



Banks and tanks. Peripheral European countries, subjected to colonial aggression, are the centers of imagining alternatives. Currently, their peripheral and minoritarian issues are moving into the center of the political discussions and practices!

### **Berlin is the new Athens!**

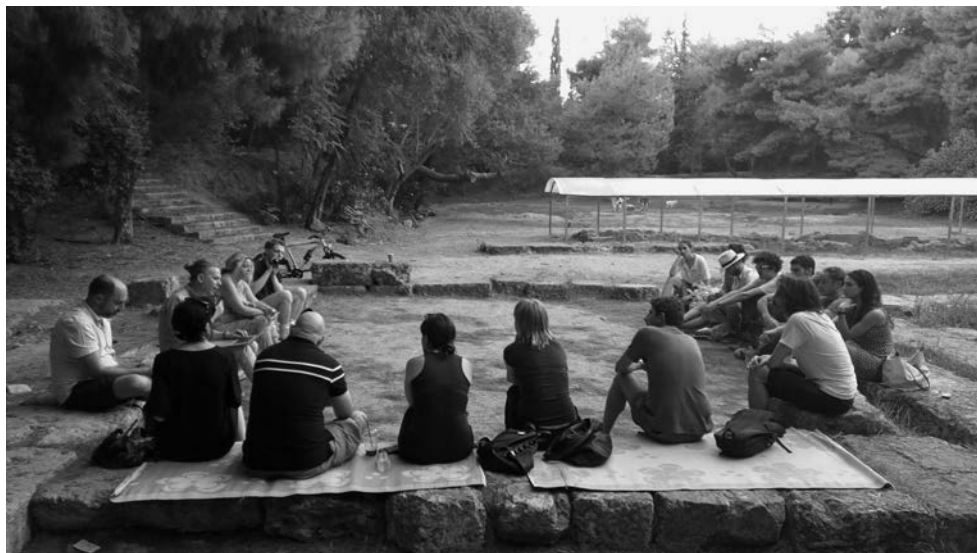
In Athens, the ontological difference between art and not art shifted in 2008. Demonstrations became performances. The city was turned into a pyrotechnical art work. New politics of visibility has inspired Activist art all over the world. We are happy about the great interest of the planetary art- and not-art-communities towards our city. The experience shows that it might be better to come, please, if possible, in small groups, and for a longer time period.



Molotus emblem unites knowledges and builds the bridge between the Molotow cocktail and the meditation lotus.

### **Education as an action. Education as a work of art. Avtonomi Akadimia transforms the educational system of Europe.**

Avtonomi Akadimia, a free access intercultural university, is active since June 2015 in Athens. It practices the free sharing of knowledge by inviting artists, philosophers, scientists and activists to be involved in a long term deep exchange with a world-wide community of participants. Avtonomi Akadimia operates on/in the topos of origin of the patriarchal concept of the western pedagogy, that is, in the original garden of Plato's Academy, Akadimia Platonos, an archaeological site in Athens.



Luca Di Blasi: "White, Heterosexual Men and the Rise of New Populism"

The word "Akadimia" is used for educational institutions because of this garden. This place, with Plato's "Republic", is the source of militarized nation state and binary logic of the empire we still live in. It is the origin of the premises of fascism. This is why we reshape the base of our entire occidental "civilization" precisely at this space of thought. Here, we shift the subsystemic boundaries between art, science, technology and politics. After 2300 years, art becomes part of society. More and more, art finally rejects commodification and resists the extracting logic of the investment markets. Less and less, philosophy is subsumed under the ever perpetuating financialized academic culture.

Environment forms knowledge. The garden provides a platform that allows people to experience themselves as a community. In our open meetings, symptoms of the sado-masochistic relationship between Greece and Germany vanish. We are one.

Akadimia Platonos Garden, with its numerous initiatives, self-organized cafés, as well as fair trade shops, meetings of alternative economies, rainbow families celebrations, and generally, with its warm environment, constitutes an alternative model of Europe.

This ecosystem is currently endangered by the sealed plan:

Perfect Academy Shopping Experience!



**a 300 million euro**

**Shopping Mall “Academy Gardens”**

**backed by US asset manager BlackRock**

**Academy Shopping Experience: 55,000 m<sup>2</sup>**

**1,750 m<sup>2</sup> for parking pleasures!**

**Fresh pollution thanks to urban regeneration!**

**Buy one get two: Plato and Aristotle pack.**

Environment Minister Giorgos Stathakis approved the agreement and inked a deal with BlackRock subsidiary Atrume SA for the construction. The Association of Greek Archaeologists (SAE) have opposed the project, they stated that the Greek government has backed the construction of the 55,000 square meter shopping mall after changing construction rules next to areas of archaeological importance. The Council of State has deemed plans to build a shopping mall in the central Athens neighborhood of Akadimia Platonos illegal in 2015.

We live in the financial dictatorship.

Avtonomi Akadimia, as part of the Athenian story of resistance, announces the

## **BLACKROCK PROTEST SEMESTER**

*Living the dream, even if its fire will absorb you (Nikos Romanos)*

Join the Summer Semester in June at the Akadimia Platonos in Athens.

We will **THINK** and enjoy **FREEDOM**

We will practice overcoming the disconnect with nature.

Program will be announced shortly on [www.avtonomi-akadimia.net](http://www.avtonomi-akadimia.net). Please, don't hesitate to write directly to: [jouliastrauss@gmx.de](mailto:jouliastrauss@gmx.de) if you are interested to participate.



Please, write your name, paste your photo, and laminate this student ID. You can use it for discounts or for free entrance in museums, conferences, and for other occupations around the world.

Avtonomi Akadimia is called into existence and organized by an artist Julia Strauss.

It is inspired by Pythagoras, Aaron Swartz, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Chelsea Manning, Archytas, Nikos Romanos and Sappho. Our active board includes Prof. Luca Di Blasi, Prof. Sotirios Bahtsetzis, Prof. Ioulia Mermigka, Prof. Tania Hron, Prof. Lindsay Parkhowell, Prof. Helen Dimos, Prof. Sebastian Bayse Schäfer, Prof. Peter Weibel, Prof. Johanna Di Blasi, Prof. Elad Lapidot, Prof. Raimar Stange, Prof. Mriganka Madhukallya, Prof. Natasa Efstathiadi, Prof. Raúl Hott, Prof. Stamatia Agrafioti, Prof. Eirini Vlavianou, Prof. Hiroshi McDonald Mori, Prof. Clara Hüneke, Prof. Noah Fischer, Prof. Jonas Tinius, and Prof. Brandon LaBelle.

# Underground & Improvisation

Interview with Angela Lammert, co-curator of Underground and Improvisation: Alternative Music and Art After 1968, at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin

Two exhibitions on the themes of underground and improvisation, held from March 15 to May 6, 2018 at the Akademie der Künste on Hansseatenweg, Berlin, focuses on the alternative music and art movements in East and West, from the student revolts of the Prague Spring to the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain in Berlin and eastern Europe. The extensive supporting programme consists of a series of concerts, film showings, panel discussions and an interdisciplinary symposium.

The exhibition “Notes from the Underground – Art and Alternative Music in Eastern Europe 1968–1994” commemorates a generation of artists that occupied the interface between performance art, video art and experimental music, deliberately eschewing official culture. Censorship and scarcity produced richly imaginative and frequently ironic types of work. The exhibition presents a selection of contemporary testimonies, some for the first time, including musical instruments fashioned by the artists themselves, Super 8 films, Samizdat magazines and documentary recordings of performances. An exhibition in cooperation with Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland. Curated by

David Crowley and Daniel Muzyczuk, adaptation prepared with Angela Lammert.

The exhibition “Free Music Production / FMP: The Living Music” traces the history of Free Music Production (1968–2010), the Berlin platform for the production, presentation and documentation of free music, which was founded by artists. Legendary FMP concerts and events were held at the Akademie der Künste, entering the annals of international history as one of West Berlin’s most important cultural contributions. This exhibition and concert programme returns the story to its birthplace, forging new bonds with the contemporary music scene. An exhibition in cooperation with Haus der Kunst, Munich and Akademie der Künste, Berlin. Curated by Markus Müller. Funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Goethe-Institut.

The music and discursive and concert program for both exhibitions is curated by Louis Rastig, Sergej Newski, Markus Müller and Angela Lammert.



Brandon LaBelle: There seems to be a lot of attention on the art and music scenes of East Germany lately – I’m thinking of the recent exhibitions *Gegenstimmen. Kunst in der DDR 1976-1989* (Gropius Bau, Berlin), *Geniale Dilletanten. Subkultur der 1980er Jahre in West- und Ostdeutschland* (Albertinum, Dresden), and *Left Performance Histories* (ngbk, Berlin). Do you think there is something we need to learn from this history? What makes it relevant for us today?

Angela Lammert: I think especially in this historical moment of social movements, which are active on a global perspective, I find it important not only to remember this special history of underground art, and the intermedia crossover of music and the visual arts, but to also recall and reflect upon the anarchic element central to this period, where artists tried to critically work against aspects of the social system. It seems valuable to find out what this form of cultural anarchy could mean today. I think it is also important to look at the extremely interesting collections of materials that represent this period, and to bring this into an exhibition context. From this material you can see how artists from this time were developing very different strategies to deal with the political and social systems and with the wish to express through more intermedia artistic forms the possibility for social change.

BL: So, on one side we can appreciate the artistic strategies that were prevalent, and on the other, how these related to ideas and expressions of social movement?

AL: Exactly. And we tried to consider in our exhibition how these kinds of artistic practices found reception or came to define the underground then, because I think a lot of the artists involved in the exhibition didn’t intend from the first moment that they would be “underground”. They wanted to express themselves in a certain way, bringing a critical perspective onto society, and then developing different practices as well as distribution systems to deal with their local situations. And that is for me one of the most important points or core ideas of our project, that

you can see that within different countries and periods of time the underground could have different understandings, and that it is not the same for instance in Berlin as it was in Leningrad. While also demonstrating that such meanings associated with the word “underground” cannot be generalized in hindsight. And that we are often confronted with a kind of cliché of this concept or idea, which needs to be critically rethought. “Underground” is not identical with the idea of imprisonment or conspiratorial meetings or anti-communistic positions. I hope we can show that the concept and reality of the underground are much more complicated, and which can also help us to find strategies to deal with our situation today. Another point I want to emphasize, is the possibility or reflection as to which way we can make an exhibition about conceptual or performance art, and how to bring music into the space of exhibitions. This, I think, requires some reflection and investigation, which we tried to communicate, particularly through the event program. This is also something I find very interesting, how at the current moment the topic of sound is more present within the biennale contexts, for instance in the recent Venice Biennale, or also in documenta 14, which we could say also finishes the period of the classical sound art and therefore requires new relationships to certain historical material.

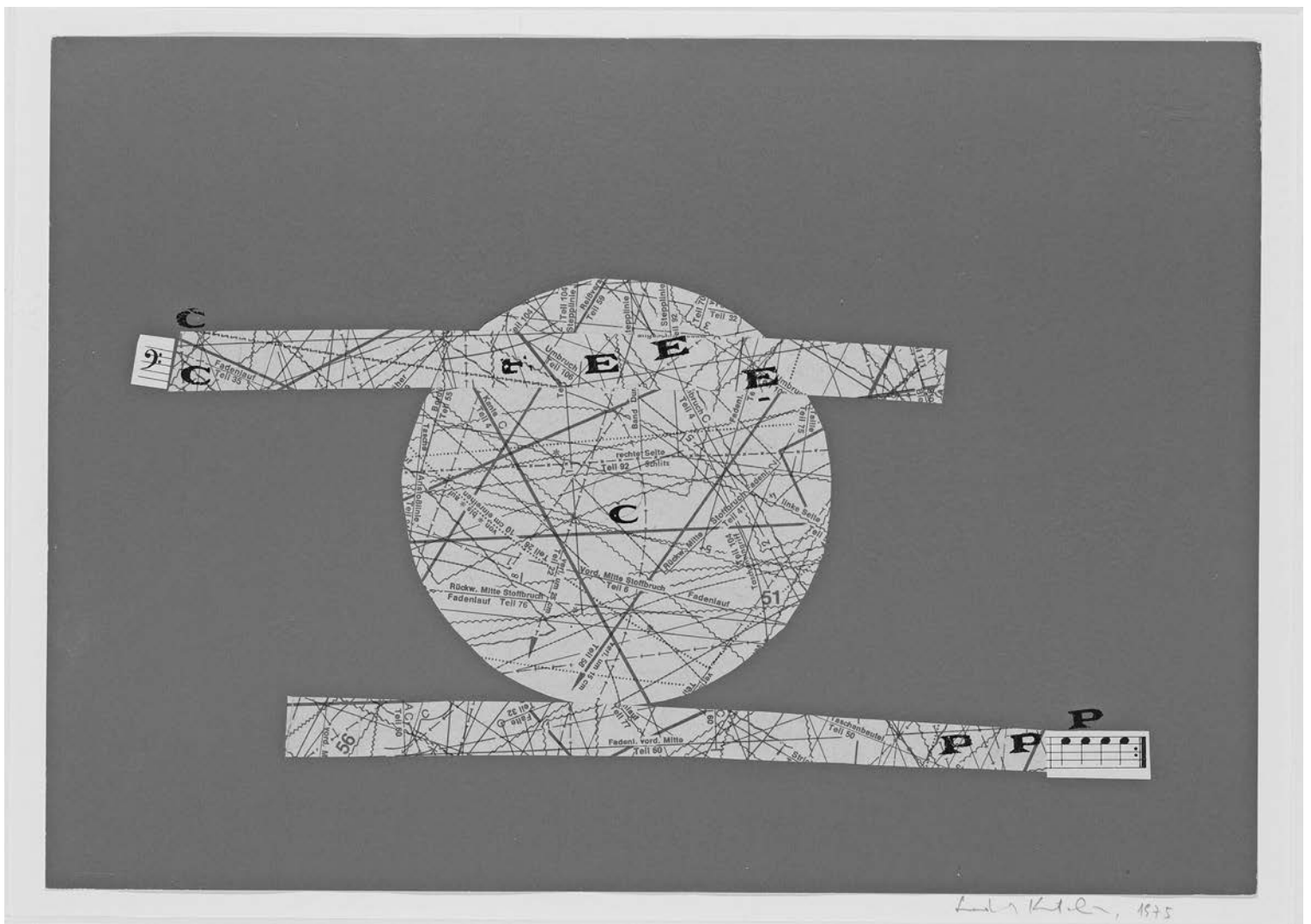
BL: I want to pick up on this issue of strategies and how artists were searching for ways to deal with social realities in the former East. Can we identify particular strategies in the exhibition, for instance the idea of “the new primitive” or “the new modern” which the exhibition presents as thematic frameworks – can we understand these as strategies, or ways of posing of questions?

AL: I think that is really a quality of the exhibition that we take over from Łódź [a version of the exhibition, Notes from the Underground, was originally presented at Muzeum Sztuki]. In that exhibition, the curators did not want to have a chronological presentation of works. The exhibition also sets out to cover not

only the German-German situation, but to bring a broader perspective across eastern Europe, so there is an attempt to find some other chapters or frameworks, such as “new primitives” or “new moderns”, in order to combine and think through the different social contexts and how they influenced certain conceptual tendencies, as well as to find points of contact across the artistic works presented in the exhibition, and how different artistic scenes had to work in and around situations of political oppression, from former Yugoslavia to Czechoslovakia.

BL: I really appreciate this about the exhibition, that the themes around which the works and materials are presented help to find relationships between the different local and national contexts, pointing at resonances that may have existed throughout the eastern European context, and which may still act as strategies for today. How notions of the modern or the primitive might relate to contemporary cultural practices. I was wondering how some of the artists are working today, do they still relate to these earlier conditions of the underground in their practice today? How have their practices evolved?

AL: Some artists, for instance Lutz Dammbeck – we present material from his media collage *Hercules* (1979-84) from the Archiv of the Akademie der Künste, which was never exhibited before – through his intermedia practice he was often referred to as a key underground figure. Yet, as an artist he worked according to a unique willfulness un beholden to the alternative milieu, a position held “Against the seduction of adaption and insincerity” (In: Lutz Dammbeck: *Bessen von Pip*, Hamburg 2012 S. 66). Beginning with animation films working inside the DEFA-structure, he then continued with more intermedia practices, and is now internationally known for documentary films, such as “Overgames” (2015). Or you have other people, such as the Hungarian poet and performer Katalin Ladik; she lived and worked in former Yugoslavia where Hungarian was a minority language. She told me that this term or concept of the underground was never used



Katalin Ladik, Zachód Słońca (Sunset), 1975  
© Katalin Ladik / Collection of Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

in Yugoslavia, that it didn't exist – this is her interpretation, which was in contrast to the situation in Hungary. This position is inseparable from her feminist position, from the projection of herself as a naked poet. “The Yoko Ono of the Balkans” was expelled from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia for “immorality” but paradoxically also became a star on state television. The exhibition includes her visual notations and paper collages – a type of pictorial guide and prototype for her in-situ body and voice performances, the *Phonopetica* – which she brings into an acoustic-reenactment for the exhibition. She is active also today with performance, which we include in the programme of events.

Also, else Gabriel, who was a member and co-founder of the Auto-Perforations-Artisten Group in the former GDR, and today is professor at the weißensee kunsthochschule, shows for the first time in the exhibition material around the occupation of the EIGEN+ART gallery in Leipzig in which the public was allowed entry for two hours a day and could exchange food for various expressions or works produced by the artists who did not leave the gallery during ten days (*Allez! Arrest*, 1988). This was about the freedom of the artists' own perspectives and experiences from within the society, which did not coincide with the official allegations and constraints. This year Gabriel also stressed the broader artistic qualities of her work against the purely historical relation she at times experiences as being strictly tied to the “unofficial” artistic scene in the former GDR. She didn't want to be associated solely with this time and the notion of being underground. So you have a lot of these different reactions, especially over time as the artistic situation changed. We also had a discussion about the punk scene from the former GDR in relation to the scene in West Berlin, which had a lot of connections, and yet some of the artists spoke about how there existed many publications about the scene in the former GDR but not much about the scene in West Berlin, and that this could be a task to look into, which I find also very interesting and important to consider.

Some of the artists presented in the exhibition are also not working as artists today, and rather, have pursued different careers. For example, Piotr Rypson from Poland is now the deputy director of the National Museum in Warsaw. Cornelia Schleime, who made a lot of over-painted photographs, actions, and films, has turned more toward a focus on painting over the years. So it is interesting how artists have shifted their focus over time, bringing their concerns into other materials or expressions. Or, in another way, you also have different political developments from these artists. For me, a difficult situation has been how in the underground scene the development sometimes moved towards more right wing directions – of course, this is also a global phenomenon. For example, one of the most talented artists from the Leningrad scene, Sergey Kuryokhin, who performed the work “Lenin was a Mushroom” on Russian television in 1991, moved into an extremely right political direction, so this might be something to discuss as well.

Another difference between the East and West, from my impression, was that in the East there existed another kind of distribution system, which was more independent of commercial thinking. In this way, you have another type of creative potential that is something really very meaningful, and which you feel in the works and expressions. I think this kind of energy is something you feel in the exhibition as well. It is maybe one reason why this underground work has such a strong impression and impact, which also leads to different forms of appropriation. For instance, how this underground artistic production may provide “fresh blood” for the art market, which is also something we should not overlook in our reflections about this whole subject, as well as the forms of self-mystification and self-inscription into art history generated by some underground artists or curators. It's important to question this as well.

BL: Regarding this question of economy and distribution, I was thinking about Free Music Production and the incredible records they produced for over 40 years, and comparing these to Samizdat

and cassette productions from the East. I think here you see a very different perspective on what is possible. FMP was quite able to produce professional materials that also reflected a certain attitude and capability, how the musicians or members understood their work as something that could be of interest to a broader public. That is a very essential question: this relation to questions of the economic means, and understanding yourself as someone that participates in a larger free culture or not, which is very striking in the exhibition.

AL: I think that is one of the most important questions for me too. For example, the production of cassettes from the eastern countries, which often have self-made artistic covers as well, I know this also from my youth where these cassettes were communicated inside a special kind of society. For instance, artists and musicians would produce music in the afternoon and then they would have this cassette to share, and then the next morning they made another, so you have an extremely fresh and experimental practice and distribution system going on, which is quite far from a commercial system. I think this produces a kind of aesthetic as well as social quality. Even more successful bands, for instance Rammstein, they see this also when they look back and reflect upon this history and their own experiences. That it was a special kind of experimental process of making art and music, which they miss.

BL: It also shows something about what artists and writers from the East were thinking about and relating to. For instance, in the Library of Banned Books in Prague you find that many Samizdat publications include translations of writers from the West alongside local authors. So you see what they were relating to outside their own specific contexts – what they identified with or sought alliance with.

AL: You also find something like this in the Leningrad scene, which related very much to western European art. You have this orientation to the West much more

than between the communities within the East. Here music became something very powerful, because music from the West was more accessible through radio broadcasting, and duplications of recordings, which allowed for a more dynamic cultural relationship to happen. This also contributed greatly to the special kind of cross over between music and visual art, since music was more accessible as a cultural expression which could impact directly onto visual arts practices.

BL: There have also been a lot of events taking place in the exhibition, particularly conversations and concerts with many of the protagonists from FMP. Have there been any interesting developments from these events – some surprises or revelations?

AL: We have tried to question the topics of the exhibition, which for me has been the most important part of the discursive program, but also combining these conversations with musical concerts. We wanted to pose these events as central to the exhibition itself, not as something extra, but central to the project. Of course, it is very nice to have some of the protagonists come together with younger artists, to discuss some topics together. This was sometimes a conflict, but also an extremely productive situation, which might also disturb the general understanding of this history. But these events also allowed the public to have the possibility to discuss with the artists and musicians, and to think more about the meanings of underground culture and creative practice. I hope this has been a good point for people to experience.

BL: Going back to the question of sound and music entering the gallery or museum context, maybe this is something an institution like the Akademie der Künste can offer, to provide the possibility for musical performance to take place alongside discussions, so as to generate shared reflections together with creative work.

AL: This is also why we avoided lectures,

and focused more on panel discussions, which is another possibility for engaging with the public.

BL: You made a comment about your personal connection to the cassette culture. You grew up in the East?

AL: I grew up in East Berlin and lived together with an artist who was also involved in Samizdat journals. I studied with a lot of these pioneers and actors of the 80s scene, who are also involved in the exhibition. Because I have this experience some questions come forward: Is the renewed examination of recent eastern European history and artistic practice another form of ghettoization or does it offer us the opportunity to learn about something we know too little about? What do the sovereignty of interpretation and self-inscription into art history have to tell us thirty years after the Berlin Wall? Can people escape the roles taken on in those unions born from necessity? Have the dependencies, discontent and niches just shifted? Which forms of defiance should be recalled or brought into public discussion?

I think it is clear that it's important to communicate what was happening culturally in the GDR and eastern Europe at this time, and it seems people also really want to know this and to relate to this period. It is really a question though, especially in terms of what is important today in contemporary art, particularly in Berlin. It seems to me necessary to bring this history into contemporary institutions and discussions, and to learn from this previous work and scene. For instance, the Werkstatt Junge Kunst II held in 1988 was an extremely important and special situation, which included a range of artists, theater makers, musicians and writers, such as Heiner Müller, Susanne Binas, Robert Linke, the Dresden artists (Brendel, Gabriel, Görss, Lewandowsky), Christa Wolf, etc., coming together to discuss intermedia works and new forms of creative production. There were many exciting works presented and performed, as well as key

discussions taking place – for example on the relations between static and moving images and acoustic sounds, or between performances and images, as well as on the question of intermedia art and the Akademie. There were related discussions taking place in the West as well though in a different manner and with a different relation to the question of society. It is interesting to note that within contemporary aesthetics there is a new discussion around the differences between the plurality and the unity of the arts, and whether genres find a new significance or not today.

BL: One of the things we are very much relating to through Free Berlin is the international cultural community within Berlin today and how to engage with the former GDR and its artistic scene. The exhibition helps to communicate to this international community I think, and how this history has shaped the city and a larger cultural sensibility.

AL: I think a lot of people from outside came to Berlin not only because of low rents, but also because of this kind of anarchic situation, which you could find here after the transformation in 1989. You have this process of gentrification taking place more and more of course, and for me, as I was born in East Berlin, I have seen this transformation directly. I think it has been very moving from the beginning, because you have all the problems and all the possibilities, all the conflicts and opportunities, concentrated in Berlin, which I love a lot I must say. And because you don't have so many rich collectors for art, the art market is also another problem in Berlin. But you have the possibility for a certain production, a way of creating and living.

BL: So would you say that Berlin stays connected to the general anarchic ethos of the underground?

AL: [laughs] Yes, I think so, a little bit. You have such relationships, which I think have been extremely inspiring for many artists.





Zorka Ságlová, Throwing Balls (Házení míčů) in Bořín Pond, Happening in Průhonice, April 1969  
© Jan SágI / Collection of Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018

Eva Rowson

# How do we keep it going? And, how do we keep each other going in the meantime?



Jenny Moore and Tom Woolner for the Art Licks Magazine Launch, 38b, London (May 2014).

“The point was conviviality, a deep kind of sociality...The most important thing was gathering in that tiny kitchen, talking, having a drink. These small congregations are the most important entities. Ideas come from individuals and in group formations they have more chance for survival.” – Victor Skersis, as quoted in *Anti-Shows: APTART 1982-84*<sup>1</sup>

Can we begin with the gathering in the kitchen? In a moment in which so many aspects of our life and work are required to be present, documentable, in order, in shape, profitable, describable, it's hard to imagine how. And in the city I live in (London), where the cost of living, movement, access, exhibiting keeps rising, the spaces for unplanned encounters, sharing a drink together, experimenting and not quite knowing what will happen seem to be disappearing. We need places in which we can try out what works and what doesn't so we can figure out how to sustain and make better what it is we want to put into the world. We want spaces for personal nourishment in the way Sara Ahmed suggests in *Selfcare as Warfare*: “through the creation of fragile communities, assembled out of the experiences of being shattered. We re-assemble ourselves through the ordinary, everyday and often painstaking work of looking after each other.”<sup>2</sup>

As buildings are snapped up by property developers, studios close and rents increase, independent and artist-led projects have to move or change shape in order to maintain a practice and find ways to keep each others' practices going. In 2015, the Greater London Authority's report *Creating Artists' Workspace* estimated that 3,500 artists are likely to lose their workspaces in London over the next five years.<sup>3</sup> As a producer and curator, my own practice has developed by both working inside institutions — and outside, as part of collectives including Black Dogs, Wish you'd been here, Bare Plume and The Caged Antelope. Using a DIY approach to running projects, parties, bars, club nights, hosting has become an important feminist method for me in being generous, welcoming, and creating

spaces for people to come together. So now, in this current context, I am wondering how to keep providing the opportunities for experimenting, exhibiting, learning, hanging out, and making friends.

Since 2010, I've run 38b<sup>4</sup> from my living room in Peckham, London with my partner Luke Drozd. Connecting to the historical legacies of APTART — a series of self-organised experimental 'anti-shows' which took place in private apartments in Moscow, Russia, between 1982 and 84 — 38b started from a desire to create *space*. This was a space for ourselves and others to test ideas amongst people we know and trust, making things happen using what we have, and bringing together friends who should know each other but are yet to. As we were already paying rent for our apartment, the most immediate, cheapest way to do this was to transform our living room. So 38b began to take away the pressure of having to have substantial savings or apply for funding in order to do things. 38b doesn't generate any income, it happens in our spare time and we both have jobs which cover our costs. Because 38b happens where we live, things can happen quickly, we can decide what we do and when — as it's built on an understanding that no one is profiting from it — and we have been able to let people do what they want and see what happens. Our first exhibition *ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRSTU-VWXY etc* attracted just ten or so friends. Now, sometimes over 200 people come through the apartment over a weekend. The artists we invite use it as they need — either stripping any trace of our residence into a white-walled gallery, or embracing its domesticity. Sometimes the room is emptied of furniture, sometimes it's full. Sometimes we hide the sofa, sometimes we have to make the exhibition around it as there's nowhere else to put it.

We began in a context of diminishing areas for artists to work and exhibit in London, and since we started, the number of domestic art projects in the city has increased. These have been important circumstances for 38b to grow from, but what we've learnt through it is not just about finding a way to continue to exist

against all odds, but about the importance of carving space for practicing, testing, and socialising. 38b has always worked toward an ethos of organising in the hope that something will happen, and not in the fear that it will not.

During this time, we've found mutual support with others in London using their homes including Rosalie Schweiker's flat, which co-hosts The Pizza among many other things, Ladette Space, Fran Cottell's House Projects, Furnished Space, and 113 Dalston Lane. At the same time, we've investigated other examples of domestic spaces as sites for learning, exhibiting, getting to know each other, to understand what kind of situations and relations can happen in our homes that can't perhaps be produced in art institutions. These include IDEA – Zelarayan International Domestic Exhibitions by Affinity, The Copenhagen Free University, and The Grand Domestic Revolution at Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, and The Showroom. 'Why do it at the Tate if you can do it in your living room?,' co-hosted in our living rooms in London and Amsterdam with Rosalie Schweiker and Maria Guggenbichler, and an episode of Radio Anti Domestic Transmissions at 38b, broadcast by Radio Anti (Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau & Ross Jardine), were organised as opportunities for us and others to discuss how we can keep our activity going beyond the living room, without compromising our principles.

In autumn 2017, on a residency in Barcelona with BAR project, I encountered echoes of the struggle to keep going. Online hosting service Airbnb has pushed rental prices up to similar levels as London, and the independence referendum in Catalonia, which began when I arrived in September, led to the sudden blockage by the Spanish government of resources to public institutions in the Catalan capital. Many projects were forced to shut down. People are now having to work out how to keep things going without institutional support, using their personal resources and energy, and organising themselves to make it possible for





Yvonne Carmichael, 'Retail Aesthetics', 38b, London (September 2013) / Mike Ryder and Mick Welbourn, 'Contents May Be All Kinds of Wonderful', 38b, London (February 2014).



others. Many independent art spaces have recently closed — including Fireplace<sup>5</sup> (who now keep it going nomadically) and the long-running, much-loved bookstore Multiplos.<sup>6</sup> They lost their premises to new developments, increasing tourist-focused rents, and the energy it requires to sustain something on nothing. At the core of both of these organisations is a dedication to providing a place to share and test things collectively. Other domestic spaces, including Halfhouse, el passadis, Festival Plaga, Homesession and the conversation series Esnorquel, hosted in curator Sonia Fernández Pan's kitchen, also have and continue (as the artist Quim Pujol who ran La estrategia doméstica from his home in Barcelona says) to 'make space for others to come in'.<sup>7</sup>

Nyamnyam, run by artists Iñaki Álvarez and Ariadna Rodríguez from their kitchen in Barcelona's Poble Nou, is organised around cooking and eating together. Without funding, or wanting to become a fixed model, nyamnyam run regular intergenerational events which aim to promote creativity and knowledge exchange. They design collective actions in which everyone has a role in producing the food, as a way to shake up existing relations and get people to talk, share, meet while chopping, toasting, boiling, reading, serving next to each other. For them, these small moments of collective decision-making and co-working that happen in the communal kitchen cannot easily be summed up, but they recognise this is an important space for encouraging conversation that leads to unexpected places.

"It's clear it could be a lot easier but we look at things through this lens because it's a way of life," Iñaki from nyamnyam says to Anna Dot in a 2016 interview for *A\*Desk Critical Thinking*.<sup>8</sup> "What is central is not the food, so much as the moment of sitting together at the table, cooking together, or sharing a particular hour, which is the hour of eating. The food, as a result, is not important."

When I first met Iñaki and Ariadna, we both had been separately introduced to The Bloodroot Collective, a feminist

restaurant in Connecticut, United States who have been going for 40 years.<sup>9</sup> The self-sustaining business, of which two of the original collective members still provide the foundation for Bloodroot today, acknowledge the writer and civil rights activist Audre Lorde, their friends, passersby, washer-uppers, each other, their mothers, their feminist politics as constant inspiration for keeping going. Their cookbook and personal reflections on their work, *The Second Seasonal Political Palate* produced in 1984,<sup>10</sup> was used as the starting point for 'How does she keep it going?', the first event in the programme 'Como imaginar una musea?', which I co-organised in Barcelona [with BAR Project, Adrian Schindler, Ariadna Guiteras, Ariadna Rodriguez, Caterina Almirall, Eulàlia Rovira, Jordi Ferreiro, nyamnyam, Priscila Clementti, and Sonia Fernández Pan] during my residency to reimagine the 'museo' (museum), which is a masculine noun in Spanish, as a feminist 'musea.' The series of events began at nyamnyam, moving into a museum (Fundació Antoni Tàpies) and then an independent project space throughout November of 2017, to conjure up a feminist cultural institution run on priorities of friendship, hospitality, care, collaboration, socialising and experimentation.<sup>11</sup>

"We live our work and our work lives," write the women from The Bloodroot Collective, "Our rewards are daily because we live what we believe. Yet, maintenance requires commitment, devotion, and lots of hard work. It means our beliefs, actions, our behaviour, are all part of this intensity, this consciousness of extremity. We choose this consciousness."<sup>12</sup>

Beyond Barcelona in Bilbao, I met Beatriz Cavia, Miren Jaio, Isabel de Naverán and Leire Vergara who have been running the project space — which also functions as their office, meeting room, residency base — Bulegoa z/b for the last eight years. As a collective, as well as mothers and freelancers with other jobs, they have kept it going by resisting the pull to be present all the time. They keep their costs low by only opening the space publicly when it's needed, and recognise that

at the same time they can provide somewhere important in the city for artists to test work, rehearse and use as a temporary studio. "Bulegoa z/b adjusts to our lives, we don't adjust to it," says Leire.<sup>13</sup> However, if the activity of an institution is not constantly visible, and instead focused on caring for relationships, encounters, learning in private moments and doing what is possible, how can we justify this to our funders — and ourselves — as still being important and productive?

During the research for 'Como imaginar una musea?', the essay 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction' by Ursula K. Le Guin<sup>14</sup> helped to think about this 'on/off' conflict. The fantasy and speculative fiction author re-imagines history through a lens of the container as something which gathers, nurtures, protects the relationships inside it, as opposed to the pointed stick (or the visible, engaging, documentable art programme), which conquers and forces itself into other people's spheres and lives. "We've heard all about all the sticks, spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things," writes Le Guin, "but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news."

If we use Le Guin's theory of a container, which shape-shifts to respond to what is needed, can we imagine a way to keep going based on reacting to what our workers and audiences need, rather than our funders? Could this extend to creating accessible, shared space built on advocating equity for those who have lost space, face reduced access to opportunities or simply don't feel in a safe in an area to continue their practice?

If we imagine our programmes becoming less about always being visible and more about protecting space for ourselves and others to test things, take risks, learn, fail, and re-learn as we go along, then we need to shift institutions and funders away from the need to have clear outcomes in order to prove what they're supporting is 'productive'. If we already own/rent/have access to a space, then let's make



'La musea: How does she keep it going?' Co-hosted by Eva Rowson, Ariadna Rodriguez, nyamnyam and Priscila Clementti at Espai Nyamnyam, Barcelona (November 2017) / Opening celebration of Fireplace in Poblenou, Barcelona, 2015. Image: Eulàlia Rovira.

it accessible to others to use for their endeavours, even if it doesn't enhance our own visitor figures. As an example, at London's The Showroom the studio is regularly given over to different groups from the local area around Edgware Road and all over the city to use outside of opening hours for meetings, classes and closed workshops. What happens in these 'non-public' moments may not be visible straight away but they provide important opportunities for the groups to work through things among a close community, the outcomes of which may only become visible a while later.

The question 'how do we keep it going?' is as much about finance and administration as it is politics. To keep a vegetarian restaurant going for 40 years, requires good financial organisation as well as feminist politics and commitment. This article is too short to explore models here — beyond the living room — for supporting not-visible-at-first activity, so now I'm thinking of how to encourage funders, our institutions and ourselves to put the emphasis on keeping spaces for this kind of work open and sustained.

38b is now at a point of wondering how we keep it going in (or out of) our living room, as demand from artists and others for testing grounds keeps growing. Making space for things to happen requires hard work, time and maintenance. We all know it and at the moment perhaps

it's harder than ever. But let's keep it going. Because we have things to say and share that matter. And if we're going to keep it going, then we need to remember the importance of the gatherings in the kitchen — or in 'la musea' — the private spaces, test-spaces, social spaces, that give our hopes more chance for survival.

#### Notes:

1. Victor Skersis, a participant in APTART (Moscow, Russia 1982-84), as quoted in 'Anti-Shows: APTART 1982-84', edited by Margarita Tupitsyn and Victor Tupitsyn with David Morris, Afterall Books in association with the Centre for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2017.
2. Sara Ahmed, 'Selfcare as Warfare', 2014. Online at: <https://feministkilljoys.com>.
3. Following the report, the Greater London Authority and Mayor of London are now working to create a Creative Land Trust, to enable studio holders and organisations to purchase their buildings in an attempt to generate ownership and solidity for the art scene across London.
4. See more of our activities and histories at [38bprojects.com](http://38bprojects.com).
5. Fireplace is a project by Ángela Palacios and Quim Packard, started in January 2015 and initially established as a shared workspace and project space in Poblenou, Barcelona.
6. múltiplos is a Barcelona based structure for the distribution of artists' publications run by Anna Pahissa. In November 2017, its bookstore in the centre of Barcelona closed.
7. Quoted from a conversation with Quim Pujol in Barcelona, September 2017 on hospitality, being nice and hosting projects in our domestic spaces.
8. 'Nyamnyam: Taking the everyday beyond the home', interview with Anna Dot for A\*Desk Critical Thinking, October 2016.

9. I was introduced to The Bloodroot Collective by Andrea Francke and Kim Dhillon who kindly scanned recipes from the book (in line with the reproduction requests of the Collective) and shared them with me.

10. The Bloodroot Collective, *The Second Seasonal Political Palette*, Sanguinaria Publishing, 1984.

11. La musea is continuing in collaboration with Adrian Schindler, Ariadna Guiteras, Ariadna Rodriguez, Caterina Almirall, Eulàlia Rovira, Jordi Ferreira, Lara Garcia Diaz, nyamnyam, Priscila Clementti and Sonia Fernández Pan. See more at <https://lamusea.hotglue.me/>.

12. The Bloodroot Collective, *The Second Seasonal Political Palette*, Sanguinaria Publishing, 1984.

13. Quoted from a conversation together during a tour of Bulegoa z/b in October 2017. Bulegoa z/b is careful to acknowledge those who have worked there: 'Members of Bulegoa z/b are: Beatriz Cavia, Miren Jaio, Isabel de Naverán and Leire Vergara. Andrea Rodrigo collaborates on the project by coordinating press, managing the contents of the web page and assisting in the activities of the programme. Previously, Jesús Arpal Moya, Alexi Hofer and Adriana Laespada undertook these tasks. Abel Jaramillo and Daniel Aranda have done their post-graduate internship at Bulegoa z/b.' (source: <http://bulegoa.org/en/about-us/>)

14. Ursula K. Le Guin, 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', 1986. Online at: [https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit\\_crit/works/leguin/carrier-bag.htm](https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/leguin/carrier-bag.htm). This text was introduced to me by Simon Asencio, Adriano Wilfert-Jensen via Marlene Bonnesen who with the collective DANSEatelier's used it as the basis for The Carrier Bag Festival, Copenhagen, June 2017: <https://www.dansehallerne.dk/en/performance/thecarrierbag-festival/>

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Tatiana Fiodorova

# How We Survived





Moldovan artist Tatiana Fiodorova was born and raised in Soviet Moldova, but her formation as an artist occurred during the 2000s – a difficult transition period for the Republic of Moldova, associated with the emergence of a market economy and new values. In relation to the lost Soviet identity, and the question of a new identity of the Moldovan woman, Fiodorova has faced social, political and economic problems, which have become the focus of her artistic studies. In search of her identity and future, the artist has turned to the older generation of Moldovan women, many of whom are already retired. In particular, she has focused her attention on her mother who, along with many other women, is a saleswoman at a flea market located near the Chişinău railway station where she has worked for the last ten years. Fiodorova has produced a series of drawings made on toilet paper of the women sellers at the flea market. For two years (2016-2017), the artist documented and observed the life of this place. In the summer of 2017 the flea market was closed by the authorities. Portraits and stories of women tell of the difficult everyday life of the aging Moldovan women and help to rethink both the Soviet past and Moldovan present today. What is a woman's future in the country of Moldova?

- Mom, it is probably not easy for you, having worked all your life in the factory as a worker to become an illegal seller on the streets.

- Life has forced me. During Perestroika I became a widow with two little children. I worked at the Soviet factory "Steaua Rosie/Red Star" for more than 25 years. I only had two years before pension. During Perestroika in the 90s the factory was in the process of bankruptcy. Soon I lost my job and was left without a livelihood. There was no money, no job. In the passbook where my savings was held, about one thousand rubles for a "bad time" was lost. In that time it was a lot of money! I saved this money over a long period to help my children grow up. The USSR began to have inflation and this sum was reduced to nothing. The state did not return this money to anyone. It was very difficult, not only for me, but for all people. So I had to find money for food and started to collect empty bottles on the streets, sold them and bought something for my children. Then I realized that people began to go to Odessa, to buy goods and resell them in Chişinău. I did not have any money to buy goods in Odessa because as I said, Steaua Rosie's factory was in the process of bankruptcy, and the factory had a lot of leftovers which had to be disposed of. Near the factory they started to sell these leftovers on the street: children's tights, t-shirts, panties. And I thought why couldn't I do the same. When I was still working in the factory there was a period when worker's salaries was stopped and the factory gave us goods instead of money. How could we survive? I went to the central market and sold these goods on weekends to get my salary back. Of course, this was not legal and I was not alone. Many people at that time lost their jobs. We didn't pay taxes to anyone, just went out on the street and sold. Of course, the police tried to catch

us and we had to pay a penalty for the illegal trade. First of all, the police, without our noticing, approached us and took away the bags. In the bags were a lot of goods and we had to go to the police station to pay a fine; after this payment the bags could be returned. So one day it happened to me and I went to the police. The women with whom I worked advised me to pay some small amount of money to the policeman in order to not pay a fine. I went to the police station, the policeman filled out some papers, and announced that I must go to the bank to pay a fine. The amount of the fine, I do not remember now, but it was a decent amount for me; I did not have such money. I said that I am a pensioner, a single woman who grew up in an orphanage, I have two smaller daughters, let me go. I did not have any money with me to give him as a bribe. The next day I had to borrow money from friends, and paid the fine. But after this incident I continued to trade. We were still caught by the police. But I had the experience of trading already, and I began to negotiate with the police. There was a case when again the same situation occurred. And the policeman hinted that everyone wants to live and he also has two sons. And he asked me to give him two or three t-shirts, and he will not punish me for illegal trade. So we agreed. Then for a long time I was not punished and freely continued to trade.

- How many people work at this flea market?

- At first the bums started to trade there all sorts of iron, then the tenants of the houses located along the boulevard Gagarin took everything out of their flats to sell. Gradually the market has increased. Many people from all of Moldova, from all nearby villages began to trade there. They came from Orhei, Straseni, even from Romania. The peasants came to sell their wine and grain. It was necessary for all people to somehow survive if the farms were ruined, the factories were closed. Then the authorities determined that only retired people could sell in this flea market to help them survive with such a meager pension. But everyone wanted to trade there, not only the elderly, because it was free, and people don't need to pay taxes.

- I often walked around this market and saw that each seller had his own place for selling, although this market was not controlled by anyone, and it was not, in fact, a commercial place.

- The flea market, as I said, appeared and was created by the people who had a need to somehow survive in post-Perestroika times. Every morning people occupied places for trade, whoever came first could choose the best place for himself. I had to get up at 5am every morning, to be there by 6am. But from time to time difficulties occurred. The market developed spontaneously, but a few people who traded with us decided to turn it into a commercial place. They came at night and occupied places. Next morning they started to take money from us for these places and we called them invaders. As I said, working as a seller I left the apartment early in the morning to be there at 6am. One day, together with other pensioners, we came to the flea market and all places







were occupied and sold out. Mostly the younger generation was standing and trading. What could we do, we who had no money and were old. Let them go to work in factories, why do they take our bread. The main thing was that we did not sleep well at night! We were nervous all night because we must come first to take a place for selling. So I came early in the morning; every place was occupied and somebody told me to try to ask that woman, maybe she'll give me a place. I came up, put out clothes on the ground, started working and in an hour she told me that I must pay if I want to trade. Why should I pay? So I was nervous, collected all the goods from the ground and went to look for another place.

- From your experience, what was easier or better: to work at a factory as a worker or to be a saleswoman on the street?

- It was better to work in the factory. You felt protected in your place and it was warm. I knew my schedule; after having worked my shift, I went home to my children. Working as a saleswoman, you do not know what awaits you, what you will sell, how much you will earn. Or wonder if the police will catch you today or not. There were days when I earned nothing. You stand and trade in the cold, frost, snow, wind, rain, hot sun. You are forced to go out and work in any weather. Everyone who traded with me on the streets, they started to sell illegally after losing their jobs. But, of course, at the Soviet factory it was not easy to work either. I worked in two shifts, and I was coming home from the second shift close to 11pm. At this later time when I was returning home my children were asleep already. They got up early. Since I could not be with them all the time, they learned how to take care of each other. The salary was also small. For a long time I received 60 rubles. In general, life for me was difficult; I had grown up in an orphanage, then became a widow with two children, then came the hungry period of Perestroika. Thank God the children have already grown up; they have their own families. But I continue to trade. I have a small pension - around 1000 lei (50 dollars). I live with my daughter's family and we must pay for heating; communal services are very expensive. I'm going to trade, and I'm 74 years old already.

- Why do you still work, your children support you, and help you?

- I don't want to live at someone else's expense. Why should I live on their income? I must work too. Their salaries are also not enough to cover everything. I want to have my own earned money. Also, after being a seller for so long trade is probably a habit now. I have friends there, have the opportunity to communicate.

- Do you remember any funny stories related to trade?

- If you are an illegal seller, everyone thinks about himself: always how it is necessary to be on alert to check that the goods have not been stolen; or to leave in time so that the police haven't seized you. But we often helped each other. For example, when we saw that the police appeared, we shouted to help other sellers so that they would not be caught. I've always screamed POLUNDRA [a warning cry, used on ships, as well as firefighters at work, meaning "stand away"]!!! Everyone hid the goods in their bags and fled. There was one funny case. One day a policeman approached me and he started to cry out

STRINGETI MARFA [in the Romanian language: "pack up things"]! I answer him, that I am not Marpha; my name is not Marpha. I did not know that the word "marfa" is from the Romanian language and means "goods". I only know that Marpha is a Russian name. He says to me: "GO HOME TO RUSSIA!!! THE SUITCASE, THE STATION, TO RUSSIA!" I tell him that I am from Ukraine. And he told me so go to Ukraine, there's enough of "ГОЛОДРАНЦЕВ" [in the Russian language: a man of a lower stratum of society; pauper]. So later each woman seller agreed to choose a day to be an observer who would tell us when the policeman appears. So we continued to trade.

- As I understand, the common problems, like the fear of being arrested by the police, have given you the opportunity to unite with other women. How did you help each other?

- Many people think that the gypsies are bad, but I made friends with them. They joked, talked, helped each other. As I said, the biggest problem was to have a place where to trade. Every day in the early morning about 6am you must be there to occupy a place, if it is still free, and the trading starts after 10am. From time to time we helped each other. Whoever comes first, he saves other places, not only for himself. Once there was a case when women sellers decided to spend the night in the market, not to lose a place. But after one incident they stopped doing it. At night a drunken man attacked a woman who wanted to rape her. She was screaming and people from the neighboring houses called the police. So the police sometimes help us.

- Finally, tell me, why has the flea market been closed?

- At first there were few sellers in this market and then this place began to expand. After a time this place became not well-groomed and dirty. After many years the state authorities decided to turn this place into a location for leisure and recreation. The railway station was renovated, the monument about Stalin's deportation was installed, the fountain was renovated and it began to work after a long break. Then, after the market was closed, in 2017, all the pensioners protested during the whole summer, around two hundred people came. At first we blocked Gagarin Avenue and protested that we were not allowed to trade. Then the police told us that if we blocked traffic on the road, there would be a fine for everyone who protested, around two thousand lei (100 dollars). Then we moved and protested at the City Hall. We had many meetings with different bosses; they promised to give pensioners another place where they could freely trade. It's February 2018, but until now the issue has not been resolved.





Valeria, 57 years old:  
We, of course, help  
each other but not  
financially, but morally.  
We have been trading  
here for a long time and  
are supporting each  
other. Sometimes we  
cry, when there is steal-  
ing of things. Also, we  
complain to each other.  
Is it true, Zhenya? "You  
have not sold today,  
tomorrow we will sell"  
– we talk to encour-  
age each other. The  
main thing is that we are  
healthy and can walk, or  
at least crawl.

## **White Panther Party 10-Point + 3 Program**

1. Full endorsement and support of the Black Panther Party's 10-point program.
2. Total assault on the culture by any means necessary, including rock 'n' roll, dope and fucking in the streets.
3. Free exchange of energy and materials – we demand the end of money!
4. Free food, clothes, housing, dope, music, bodies, medical care – everything free for everybody!
5. Free access to information media – free the technology from the greed creeps!
6. Free time and space for all humans – dissolve all unnatural boundaries.
7. Free all schools and all structures from corporate rule – turn the buildings over to the people at once!
8. Free all prisoners everywhere now – they are our brothers.
9. Free all soldiers at once – no more conscripted armies.
10. Free the people from their "leaders" – leaders suck – all power to all the people! Freedom means free everyone!
11. The full realization of the erotic potential of the Fluid Body through practices of compassion and mutuality!
12. Free the Earth from all destructive chemicals, bullshit war-mongering, synthetic fabrications – we demand respect for our Planet!
13. Free the Imagination! and the passions of aesthetic justice and social care.

– John Sinclair, Minister of Information, White Panther Party, November 1, 1968 /  
Lily Z., Democratic Fem/Federation, March 15, 2018





Rock n Roll is a weapon of revolution Detroit Motor City, *Kick Kick Kick out the Jams*, Trans-Love Energies Commune, 1968 – MC5, Stooges, The Up, Guitar Army live at the Grande Ballroom: *the only currency we respect is electric current and the charge of life that runs through our bodies and throughout the entire universe* / The Rainbow Culture strikes for a Free Future (down with the Pig Media)



Lise Skou

## I AM (ALSO) ADAM SMITH'S MOTHER

### Scenes from this world and the intertwined structures of hidden economies

#### Prologue

“Women’s unpaid labor in the home has been the pillar upon which the exploitation of the waged workers, ‘wage slavery’, has been built, and the secret of its productivity.”  
(Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 2004)

#### Scene 1

##### Becoming precarious

Adam Smith: It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the baker or the brewer that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest.  
(*The Wealth of Nations*, 1776)

Taking a perspective of feminist critique we return to the household of Adam Smith, as he writes his foundational text on the study of contemporary economics *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith’s writing took place in the safe space of his mother’s house – his domestic needs, cooking, cleaning, etc. were taken care of by her labour.

#### Note 1

The contradictions inherent in this narrative form the hub of my artistic practice. I am interested in returning to this theoretical oversight – the point where Smith neglected to account for the hidden economy of the household while developing his ideas on free market economies that continue to shape today’s economic theories. Shedding light on hidden economies is at the heart of the practical aspects of my projects, as well as of the methods, concepts and theories involved: Which kind of work is remunerated, and which is not? What does and does not have value from a socio-economic perspective? And according to what criteria is value attributed? I aim to discuss how focusing on these hidden economies can shape an understanding of a future beyond capitalism – or the possibility of producing new economic narratives and a more nuanced understanding of contemporary economics.

#### Scene 2

A rainy, spring month in 2015 brought me to London for a conference on feminism and parenting. I stayed with a friend in a part of London I no longer remember the name of. As usual when I travel I felt incredibly lonely and vulnerable, despite the fact that there were both adults and children in the house I was staying in. A state that usually provokes feelings of frustration at my position as an artist and the futility of my endless attempts to create something meaningful over the years. I always wonder why these thoughts arise. Is it the loss of identity due to lack of context? Is it the longing for some meaning in art that suddenly hits me when I’m in a position without identity and have endless time to reflect? Is it the feeling of limitless free time, because in this city that is not my own I do not have the usual domestic labour of childcare, packed lunches, washing up, laundry, taking my children to and from school, tucking them into bed, and making sure their lives hang together, and – not least –

breastfeeding my youngest son, who has suffered from serious separation anxiety for the past two years? Is this freedom not one to be embraced and celebrated?

One morning I went for a walk. It was raining so I was wearing my raincoat. The rain was so heavy that it ran down my coat onto my trousers, which were soaked in minutes. This made me feel even more vulnerable, as if the last trace of my identity had been washed away by the rain. I went into a café for a coffee and croissant. After being cold and wet it felt lovely to sit in a warm, cosy place. The staff seemed happy and comfortable with their working situation. It was a relaxed place, and the menu stuck to the Raw Food and organic, locally sourced trends of recent years.

#### Note 2

In autumn 2014 I organised a seminar called *Hidden Economies – how to smash capitalism at home in your spare time* in collaboration with American artists Bonnie Fortune and her husband Brett Bloom. Inspired by the work of feminist geographers JK Gibson-Graham (Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson), *Hidden Economies* was a two-day seminar with presentations and workshops focused on hidden economies existing within, alongside and around capitalism. We were interested in how cultural work can contribute to shedding light on economic difference and in articulating new economic realities. This inspired Bonnie and I to think about art projects as businesses. We were looking for ways to start up a business that would also function as an art project and at the same time generate economic income for us as well as the people involved in the project. We asked if we could somehow set up an art project that was not profit based and at the same time could save us from the precarious economic life that accompanies life as an artist, woman and mother.

#### Scene 3

##### Constructing (New) Economic Narratives

Adam Smith: Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of.

Customers came and went as I sat there. It seemed as if everyone knew each other. As I sat there in the midst of a community I was not part of it suddenly struck me: I wanted to have a shop. A shop that could fulfil my need for community, provide a source of income, and at the same time provide a way to explore the possibility of implementing an economic model that J.K. Gibson-Graham describes as functioning beside, alongside or around capitalism. In other words, the idea was a shop where people not only traded with cash or currency, but also using other kinds of transactions. I dreamt of opening a shop where with others I could create new narratives about how we work, shop, produce, and live together.

The year before I had written a manuscript and produced a reading performance entitled *We all suffer from capitalism, but refuse treatment* based on Marge Piercy's feminist science-fiction novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976). In the book we meet the main character Connie, a psychiatric patient who claims to be able to travel in time. She travels to the future universe of Mattapoisett. Here she meets Luciente, who shows her around. In Mattapoisett the nuclear family has been disbanded: children do not have two parents, but a number of co-mothers. They live in children's houses, nobody owns anything, everyday items are made to last, and luxury goods are produced to be perishable. Puzzled, Connie

says to Luciente: “You don’t get to keep anything for yourself!” To which Luciente replies: “We pass along the pleasure.” That was it! That was to form the basis of my shop. We were to pass along the pleasure. I wanted to make a shop with good, traditional machines people could borrow for home production. Like a library of things.

#### Note 3

I started *Exchange Library* in March 2016 as part of my overall artistic research project called *Trade Test Site* – a test site for trade. My good friend and colleague Bonnie Fortune was part of it: discussing the project, supporting me, and being involved in as many aspects as possible.

*Trade Test Site* consists of three strands of research: a *Public Program* – of production workshops and lectures; *Trade Test Site Imprints* – publishing booklets on feminist economies; and the *Exchange Library* – concrete tests and models for economic narratives that differ from the narrative of capitalist hegemony.

#### Scene 4

Exchange Library – A Shop and a Café

Members are business owners; business owners are workers;  
workers are financiers; financiers are producers;  
producers are shopkeepers; shopkeepers are distributors;  
distributors are cleaners; cleaners are managers;  
managers are members; members are business owners.

#### Note 4

The *Exchange Library* is a small shop in one half of the exhibition space rum46 in the centre of Aarhus, Denmark. The shop is in a constant process of flux trying out and discussing different models of trade and exchange.

In the beginning the *Exchange Library* was based on the idea of membership. Initially membership cost 50DKK per month – later I lowered it to 35DKK per month. For that sum members could borrow equipment for home production for free: an apple press, butter churn, fermentation container, flour mill, juice distiller, and much more. Members could either take the equipment home with them, or use it in the small kitchen at the back of the shop.

We also organised *The School for Home Production – Passing on Knowledge, Preserving Memories* – a monthly evening class and communal dinner. Here we taught ourselves and each other how to produce traditional foodstuffs using the recipes and methods of preserving and storing food of earlier generations. One of these was fermented cabbage, which had been a key element of self-sufficiency for former generations in the Nordic countries. We revived these old skills in order to discuss the value of this hidden labour, the hidden economy of producing such consumables in the home, and to link these to Adam Smith’s mother and Adam Smith’s omission of such labour as of value from a socio-economic perspective. It developed into a small production collective, which also produced goods for the shop.

The shop was open three days a week, and anybody and everybody could come in off the street to trade just like in any other shop. Except in our shop purchases were made via Direct Exchange or Time Banking. This led to discussions about some of the central themes of the project: How do we establish the value of products? And what is the value of the labour



involved when production is based on hidden economies like direct exchange, gifts, home production, home-grown ingredients, self-employment, producer cooperatives, non-capitalist processes, etc.

Members could also collect 4 litres of Kombucha a month. We brewed lots of Kombucha during our *School for Home Production* evenings, as well as syrups with different flavours to add to it. Members could also get a Kombucha fungus and learn how to brew their own Kombucha at home. Also open to them was our *Kombucha Fungus Hotel*, where we tended the fungus and brewed Kombucha from it while its 'owner' was travelling or otherwise unable to look after it.

#### Scene 5

Guy Standing: ... if the precariat can become a class-for-itself, with effective agency, and a force for forging a new 'politics of paradise', a mildly utopian agenda and strategy to be taken up by politicians and what is euphemistically called 'civil society'.

(*The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, 2011)



*School for Home Production – passing on knowledge; preserving memories.* The theme of the evening was Cooking with Bacteria.

#### Note 5

The idea of membership arose primarily out of my personal need for income. I wanted to make an art project that was not profit-based, not exploitative, but that still – in one way or another – could generate the economy necessary for me and all the other members that wanted to work in the shop with everything that involved in terms of hosting events, cleaning, serving customers, communication activities, washing up, etc., etc. Everyone could book the hours they wanted to work on a calendar in the shop. Everyone had to do all the work that needed doing, and the pay was the same regardless of seniority or education. We owned and ran the shop collectively and non-hierarchically. Nobody was below or above anybody else. All work was of equal value. The ideal was that membership fees would generate

enough money to give all of us an economic foundation to live our everyday lives. My goal was to find out if this kind of business model was possible. I wanted to see if an artistic project, the main purpose of which was to discuss the precariat and new economic narratives, could take the form of a business with paid employment for all the staff.

## Scene 6

### Hidden Economies – Constructing (New) Economic Narratives



Customer cleaning the floor in the Exchange Library Shop and Café in exchange for coffee.

## Note 6

As well as the shop I established the *Exchange Café*, where people could get coffee or whatever else was in the café using a barter system. What was available in the café depended on the customers. If, for example, I wanted a cup of coffee, I could exchange it for a jar of jam I had made myself. The jam then entered the goods available in the café that other guests could enjoy when they visited the café. In addition to this kind of Direct Exchange, transactions could also be done via Time Banking. The price of a cup of coffee was calculated as follows:



A cup of coffee costs 30DKK in a normal café in town.  
 Minimum pay in Denmark is 130DKK per hour.  
 So a customer was to work 14 minutes for a cup of coffee at the Exchange Café.

The nature of the work used to pay for the coffee was up to the customer, but of course had to be relevant to running *The Exchange Library*. It could be anything from vacuuming to baking bread, promoting projects, cleaning or serving other customers.

### Scene 7

#### Becoming Precarious – or Continuing To Be So

Guy Standing: If you're in the precariat and you're not angry, you're mad.  
 (*Ugebrevet A4*, 2 April 2018)



From Exchange Library Café. Serving cake in the café, 2017.

### Note 7

The idea of membership did not work. Despite a lot of people thinking the idea was interesting, and many people participating in the many production workshops we ran, it was as if something stopped the majority of them joining and getting involved in the way this kind of collective project required. This meant that the idea of membership fees generating pay for workers could not be realised. Today the shop mainly runs on my unpaid labour as business owner, worker, producer, shop cleaner, manager, etc. – and as an artist.

I no longer consider the idea of membership to be the driving force behind the shop. The shop and café are open three days a week. People come in off the street and trade what they



have with goods produced by other customers in the shop and café. In this way the customers function as a production collective in the city. Time Banking or Direct Exchange are still the fundamental economic models for trade. I see the shop and café as a new public realm for non-monetary-trade: a space for new economic narratives.

#### Scene 8



#### WHAT IS WORK?

Sorry, have to go now. My son needs me ...

#### Epilogue

Guy Standing: Being precariatized is to be exposed to pressure and experiences, leading to a precariat existence, where you live in the present without a sure identity, or sense of development achieved through work or life choices.

*(The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class, 2011)*

On the question of the city, this city, other cities  
 On the question of looking back & looking forward, as  
 well as around, at all this, and more  
 On the question of the autonomous, the poor, working  
 with or against, in the field or under  
 On the question of experimenting with matters of life  
 and labor and ideas for each other  
 On the question of what happened to Athens  
 On the question of what happened in Detroit  
 On the question of hidden economies and the restless  
 currency of free culture  
 On the question of survival, home, future meetings,  
 plotting and planning – *see you again!*

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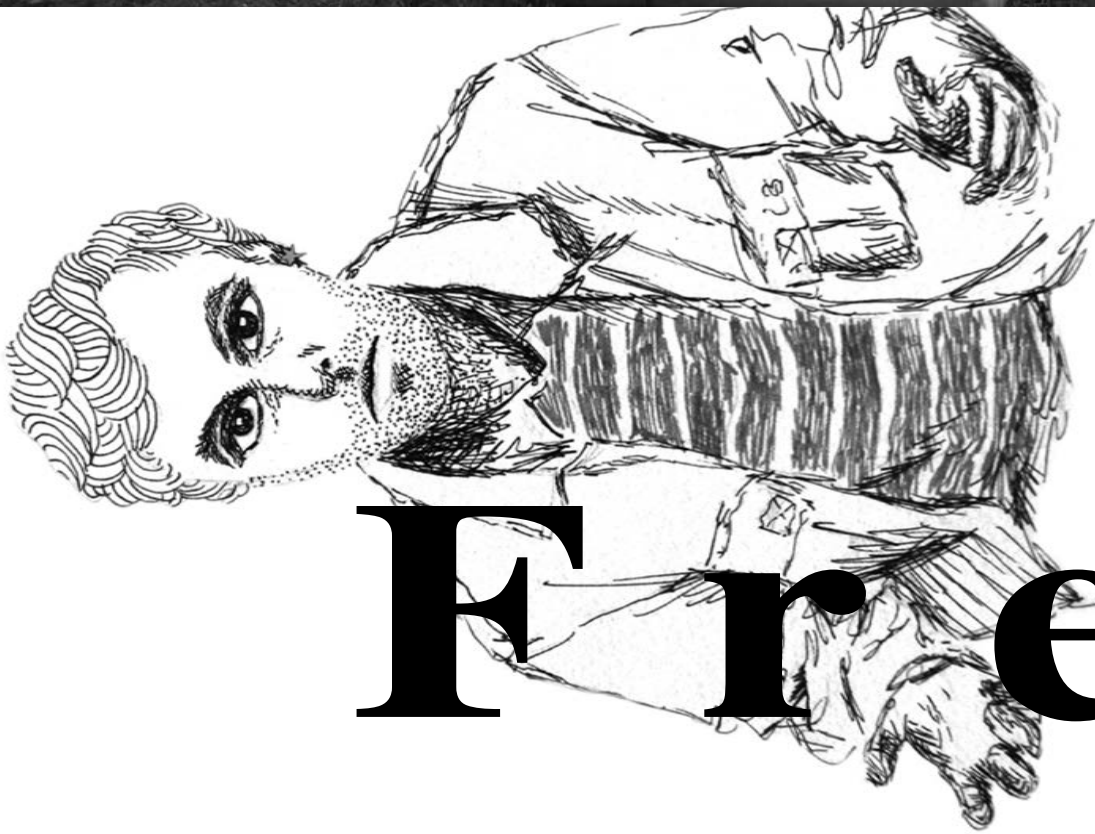
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