — “Are they for sale?”

A co-worker, likewise a vegetable and fruit merchant, wants to understand why Eve is associated with sex, and asks if the artist is a feminist, and then ardently wants to understand why men are accused of thinking about sex, while feminists refer to it so much... He offers Khademi fruit whenever she needs replenishment and admires her courage. He’s happy that mentalities are evolving. According to him, Khademi would have had problems a few years ago; nowadays a tolerant attitude is more widespread among the population.

The most disturbing are the ladies in veils who really do not get the sexual allusion. In general, from nine to four o’clock, the public gradually grasps the hint, as though they couldn’t believe its eyes, and didn’t believe in their own fantasies. As soon as the light turns on in their minds, they wiggle and laugh.

All the market stalls play on attraction: Eve’s is pleasing thanks to the seller’s frankness and her wares tender, funny and authentic appearance. The public constantly exclaim: — “How beautiful!”

Eve sells, gives back change and struggles with how to wrap the fruit, for she wants it to stay in its gonad-like condition as long as possible.

EXPANSION. The market is about to close, her neighbour cries louder and louder:

— “Bananas 1 euro, RRRRRR (he explains that *Rrrr* in Arabic means “here”). It’s contagious, ever more frenetic, it makes her want to holler. Suddenly Eve shouts out: “I’m offering presents!”

Instantly a swarm of ladies of every nationality start asking questions, are interested in her merchandise, and then carry them off. A group of friends stops for a moment.

“What peculiar gifts! — Yet, a small gherkin ... — But... But...” They whisper to each other, look attentively, are somewhat bedazzled, resist as best they can from bursting into laughter, which rises and spreads throughout the stalls of this urban performance.

— “Well done Eve!” The public expresses its regret that it will not find your clever and extravagant stall the following week. Undoubtedly the flavour of your fruits and vegetables were tasted in anonymous homes over that weekend, accompanied by deconstructive and aphrodisiac rumours. It is very likely that no one will have mentioned the artist’s name or referred to the exhibition of her drawings in Liege a few weeks thereafter.²²

22. bit.ly/2DvZt3T

The dissemination, however, of a feminist message that refers to anatomical functions and resists religious moral precepts through concrete interaction with an uninformed public truly bears the mark of Kubra Khademi.

Translation (French): John Barrett

bit.ly/2Sds4DI

bit.ly/2GdOduP

Eve is a Seller
Kubra Khademi

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

Video 2' 24"

© Camille Laufer / CIFAS



Watch the video here: bit.ly/2RB9j8c



Eve is a Seller
Kubra Khademi

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

© Bea Borgers



Eve is a Seller
Kubra Khademi

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

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Eve is a Seller
Kubra Khademi

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Eve is a Seller
Kubra Khademi

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Kubra Khademi

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Kubra Khademi

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

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Eve is a Seller
Kubra Khademi

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

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BIOGRAPHY
Véronique Danneels



Véronique Danneels (1958), holder of a Ph.D. in Art History, teaches at the Fine Arts Academy of Tournai since 2013. She has worked for more than thirty years in the education section (lectures, communication, programme) of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, of the Ixelles Museum, and in the Arts Centres Wiels and Bozar. She has collaborated with different associations, several artists and in different cultural projects. After living and working in Berlin, Valencia, San Francisco and New York, she currently lives and works in Brussels.

Photo: Marit Galle

ITINERARY

Creating Artistic Spaces for Negotiation
Three Cases involving the Curator Joanna Warsza
 Emilie Houdent

Joanna Warsza curatorial career has forged her a singular skill when it comes to conflict-laden situations generated by and within art. In her vision, dissensus unquestionably constitutes a prerequisite for transformation and emancipation.

Born in Poland in the late 1970s, Warsza was immersed in the overthrow of the communist bloc, followed by the capitalist onslaught and disintegrating dreams about Western lifestyles. She thus has taken a particular interest in the standards of collective representation and their potential reversal. She has focused on presenting the work of artists who seek to disrupt the *status quo* and to dissociate truths from individual doctrines. From altering the function of a monument to placing antagonistic collective memories into perspective; from expropriating urban rituals to exposing political contradictions, sometimes to point to conflict, her curatorial approach re-infuses the cityscape as a physical and symbolic place in public space. It is not a question of paying tribute to or of aestheticizing a public phenomenon, but rather, by virtue of art, to shift our interpretative grids, to render visible our cities' polysemy and tendencies, and to invite us to debate. Warsza has commissioned projects that doubly resonate with the context: a place, its history and its symbolic import are invested at the same time as the specificities of a current state of affairs, social or political reality. Artistic proposals are generally neither transposable nor reproducible.

It is a question to shift our interpretative grids, to render visible our cities' polysemy and tendencies, and to invite us to debate.

Art is envisaged as a tool for reflection, for responding to a situation. It creates a crack in public space all while yet integrating it. Its repercussions are meant to go beyond the confines of the art-world, reaching a public beyond its usual audience. By taking its own context as its object, art activates our common traits and identificatory supports, and is then capable to affect its public intimately. A community at once object and recipient of the work will be highly prone to be “carried away” by the aesthetic experience.

Using this *modus operandi*, Warsza has specialized in curating public programs for contemporary artistic events. As a curator associated with Artur Zmijewski for the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012, she explored art's potential to influence reality. In 2014, she was to commission the public program for Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg at the Hermitage Museum, while war was raging in Eastern Ukraine. In contrast to the apolitical posture of Kaspar König, the principal curator of the Biennale, she focused the public program on the theme of boycott and the use of art as a tool of internal resistance. She was subsequently chosen to be Artistic Director of Public Art Munich 2018.

Art forms, which form part of public programs, lie at the intersection of creativity and mediation. They borrow their semiology from performance art and the aesthetics of reception by applying them to public space. Their evolution and their ambition to change the rules of the game—as suggested by the title for Public Art Munich 2018 title *Game Changers*—also impact art theories and its system of production and distribution. We've already seen various formulations mooted to designate this movement: contextual art, In Situ project, political art, *art effectif*.

The Christmas Tree in Saint-Petersburg

For Manifesta 10, Warsza invited the Estonian artist Kristina Norman, who undertook to erect a monumental Christmas tree made of metal, a reproduction of the Euromaidan militants protest symbol in Kiev. Obviously, the project was targeting the Kremlin. To obtain permission to erect such a sculpture in front of the Hermitage Museum, Warsza needed cunning, obscuring any reference to Maidan, focusing the work's theme on re-activating the idea of winter in mid-summer and the Winter Palace's timeless character. The work's true import was kept secret until its inauguration. Warsza and Norman had effectively chosen a Trojan horse as a means of opposition in order to speak on the role of art. They had geared themselves up for censorship and open conflict, imagining it as a form of epilogue at work, and, more broadly, the theme of boycott that ran through Manifesta's public program. Yet, the work was not censored and the director of the Hermitage, in turn, diverted the discourse on art by maintaining that the metal Christmas tree represented a critique of Maidan and a counter-example of that which might happen in the Russian Federation. Despite this attempt to neutralize its impact, the Christmas tree and the spectre of Maidan indeed appeared on the main square of St. Petersburg, and the attempt to manipulate how they were interpreted was plain for all to see.

The Christmas tree and the spectre of Maidan indeed appeared on the main square of St. Petersburg.



Souvenir
Kristina Norman

Manifesta 10 Saint-Petersburg, 2016

© DR



Souvenir
Kristina Norman

Manifesta 10 Saint-Petersburg, 2016

© DR

The *Pixadores* in Berlin

Discourse on art or the aesthetic debate is often used as a pretext to avoid ethical or political dissensus and in order to establish the denial of an alternative position.

Os *Pixadores* [spray-painters] have thrown themselves at this flaw in the art world. These graffiti artists operating in Sao Paulo tag pictograms at the top of skyscrapers, marking urban space with signs of their existence and their revolt directly on the symbols of power they denounce. The graph denotes re-appropriating surfaces in public space by means of a break in. In their *pixação* [wall writings], the symbol represents taking a far more radical risk than that of being arrested by the police. The megapolis's peaks are not conquered, in fact, without challenging the tower block's verticality and the risk of falling into the void. Endangering their own flesh—some have paid for their daring with their lives—raises the reality of exclusion as a matter of life and death, and of the *Pixadores* determination to wage battle with Brazil's non-egalitarian society. There is no need to formulate a message, the site where the symbol is inscribed suffices to designate its significance, "How to Do Words with Things," the converse of Austin's classic formulation.²³ Rather, the *pixação* is a performative act in the tradition of action painting and conceptual art, where the operating mode takes precedence. During the 2008 Sao Paulo Biennale and again in 2012, the *Pixadores* crossed swords with the official art world, which initially treated them as vandals, and later tried to integrate them... without fully reckoning on their subversive force; they would again seek conflict by tagging Nuno Ramos's monumental work that occupied the centre of the Niemeyer Pavilion. This tension between illegal act and performative gesture and its repercussion on the uses and scope of art led Joanna Warsza to invite the *Pixadores* to the 7th Berlin Biennale, *Forget Fear* (2012).

23. *How to Do Things with Words*, the renowned philosophy book by John Langshaw Austin, published in 1962.

The public experience their judgment waver between a moral viewpoint and an aesthetic experience of dissensus.

With the desire to fully appreciate their performative practices, and allow the "bottom up" movement to evolve, Warsza offered the Sao Paulo-based artists a workshop space: the Draftsmen's Congress, conceived by Pawel Althamer at the St Elisabeth-Kirche, where the public were invited to express their political positions through images. Large exhibition panels and painting materials were put at the public's disposal, with the slogan "Draw your opinions, be polite or politically incorrect, (...) fight others in this battle of images." In the eyes of the *Pixadores*, however, the other is the institution, the establishment. They scaled the inner walls of the Elisabeth-Kirche, to spray on their pictograms, ignoring the institutional framework of exhibition panels, and shamelessly damaging the church's old walls. They showed *for real* their art of vandalism, taking spectators and the Biennale's organizing team alike by surprise. Artur Zmijewski, the person in charge on site, called in the police. They burst into the church and stopped the performance, seizing the artists' passports. Zmijewski and the *Pixadores* heaped abuse upon one another—what was the real reason for them to be invited? What ensued was a painting battle with the Draftsmen Congress paint bottles, with colours splashing. To fight or to play at fighting? "The struggle in art," according to Warsza, "between a curator, who would like to reject the authoritarian role, that of the inviting power, and artists who do not want the role of official guests." The confusion between an artistic show and a news item hit a peak. The public was split; some cried foul at the manipulation, whilst others savoured the intensity of the event and the synchronization of the arts and politics, and of fiction and raw reality. Who is manipulating whom? The insti-

tution felt outraged by the artists it had invited. It excluded the practice of artists from the artistic sphere, by referring to their actions as a prosaic disorder of public order. Warsza then assumed the role of mediator, proposing a debate to document that which she would later categorize as a “public curatorial crisis,” and as “the performance of the struggle between artists and curators.” Zmijevski sought to stop her intervention, even threatening to fire her. Despite the tension, the discussion finally took place, but it didn’t address the rift that has just occurred. The conflict wasn’t “sublimated” and from Warsza’s standpoint “the curatorial work hadn’t been completed.” Yet, to the extent that the practice of the *Pixadores* consists precisely in effective protest, the public was inevitably obliged to take sides and then experience their judgment waver between a moral viewpoint and an aesthetic experience of dissensus, between fiction and reality. None of the values of the normative triad, logical (true or false), ethical (good or bad), and aesthetic (beautiful or ugly) succeeded in dominating the others. In calling in the police, Zmijevski not only cornered the artists, but also cornered himself as a curator into confronting a form of realpolitik. A battle by means of paint re-established the artistic value of the event; Zmiejvski entered the performance arena, freeing himself of his role of curator and re-inhabited a role of artist actor. In order for an artistic gesture to stand in opposition to its own commissioner, it was neither necessary to guard against attack nor to program it openly. Ultimately, by leaving a blind spot in the curatorial approach, art was able to embrace reality.

The aesthetic experience is capable of changing the false into the real; it’s a means of distorting moral norms that puts credibility at stake. Whenever civil society takes a stand against a work of art for ethical reasons, its aesthetic dimension is rejected. In order to defend their positions, artists often denounce a simplistic vision and call for further analysis of symbols and of contexts. Warsza’s curatorial work consists precisely in arranging the conditions in which the balance of power of values is played out within the work itself and for each of its recipients. Negotiation is integrated into the artistic process.



Politics of the Poor
Workshop
Pixadores

7th Berlin Biennale "Forget Fear", 2012
© Aga Szreder



Politics of the Poor
Workshop
Pixadores

7th Berlin Biennale "Forget Fear", 2012
© Aga Szreder



Politics of the Poor
Workshop
Pixadores

7th Berlin Biennale "Forget Fear", 2012
© Aga Szreder

Soccer Match at Munich

Massimo Furlan's project presented at the opening of Public Art Munich 2018 is indicative of this tour de force. The artist re-enacted the politically charged soccer match between West Germany and the East Germany at the Olympic Stadium in Munich at the 1972 FIFA World Cup. Nearly 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this almost *in-situ* reconstruction invited the people of Munich to relive some strong political tensions from times gone by.

The match involved only two actors, incorporating the East German goal-scorer and the West German goalkeeper, the two protagonists involved in the game's one and only goal. They re-enacted—without the ball—the movements of their historical characters, thus abolishing any spectacular dimension to the game. To follow the course of their actions, the spectators had at their disposal two radio frequencies that retransmitted radio commentaries from that day back in 1972, one from East German and the other from West German radio commentators. With these contradictory references, the reactivation of collective memory oscillated between its two functions; celebration (sports victories, post-war reconstruction with the modernist architecture of the Munich stadium) on the one hand, and reparation (the Cold War, the deadly attack against the Israel delegation at the 1974 Munich Olympics), on the other. The public thus was placed in a negotiating position with its past and, through homothetic transformation, with its present.

Here, the spectators played themselves in the past and in the present, and their reaction was as expected. But unpredictable played a trick! Against all odds it occurred on the pitch. Fifteen minutes after kick-off, the East German "player" got injured. How was one to know who suffered this injury, the actor or the soccer player he was impersonating? This dramaturgical rupture obviously didn't correspond to the historical scenario that the radios were continuing to disseminate. But the performance wasn't interrupted. The stadium's first-aid squad intervened, treating the performer and placed him on a rigid stretcher. The simulation of a football game was perfectly respected. Was it a case of a *real-fake* simulated injury, or a *real-true* pain for the performer?

Massimo Furlan, who played the West German goalkeeper, continued the game alone.

The unexpected is part of the scenario and the public is all the more intensely engaged.

The accident didn't impact the spectacle. Herein lies the strength of the artistic bias whose full significance is revealed by that accident. The unexpected is part of the scenario and whenever it happens the public is all the more intensely engaged. The theatrical framework precludes us from determining the veracity of the injury, despite its factual nature. Reality has been incorporated into fiction. Mirroring this outcome, the work seems to be brimming with fiction, merging with reality. In this Borges-like universe, the viewer is endowed with a fictitious dimension; he is henceforth endowed with a freedom of unheard of action. In fact, a naked spectator at the match will come down from the stands to embrace the goalkeeper...

Joanna Warsza's curatorial approach is thus characterized by her implementing projects that risk impacting or even dislocating the very nature of art: the risk of censorship, of conflict, of interruption. Art reveals all its strength on the edge of this precipice.

Translation (French): John Barrett

bit.ly/2S2SG9N

bit.ly/2R9Ka4g

bit.ly/2L5frmy



A reenactment of the 1974 East Germany – West Germany World Cup Match
Massimo Furlan

Olympic Stadium, Public Art Munich, 2018

© Michael Pfitzner & Paul Valentin



A reenactment of the 1974 East Germany – West Germany World Cup Match
Massimo Furlan

Olympic Stadium, Public Art Munich, 2018

© Michael Pfitzner & Paul Valentin

A reenactment of the 1974 East Germany - West Germany World Cup Match
Massimo Furlan

Olympic Stadium, Public Art Munich, 2018

© Michael Pfitzner & Paul Valentin



Watch the video here: bit.ly/2MMiT7A

BIOGRAPHY
Emilie Houdent



Emilie Houdent is a live art spectator and producer. She has been working as a production manager at Centre Pompidou live arts department and at Théâtre2Gennevilliers. In 2015 she joins Manufacture atlantique in Bordeaux as administrative and financial manager. After the artistic director had left the structure, she curated with the Russian choreographer Dina Khuseyn *Déprogrammation* in 2017, enacting the turning point for the art institution. Inspired by the context of the transition from an artistic project place to a labeled cultural institution, she set the place up as an artistic protest laboratory in collaboration with local inhabitants and artists. The event aimed to reinvest the social and political stakes of Art and experiment an art place without central power direction. She is now working as an independent producer and curator with several artists such as Dina Khuseyn, Yves Chaudouët, Elsa Gribinski, Mathias Pontevia.

Photo: RR

STROLL

Marches — les gens d’Uterpan Documentary Stories

Jacques André*

*With Sekou C., James C., Christophe J., Lionel R. and Thomas V. S.

Défilés or marches, a procedure belonging to the “New Principle of research and creation” by the French choreographers Franck Apertet and Annie Vigier (les gens d’Uterpan) is an unannounced group walk through city streets, in the middle of its thoroughfares. Performed by volunteer participants previously coached for the itinerary, participants are to remain silent and propelled by an unstated choreography, without any slogans or identification of any kind. It also happens without coordination or detectable mediation (a film camera, for example), without blocking the traffic or pedestrians, without fuelling aggression; the participants show themselves capable of seamlessly integrating into city traffic. It is meant to be interpreted by passers-by as a mirror effect. Three linked forms of demonstration—each lasting ten minutes, repeated three times over a period of ninety minutes—constitute the performance not identified as such. The first form, with a warm and social feel to it, embraces an exchange of glances; the next form, more restrained, as though mobilized by an indefinite goal to be reached by faster and more martial-like steps; the third, a slow-paced procession, meditative, the eyes lowered or internalized. This text contains excerpts from recollections, impressions, and reactions by six of among the thirty volunteer participants to the creation of *Défilés* in Brussels, on 23 September 2018, as part of SIGNAL.

Before the Performance

Jacques A.: [...] The Sunday of the performance, we leave the festival centre at a brisk pace in the pouring rain, to get to the rendezvous point in fifteen minutes. This rendezvous point, from where we would start an hour later, is the only known element of our itinerary across the city. It will only be revealed to us on the spot, for the rest has been being kept secret from everybody, including from the festival’s organizing team, as well as from the “authorities.” During our walk in the *drache*,²⁴ between the puddles and in Globish, I try to explain to a new Australian participant, who has come to attend the festival without having participated in the preparatory workshop, the other principles, constraints, information, or suggestions constituting the project, as I understood them during the two-hour group workshop three days previously. He will concisely summarize it later [...]

24. How the Bruxellois describe pouring rain.

James C.: I participated in the workshop action, a group walk in the city; something like a march, but without signs, slogans, chanting and so on. We reclaimed the streets in silence, preventing cars from passing [...]

Christophe J.: The rehearsal was a good preparation for how the program would unfold, as a way to approach the different situations that might arise.

Thomas V. S.: We were given ample instruction to know how to behave as we walk between the cars, which is not without risk, and at the same time, there was enough room for us to improvise that yet allowed us to behave quite naturally. The rehearsal was essential, as was the established mode of communication. Personally, I would have willingly participated in the second rehearsal; it is an exercise in itself.

Jacques A.: What questions, what imaginary constructions, and what reactions can the unidentified object of these group marches through the city give rise to, if we succeed in staying out of any known framework? We agreed to answer questions by those encountered, who might be insistent on solving the puzzle, with just two possible phrases: "we're marching," or then, as a last resort, "it's not meant to be said" [...] At the rendezvous point, I spot Franck Apertet, thanks to his red jacket, taking refuge under a bus shelter. He is with his partners from the studio, Stève, in a yellow oilskin, Julien, in a black coat, who were soon to embody, unwittingly, the colours of the Belgian tricolour for the starting photo, while waiting for latecomers. [...] My backpack is beginning to get drenched; I should have left my computer at home rather than risk it in this venture. But here on the spot, the large-sized umbrella I see in the hands of a woman (S.), who I met during the workshop, attracts me and hoping for its hospitality, and will trigger off our coming together as well as with her comrade (L.). It is a rare moment where it is possible to speak before our silent march, which will initiate a beginning of a relationship restricted to looking at each other. With the Australian, J., and the English-speaking, S. and L., both with nice Flemish accents, I'm no longer alone among a group of nameless people [...] I should specify that I am, as they say, of an anxious "nature." Marching will confront me with reality. I'm taking this relatively protected opportunity to put myself to the test of overcoming my fears. Even on this small scale, it is all the more vital for me to situate it on the double ground of creativity and politics.



Défilés

Les gens d'Uterpan – Annie Vigier and Franck Apertet

Facsimile of the map and instructions given to the participants before the action.

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

© les gens d'Uterpan

Annie Vigier & Franck Apertet
(les gens d'Uterpan)
www.lesgensduterpan.com

Défilés

Brussels, September 23rd, 2018

Défilés is an artistic project.

Everyone is free to motivate his/her presence as he/she wants, but *Défilés* should not have any slogan, nor cause, unveiled or expressed. Its choreography, that means its choreographic form, its register, and your attitude will make the bystanders attributing an identity or motif of claim, influenced by the current events. To make this experience successful, you should respect this engagement.

The realization of *Défilés* depends on your precision and your focus. You will have to act with carefulness to connect your position and your movements with the body and the moving of the others. The aim is to form a consistent unison in order to produce an image of a strong assembly motivated by a shared idea. Stay serious, avoid theatricality. Stay calm and cordial in any circumstances.

**Reminder: Crowd (relaxed, irregular, social) > Regiment (synchronized, ordered, determined)
> Procession (slow, regular, internalized)**

- Remember that we cannot stop the water to flow...

Enjoy the experience!

Défilés

Les gens d'Uterpan – Annie Vigier and Franck Apertet

Facsimile of the map and instructions given to the participants before the action.

SIGNAL, Brussels, 2018

© les gens d'Uterpan

Starting Point, Molenbeek

Jacques A.: We just received the map for the itinerary: quite simple and easy to memorize. We can slip it into our pocket and we won't be confused with explorers. From the beginning of the advance group, which brings together about thirty people, one of the motifs at the workshop "to feel the space in your back, in your bodies, the landmarks left behind," became highly relevant. We are moving ahead in a one-way street.

Lionel R.: Nevertheless, there was still about twenty of us at the rendezvous point on Sunday to begin the performance. Initially, it seemed as though we all tended to move towards the right, but pushed by the guidelines and the "mass effect" we quickly moved toward the centre. The first car-horns barely a few minutes after starting, but they calmed down relatively quickly; the motorists preferred to wait for an opportunity to overtake us on the left.

Christophe J.: On D-day, our presence was still noticeable in the streets, on the sidewalks, for the city wasn't deserted due to the rain. At first, I felt a gap, a hollow in the middle of the group: at times the space allowed us to "reform," to come closer together. Our rhythm was accelerated at times: we didn't manage to maintain the same rhythm during the three "schemas"; the social, the regiment, and the procession. But there again, we all found a moment to agree.

Jacques A.: The cars behind us are forced to slow down, to take their time to find the pace for gently moving ahead [...] A rare few honk, and even a rarer few rev their engines a little. In the first choreographic mode, walking backward is conceivable: I don't do so right away, probably for fear of appearing provocative with a face-to-face confrontation. A few cars go full-throttle after passing us: this is the most impressive moment for those marching up front who then seemed to be cut off from the rest. But as during the workshop, everyone keeps smiling, between ourselves, to passers-by, to the motorists crawling along at our sides. This helps and encourages me. Let me soon take the lead for a moment. Everything is going well. We've just passed a hall from which a few people have exited and are putting on their shoes. I guess it's the exit of a mosque, and that the families who will leave by car are likely to be inconvenienced, even though it is not the crowd that I imagine there on Fridays, nor the bustle of a working day on this Sunday [...] In this rather poor and maligned neighbourhood, it also reactivates in my thoughts the warning that had been made the previous day by the urban dramaturg Tunde Adefioye at SIGNAL. He wanted to make us aware that a gesture which hasn't been thought through, an urban artistic one undertaken in good conscience without an informed analysis of the context, can inflict a double wound to every discriminated person, in particular in relation to colonial and slave history.

The City Centre, rue Dansaert and the Pedestrian Hypercenter

Jacques A.: We start the slow sequence of procession, eyes to the ground, trying to form an arrow on the pavement behind those marching in the lead. [...] I recall the instructions we were given at the workshop and they help. To feel the weight of the body in the pelvis, how a footstep transmits itself from the knees to the top of the skull... I can plunge yet again into ideas that arise in to me for the migrants who are drowning in the Mediterranean with the European ideal. From the sidewalk a voice shouts out: "the sidewalks are

made for walking on!" On turning around I see we're being followed by a rather good-natured policeman, talking into his walkie-talkie or on his phone.

Soon a passer-by appears, sufficiently intrigued to come and join us, to mingle with us, and question us. This was to be the only such intervention I experienced during our walk. She is tall, dressed in a beautiful beige coat, middle-class, perhaps a foreigner. She is enthusiastic, but she seems to be getting worried by the initial lack of response, and then by those we had agreed upon. She twirls around from one participant to the next, stressed. She heads towards the sidewalk and shouts at an elderly man:

– They're marching for nothing.

The man, her husband, perhaps, interjects with something like:

– Me. I go walking in Tibet!

She insists on understanding, becoming ever more nervous. I smile at her; we are in the "social" demonstration sequence...

– Ah, there is someone who smiles!

She relaxes, then feels no doubt that our non-responses are not directed against her, that it is about something that eludes her, but does not exclude her. Perhaps my co-marchers, whom she addressed, haven't participated in the workshop; they forgot to smile when confronted with a face at too close a range. She then re-joins her companion on the sidewalk with a calmer step.

Christophe J.: In the rue Antoine Dansaert,²⁵ a passer-by tried to integrate the group. It was an unexpected situation. I was curious to see on people's faces that we were not merely walkers: they were questioning themselves, were intrigued...

25. The rue Antoine Dansaert in Brussels stretches from the canal and the downtown area of Molenbeek to La Bourse in the centre of the city, passing through a neighbourhood with elegant fashion boutiques and trendy restaurants.

Lionel R.: We then reached the streets around the Grand-Place. There it was different again, for we were not sufficient in number, or not grouped or organized enough to represent, in the eyes of all those around us, something other than a group of tourists in the midst of many others.

The Arrest, Boulevard de l'Empereur

Thomas V.S.: A slight mishap occurred following the arrival of the police with the stop before the march's destination, where the important thing, I suppose, was to communicate with them, but this didn't in any way detract from the interesting aspects of the performance.

Lionel R.: The sequel is very short, we reached the wide boulevard that leads to the Skatepark, when a little before the bridge a guy hails us to ask what we were doing there. We continued going forward without answering. He approaches us to tell us it is the police; we continue, he asks more questions further back in the march, then heads back up to the head of the march, takes pictures, a few meters later we reach the Skatepark amidst police sirens and vans, the canine brigade, thirty or so policemen at the least. They form a cordon, preventing us from passing through with their arms, we stop. The walk is over. They discuss matters with the crew from les gens d'Uterpan, and then from SIGNAL, everybody's identity details are checked and we are all released, finally.

Christophe J.: It was "beautiful" to see this image of flowing water, which doesn't resist when, for example, a car overtakes us on the road passing near to us. I didn't feel afraid or in danger. Even when the first policeman arrived on the scene, I observed how Franck,

Julien, and the other participants were quite calm. I wasn't worried in the slightest. Everyone kept their cool and that was essential for the smooth running of the process.

James C.: The ID cards were checked and we were held for about ten minutes before being released without being charged. I suppose a warning was issued. About seven minutes before the group was released, the police separated me from the group and told me that I could go. I decided to stay nearby on the footpath. I was repeatedly reminded that I was free to go. I started filming the police surrounding my co-participants. I was told that I could film, but not put the film online in Belgium; that it was illegal. The chief of police sternly told me to leave, and that if I didn't, he would not release the group, and that he was waiting for me to go before he would release the group. I hung on, reminding myself of "the imaginary bond that held us together." A few minutes later the police released my co-participants.

At the café, some final impressions

Lionel R.: A little beer at Place Jeu de Balle,²⁶ which we could not reach, even if it was close to our objective. We've got to recover from those emotions! And exchanges with other participants. Which made us relativize: we wanted to experiment with different "marches" and to observe the reactions, what people see into them, the questions that this raises; we did well with the police, their lecture was well understood! [...] I found the experience very rewarding. Both the project itself and the way it panned out on this rainy Sunday. I liked the idea—while there are a considerable number of marches, and it is a phenomenon that has become marked over recent years—to redirect the concept of protest. In this respect, the theatre is asking many questions of itself, where the artistic act tends to be politically motivated at times, I found the bias quite fresh.

26. The Place de Jeu de Balle is the square in which the flea market is held in Brussels, in the Marolles district, a neighbourhood that remains working class despite its gentrification.

James C.: I enjoyed the feeling of entitlement that walking on the streets afforded us, that car drivers had to give way to us, or manoeuvre around the group. It was also interesting to have privilege withdrawn in an instant by the police. For me, it was a momentary and small-scale oppression, a taste of what so many people experience on a daily basis.

Thomas V.S.: Few of us knew each other, I mean the participants, and yet we walked for an hour on the public thoroughfare together, with a sense of complicity. Everything went very smoothly and we were of course well prepared. [...] I've participated in other performances in public space, I've created them myself, but this was quite remarkable. [...] The purpose and manner of realization were open; the spectators could interpret this performance in different ways, which is no trifle. We, the participants, had the opportunity to march for a personal reason. Of great relevance was how, I think, simplicity and sobriety gave this march all its strength.

Sekou C.: It made me feel good.

A full version of the testimony of Jacques André (in French) is available online at: bit.ly/2StPa8S

Translation (French): John Barrett

BIOGRAPHY
Jacques André



Jacques André, born in Brittany, studied at INSAS (Brussels). In between film and performance, image and live art, he develops a multimedia creation. It allies memories and technology, sense and sensitivity, to question through the body our already-made gazes and words. In parallel to his personal works (visions of the body and the skin, words of racism, art and science) or adapted from authors like Kleist (*La Marquise d'O*, theatre stage direction) or Duras (*La Pluie d'été*, feature film), he collaborates with authors like I. Dumont, Ch. Huysman, A. Pickels, M. Wijckaert. His artistic research also passes through the writing of articles published in journals like *Traverses* (Centre Pompidou), *Scènes* (La Bellone, house for performing arts in Belgium), *Patch* (CECN ofMons), *Revue Ah!* (ULB), *Cahiers Armand Gatti*, *Espace(s)*; in collective books like *Révélation*s (La Bellone), *Œuvres* (LaM), or on the Internet, surrounding artistic routes: *Abécédaire des Hommes Penchés* (J. Sima), *Les Années-Nombre* (L. Calmel).

Photo: Brahim Sahli

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Forget about Music and Musicians: Mattin's *Social Dissonance*

Joel Stern

I met Mattin in 2001 in London, where he'd moved recently from his native Bilbao, his sensibility noticeably shaped by that city's political consciousness—formed in the dynamics of the Basque conflict with Spain—and also by its radical anarcho-punk scene. Notwithstanding these influences, Mattin's own ideas were already highly idiosyncratic. His first London performances offer a blueprint for later works. An early video work documents a 'collaboration' with Japanese noise artist Merzbow, a formative hero for Mattin. In grainy footage we see Merzbow on stage generating a thunderous din. Mattin enters from the side offering a glass of water, which Merzbow accepts and drinks. The clip ends. Another work, maybe a year later; we're at The Foundry, a since-demolished bohemian pub in Hoxton. Mattin, behind a small high-table with a laptop, discharges an extraordinarily loud, high-frequency noise. The venue manager (KLF associate Alan 'Gimpo' Goodrick) instantly pushes the mixer volume down. Mattin, responds, pushing it up again, louder than before. Gimpo comes again, but Mattin blocks his path. A physical confrontation ensues and the two grapple, Mattin gripping the laptop overhead with one hand, restraining Gimpo with the other. A cacophonous noise soundtracks this, until, seconds later, the two topple sideways ripping the audio cable from the laptop. Cue silence, then applause. These works, though ear-splitting, are not about noise *per se*. Rather noise is a smoke-screen, or cover, for other experiments. In both works Mattin is positioned askew—side-of-stage—to his own performance, both instigator and interloper. The artist is present, but the work takes place elsewhere. This somewhat contrarian slipperiness is strategic, characteristic of Mattin's oeuvre generally. In spaces of noisy confusion, we are drawn in, unwittingly entangled in the social relations that constitute the work.

In spaces of noisy confusion, we are drawn in the social relations that
constitute the work.

Social Dissonance, commissioned in 2017 by curator Pierre Bal-Blanc for documenta 14, extends a practice which by now comprises two decades of tense, reflexive, often abjectly funny projects. Where early works were confoundingly brief, *Social Dissonance* is massively elongated, a performance score executed across hour-long daily sessions—in both Athens and Kassel—through the entirety of documenta. The total duration is one hundred and seventy hours. Instructional, or conceptual, scores are a recurring methodology for Mattin. *Social Dissonance* follows, for instance, *Non-Concert: Anonymous improvisation without instruments* (2013) and *Social Realist Score* (2016) amongst other directed group experiments that riff on what the artist has called "today's concentration camp of forced participation", the incapacity to extricate any aspect of ourselves from the pervasiveness of capitalist relations. The experimental scores of Cage, Fluxus, Cardew's Scratch Orchestra and others are unavoidable formal references—an impression consolidated by their inclusion elsewhere in documenta. However, where these early scores issued from urgent, and necessary, desires for musical revolution, Mattin's scores, contrastingly, are marked by a palpable displacement of sound, the dictate to "forget about music and musicians for the time being". This absence of music is, of course, different from silence, which, after Cage, we know cannot exist, a maxim demonstrated, famously, most overtly, in Cage's *4'33"* (1952) which instructs a performer to not play for the duration of the piece. This conscious suppression of music works to uncover the unheard and the marginalised, redirecting auditory attention towards an environment "full of accidental sounds" which

then become the piece. Mattin, appropriating Cage, redirects us again, away from sound altogether, towards that which vibrates still further in the background, “a social noise that cancels the fetishisation of abstract sounds.” Mattin’s ‘social noise’, like Cage’s soundscape, is always already present, presaging our awareness of it. Noise, sonic or social is, by definition, undifferentiated, inscrutable. Alternatively, dissonance is, at least, measurable, a quality, however subjectively given, that we ascribe to things held together uneasily, at odds with one another.

Dissonance is measurable that we ascribe to things held together uneasily,
at odds with one another.

Listen carefully. The audience is your instrument, play it in order to practically understand how we are generally instrumentalized.²⁷

A group of facilitators manage *Social Dissonance* and, in a sense, they are most responsible for its application; initiating and closing each workshop on cue, prompting participants with various exercises. I participated in *Social Dissonance* twice, first at documenta Halle in Kassel, and again at Athens Conservatoire. The experiences were particular and instructive. In Kassel, the room was crowded with approximately 30 people. A screen displayed a Skype window open to another group, like us, in Athens. It was the opening weekend of documenta in Kassel so we disproportionately comprised artists, curators, insiders in celebration mode. A facilitator, without speaking, led us in follow-the-leader style physical actions, not unlike aerobics. Some time later, a vocal exclamation, ‘whoop’, resounded from the back of the room. This was returned by a second ‘whoop’, and the dynamic escalated quickly until numerous people were whooping, banging, stamping and exclaiming in call and response. As the revelry unfolded, others shuffled embarrassed to the edges of the room. Me included. I remember feeling disdain for the ‘whoopers’. “Attention-seeking egoists, stop ruining everything!” After an interminable duration, despite determined resistance, the noises-game fizzled out. In the not-quite-silence that followed it was impossible to engage, even with intimate friends, without feeling intensely self-conscious and scrutinised, an effect exacerbated by the roving handheld camera capturing everything. At the hour’s end, finally relief. We all needed a drink. In Athens, a week later, a smaller, more seemingly self-effacing, cohort took part. The atmosphere was tentative. I recall facilitators having us self-nominate into factions demarcated by sexuality, wealth, profession, nationality. From our resultant positions we were invited to converse. While still excruciating and stilted, this felt a more honest attempt to deal with each other and ‘the situation’ than Kassel. In one moment of particular inertia, an Australian friend, known for extreme chutzpah, plugged an upcoming concert, and then sang acapella by way of example. To me this was a violation and imposition, especially from a visitor, a tourist. Pure dissonance. But something unexpected followed. Another participant, a woman on the Greek side of the room, also began to sing, in a slow and plaintive rebetiko style. I listened carefully, with heightened sensitivity, to the melody uncoil and resonate in the room. The remainder of the session was quiet, low-key, as if we were waiting for something to happen, but content for it to not. Afterwards we chatted warmly. Tense self-consciousness had given way to profound ease. The local singer invited us to join her the following evening for a rebetiko performance in suburban Athens, which turned out to be an experience so joyous, disarming and intimate I’ll not forget it.

27. This is the opening passage of the score to *Social Dissonance* which was handed to participants on entry to the work, and published via the documenta website. I’ve included further sections of the score as indented quotes throughout this text.

It was impossible to engage, even with intimate friends, without feeling
intensely self-conscious and scrutinised.

Reflect on the I/We relation while defining Social Dissonance . Help the collective subject to emerge.

Mattin has described *Social Dissonance* as an autoethnography, or self observation, of, amongst other things, the documenta audience; an archive reflecting the struggle to say, do, or produce something, anything, together, in the circumscribed space of an artwork. All hundred and seventy hours are documented on YouTube. In the course of writing this I revisited my two sessions, but found them unwatchable—not a version of myself I can bear—so drew from memory instead. Another dissonance; between the self we imagine, and the alien one we witness in the work.

An archive reflecting the struggle to say, do, or produce something together, in the space of an artwork.

The inclination may be to compare the *Social Dissonance* of Mattin's work with that of someone like Santiago Sierra, whose cynical exploitation of workers supposedly functions to reveal the dehumanizing force of capitalism. But inherent to Mattin's production of the alienating atmosphere which has underpinned his oeuvre to date, is the capacity for something utterly remarkable and unexpected to happen. It is as almost as though he stages each new work seeking reaffirmation of this possibility. This characteristic is what ultimately marries Mattin's work to noise and improvisation; indeed, his relentless critique of these traditions is perhaps, ultimately, evidence of his enduring commitment to them.

bit.ly/2FVvQdL

bit.ly/2CEqK2o

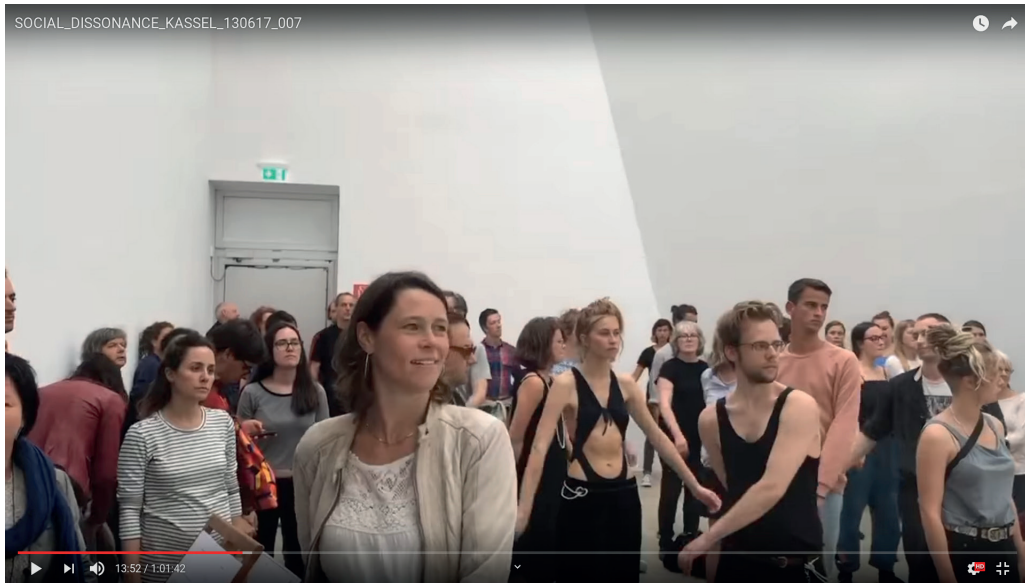


Social Dissonance
Mattin

June 13th session

documenta, Kassel, 2017

Screenshots from the videotake bit.ly/2DOFRbf

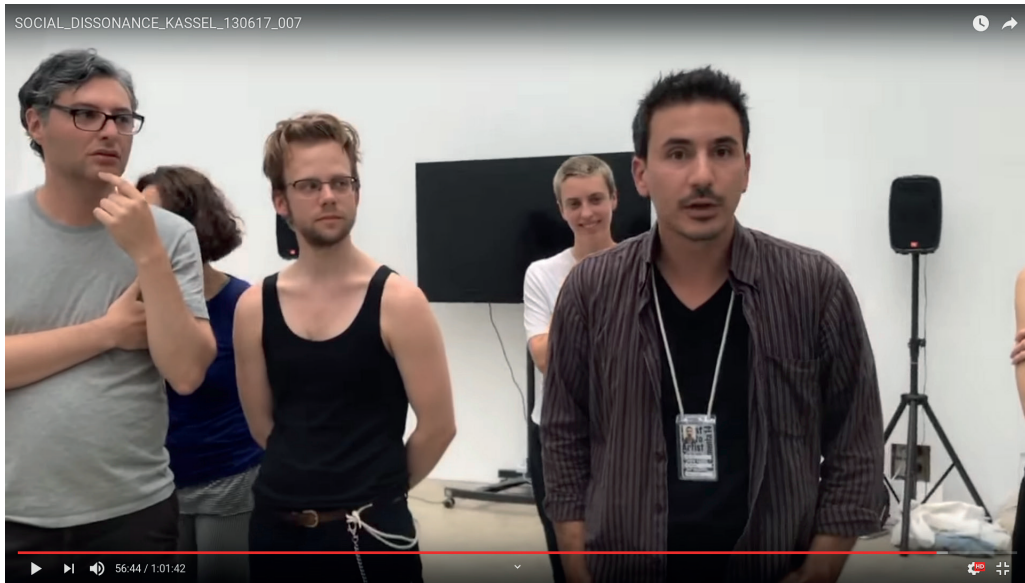


Social Dissonance
Mattin

June 13th session

documenta, Kassel, 2017

Screenshots from the videotake bit.ly/2DOFRbf



Social Dissonance
Mattin

June 13th session

documenta, Kassel, 2017

Screenshots from the videotake bit.ly/2DOFRbf



Social Dissonance
Mattin

June 18th session

documenta, Athens, 2017

Screenshots from the videotake bit.ly/2TsMs0v



Social Dissonance
Mattin

June 18th session

documenta, Athens, 2017

Screenshots from the videotake bit.ly/2TsMs0v



Social Dissonance
Mattin

June 18th session

documenta, Athens, 2017

Screenshots from the videotake bit.ly/2TsMs0v

BIOGRAPHY
Joel Stern



Joel Stern is a curator, artist and researcher interested in theories and practices of sound and listening. He is co-director of Liquid Architecture, a leading Australian organisation for artists working with sound, and has founded projects including OtherFilm and Instrument Builders Project. Joel has curated festivals, publications, exhibitions, screenings and concerts in Australia and internationally since the early 2000s. In 2018, with James Parker, he curated *Eavesdropping*, a major investigation into the politics and ethics of listening. Joel produces and performs experimental music works under his own name and in bands including Sky Needle and Soft Power. He is a PhD candidate in Curatorial Practice at Monash University.

Photo: ©Keelan O’Hehir

NEIGHBOURHOOD

A Glance That Triggers Movement

Dries Verhoeven's *Ceci n'est pas*

Kasia Tórz

In 1934, Virginia Woolf wandered through the streets of London, about which she testifies: “I find it impossible to walk down the street without stopping, it may be in the middle of the road. to ask: Why? Churches, public houses, parliaments, shops, loud speakers, motor cars, the drone of an aeroplane in the clouds, and men and women all inspire questions.” The question *Why* thus enables us to bring to a standstill the motion of walking through cityscapes and to freeze-frame. It is precisely this moment of doubt and reflection we see surfacing in Dries Verhoeven's project *Ceci n'est pas* [This Is Not] (2013).

Ceci n'est pas is a performative installation comprising a series of ten living tableaux²⁸ placed in soundproof glass booths in public space. Over the last five years, this installation has been shown in seven cities.²⁹ Everyday, bystanders meet at the exhibition site, sometimes intentionally, sometimes accidentally, and thus can look at another tableau in the series: *This is not Art* (a percussionist playing drums with hammers instead of sticks, thus destroying the instrument); *This is not a Mother* (a pregnant minor dancing with earphones on); *This is not Love* (a middle-aged man reading a book to a ten-year-old girl sitting on his lap, both dressed in underwear); *This is not the Future* (a balaclava clad young man sits on a pile of projectiles and polishes one of them), *This is not History* (a dark-skinned performer, half-naked and shackled, holding a sign announcing the number of minutes to the beginning of the show), *This is not Nature* (a transsexual performer dressed in feathers on a swing), *This is not our Desire* (a woman dwarf sitting at a table taller than herself, smoking and drinking alcohol); *This is not our Fear* (a Muslim joining in prayer while listening the faithful being called to prayer through a loudspeaker); *This is not my Body* (a woman of about seventy sitting naked wearing a mask whose silicone features are those of a young woman); and *This is not Me* (an urn placed on a thick layer of earth full of worms).

28. During the installation in Poland, eight of the ten living tableaux were exhibited. The entire documentation for the installation can be seen on the artist's website.

29. bit.ly/2MsigQv, last consulted 14 January 2019.

In Verhoeven's words, the installation comprises “images we're not used to seeing in public space.”³⁰ These static images, limited due to the confined space, and yet dynamic due to the actions performed by the performers, are accompanied by music that invites the public to come closer, thereby lending the ensemble the feeling of an outdoor event. Spectators can also familiarize themselves with the text displayed on the booths—bearing the title of the work and a factual description, formulated in cold and commercial phrases—similar to a description of a product in a store's showcase or in a showroom. These images can thus arouse anxiety, indignation, or indifference, images from which Verhoeven generates as many representations of “the DNA of our time.” In every city where *Ceci n'est pas* was put on exhibit, it provoked divergent reactions; these multiple representations can thus be considered as a probe measuring the social climate. The diversity of reactions offers proof that the DNA of our time mutates according to social context, aesthetics, and cultural norms in any given setting.

30. bit.ly/2MsigQv, last consulted 14 January 2019.

These multiple representations can be considered as a probe measuring the social climate.

With the title *Ceci n'est pas*, Verhoeven overtly refers to the painting by the Belgian surrealist René Magritte *This Is Not A Pipe* (1929), probably the most celebrated commentary in the history of contemporary art on the relationship between reality and its representation, as well as the significance and function we attribute to both. By continuing in the vein of Magritte, who in his painting played up that the pipe is not the real object but merely a pictorial representation of it, Verhoeven toys with the public's expectations and triggers a difficult decision-making process marked by an emotional energy. To what extent is that which is visually presented a "real" scene, with which an ethical and political relationship persists? To what extent is it a theatrical play and to what point is it a perverse illustration, whose titles should be read in the affirmative: *This is...: Nature, our Desire, our Body, Love, and Mother?*

Ceci n'est pas in Poznań

Ceci n'est pas was presented in Poznań in 2016 at the Malta Festival, as part of "Idiom"—in the thematic section of the festival titled "Paradoks widza / The Paradox of the Spectator." While the section's curator, the Dutch theatre director Lotte van den Berg, had began her career staging shows in traditional theatres, she has ever since been exploring the potential of public space as a laboratory for emotions, ethical attitudes, and shifting definitions of reality. At the centre of Idiom's program's, she placed the triple figure of actor-spectator-witness, thus underlining the paradox inherent in the act of observing. In her own words: "We watch the world while being a part of it. Watching something in a way gives you distance to it, it separates you from the thing you are watching, and at the same time it connects. The act of watching is about being far and close at the same time. It's about being there with the other and not."³¹

31. bit.ly/2MpScFw, last consulted 14 January 2019.

The paradox resulting from the twin feeling of proximity and distance, the responsibility for that which we see, and the indifference inscribed in the role of a passer-by, was particularly striking in the version of *Ceci n'est pas* presented in Poznań. Moreover, this paradox was repeatedly highlighted by the newspaper edited by Wojciech Wołosznik, engaged by the Malta festival at Verhoeven's express request to document the project's every phase.³² Wołosznik worked every day for several hours as a reporter-observer, listening to the passers-by's conversations, or even intentionally initiating a dialogue with them. He daily reported on reactions by spectators in a blog dedicated to the project. Many were particularly striking; they show to what extent that which we see is rarely a vision of objective reality as shared by everyone, but rather an image comprised of our vision/s of the past, our emotions, the iconosphere in which we live, social realities—both political and historical. Many passers-by in Poznań, for instance, interpreted the drummer's attire as a miner's clothing. This perception can be explained by the key role mining played in the Polish economy, and consequently in the local collective consciousness.

32. bit.ly/2RYZ2qX, last consulted 14 January 2019.

The paradox of the responsibility for that which we see, and the indifference inscribed in the role of a passer-by.

The explanatory texts accompanying the tableaux vivants were adapted to the Polish context and formulated in such a way that, while remaining cold and impersonal, they exposed prevailing taboos and touched upon sensitive social issues. *This is not a Mother*, featuring a pregnant minor, was to provoke contradictory reactions: some accused the artist of supporting the idea of underage motherhood whilst others thought it was meant

to promote the contraceptive pill. Over and again the blogger noted how the public more rarely wanted to comment on their way of seeing things without first reading the explanatory panel. Thus, Verhoeven captures the prevailing tendency to interpret reality in accordance with received instruction manuals (customs, law, moral and /or semiotic systems), and skilfully directs the tension between the intensity of the scenes displayed and a technical commentary of images that elude categorisation.

Apparently, the discomfort repeatedly engendered by direct visual contact between the installation performers and their numerous spectators was a characteristic feature. At times, this discomfort led to violent reactions, with some passers-by hitting the cabins, or then again with demonstrations of empathy. During *This is not History*, a member of the public watching the acrobatics of the black artist wrote on a piece of paper “SORRY FOR THE POLISH CROWD” and stuck it on the glass cabin. During *This is not Love*, a passer-by called the police to inform them that an act of harassment was being committed in public space. By simply setting up a modest stand in the city centre for several days Verhoeven can change the social dynamic and push numerous by-passers to question their standpoint on reality. He thus reveals that the paradoxes inherent in our ways of seeing things are still present on multiple levels and that, thanks to them, we remain alive.

Verhoeven can change the social dynamic and push numerous by-passers to question their standpoint on reality.

In Verhoeven’s installations, happenings and performances, the viewer is implicated in the project in a way that is difficult to predict, and often radically so, although based on an open relationship—namely, that of a voluntary glance. Verhoeven’s work unfolds on three levels. The first is based on that which is beyond the visible, that is to say, that which usually belongs in public space, as for example the construction site incorporated into his open-air installation *Sic transit gloria mundi* (2018), which resembles a conventional workplace, or the metal glass booths in *Ceci n’est pas*. The second level differs from the first, in that it is invisible, as with stage directions. Finally, the third level involves the viewer’s behaviour vis-à-vis this detachment. The invisible-visible game particularly evokes images that hurt and trigger internal upheavals. *Ceci n’est pas*’s forceful impact lies precisely in our contact with exhibited images that force us to open our eyes to other visions of the world. Spurred on by renewed relationships with a living image, we observe *differently* that which we see everyday while walking through the same streets. Our glance triggers micro-shocks in our standardized image of the world, causing it contours to momentarily fade. The thrill running through our bodies caused by this situation will often be barely explicable and difficult to neutralize.

Translation (French): John Barrett

bit.ly/2MsigQv

bit.ly/2CDWVyT



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas de l'art*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© M. Zakrzewski



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas une mère*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© Klaudyna Schubert



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas de l'amour*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© Klaudyna Schubert



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas le futur*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© M. Zakrzewski



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas de l'histoire*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© M. Zakrzewski



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas la nature*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© M. Zakrzewski



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas notre désir*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

© M. Zakrzewski



*Ceci n'est pas:
Ceci n'est pas notre peur*

Dries Verhoeven

Malta Festival Poznań, 2016

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BIOGRAPHY
Kasia Tórz



Kasia Tórz is a performing arts curator, researcher and editor. A graduate in Philosophy at the Warsaw University and in Cultural Diplomacy at the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. She worked as a head of programming of Polish Audiovisual Institute in Warsaw (2011-2017). Since 2008 she has been a programmer of Malta Festival Poznań (PL). She has written many texts on contemporary theatre and edited books. In 2015 she co-curated and edited the first Polish-language book-length collection of writings on and by Tim Etchells. Currently, she works on a book on Gisèle Vienne. She is based in Antwerp.

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Klaxon
(when art lives in town)

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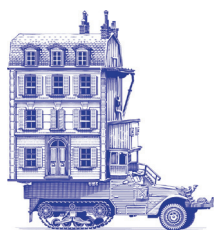
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Since 2018, the IN SITU Cloud gathers new associated members around IN SITU. So far, Bildstörung Europäisches Straßentheaterfestival Detmold (Germany), Biela Noč (Slovakia), Eleusis 2021 European Capital of Culture (Greece) and FiraTàrrega (Spain). More to come soon.

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