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Editorial

GAPS AND LINKS

Indeed, sometimes it is good not to know the point you are coming to. I borrow this thought, though slightly rephrased, from a conversation you will find in the following pages of this publication. A case in point could be the *oO* project linking one to Spotted Raphael. Thus the text on Lithuania's participation in the Venice Biennale (held jointly with Cyprus this year) – which has almost established a tradition for receiving a special mention – instead recedes into the traces of Twitter. This also recalls another pairing; a contemporary art project and a social platform, namely an earlier exhibition by Raimundas Malašauskas *Photo Finish* and the website *sunvysne.tumblr.com*. Among recent writings published on *Sunvysne* one can find conversations by the artist Elena Narbutaitė speaking to other artists or engineers, and in these pages we present an interview with the artist herself. Were I to know that so many texts (which back in summer took their departure from a collage-like idea of documenting topical art occurrences and events) would interweave similar individuals and thoughts, I might have looked for other trajectories. But indeed, sometimes it is good not to know the point you are coming to.

When compiling the contents for this publication, somewhere about halfway through, I realised, that everything you find here relates to the potential of imagination, to use Narbutaitė's words. For instance, through the opening of the historical aperture between the present and the sixties and seventies, as well as by invoking poetry as a link to reveal and transgress limits, this year's Istanbul Biennial created a new context for today's artistic practices. Its curator Fulya Erdemci refers to her chosen curatorial strategy as a structure of gaps and voids of poetry, which in turn enables the opening of the space for personal and public experiences. This could also be thought of as a structure of montage; a rhythmicity which creates new meanings or, to use philosopher's Nerijus Milerius words, self-expressing fractures. The conversation between the two philosophers, Milerius and Kristupas Sabolius, reveals the parallel of the imaginary and montage. In a similar vein to montage, including that which is cut out or remains invisible, the imaginary joins together objects of the world and our experience, thus expanding its limits and enabling the detection of something that empirically does not exist.

The topic of imagination surfaces in just about every one of the conversations presented here. When talking about the source of his subjects, filmmaker and critic Mark Cousins notes that finding an idea is like fishing or catching a signal on the radio, that it appears very quickly. According to the writer and curator Sofie Van Loo, imagination is not a fantasy or an illusion. It is what creates (in dialogue with artistic research and experimentation with fragments of (ir)reality) artistic time and space. It is an artistic capacity, opening itself up and is cultivated on all levels of art experience.

And one more link can be traced, since when discussing imagination, as a tool and a capacity, we inevitably talk of education too. Questions around what education should be for it to become an individual tool instead of institutionalised knowledge, were addressed and discussed many times before. Among some of the not so distant examples we could mention *Deschooling Society* (1971), a book by Ivan Illich which radically critiques the education system in Western countries; or the eponymous conference that took place in London in 2010 and was dedicated to discussions about the changing relationship between art and education. Meanwhile, in the context of a local educational debate two events were pertinent: RUPERT's Educational Program, which its creators refer to as para-academic and which has now entered its second year, and the release of the book *Anti-Sport* by the artist and professor at Vilnius Art Academy Artūras Raila. It is likely that the conversation between RUPERT's students and tutors featured here will bring back that familiar feeling of beginning and experimentation to some of us. Whereas the interdisciplinary arts study textbook of Raila, which appears in the more traditional context of academia, raises questions of to what degree, if at all, a methodological approach could be applied to art education. In a review of *Anti-Sport*, the art historian and critic Linara Dovydaitytė recalls ideas of the Uruguay conceptualist Luis Camnitzer who addresses art as an educational tool, which is supposed to train one for an investigation into the unknown; and finds this answer by Raila: 'In order to sustain creative intuition and passion for productivity, some things should rather remain unknown.' Sometimes gaps of knowledge and methodology are necessary in order for new connections and links to appear in their place.

ASTA VAIČIULYTĖ

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Linara Dovydaitytė

Meet Spotted Raphael,

Virginija Januškevičiūtė

Speculation and comment around this year's combined Lithuanian and Cypriot pavilion at the Venice Biennale spread rather widely, and mostly focussed on the pavilion itself, set in a modernist sports palace just a minute away from the Arsenale. The pavilion is now closed but there are still ways to follow some of the projects – artists' and otherwise – that continue. Among them is Spotted Raphael, a Twitter feed by someone or something that claims to have 'lived along the Lithuanian pavilion' (so long, Cyprus).

a tweeting fish

Gintaras Didžiapetris *Untitled*, 2013
Photo: Robertas Narkus
Image courtesy oO, an exhibition spreading through the Cypriot and Lithuanian pavilions at 55th International Art Exhibition—la Biennale di Venezia

Spotted Raphael is a living relic, and it is not clear how much longer it will be around. The idea to interview Spotted Raphael was enticing, but I decided, for reasons that I will also try to explain (as well as for some that I couldn't explain if I tried), for the time being to speak from the shore, hoping that someone else will make the leap.

Whom would we be interviewing? Outside sources of information do not really link back to the pavilion or either of its participants but to Spotted Raphael Catfish, native to the Amazon but popular among aquarium enthusiasts across continents; in Lithuania it is sometimes referred to as the snoring or the grunting catfish. Spotted Raphael mentions none of this on Twitter; not that anyone ever asked. Instead, Raphael refers to itself as a composite character and a multi-waterfall, both stated with surprise or doubt – 'a composite character? a multi-waterfall?' 'Everything is a part of me,' tweets Raphael in its usual pensive hooligan style. Or: 'Walking home I met a few comfortable families and after I met nobody. Nobody feels nicer and wiser somehow.' There are not many responses to Raphael's tweets online but it presents itself as a rather social and sociable creature, keen to introduce different characters and ideas, such as for instance Siamese tweets, and share moments, such as 'invisible doorman visiting,' 'wish I was scared,' or: 'and our pasts disappear'.

What's the relationship between Spotted Raphael and the exhibition in Venice? I would suggest – their mode of operation. 'It floats', reads one of the descriptions of the Lithuanian/Cypriot pavilion with which Raphael is affiliated. It is not uncommon for an exhibition in Venice to borrow a great deal of its charm from the architecture of its venue, and part of the appeal of the Lithuanian/Cypriot pavilion must indeed be credited to generations of the city's architects. The few steps, turns and flights of stairs inside the building felt like a fast-paced journey to another city (or a trance-inducing dance) as sooner or later the rather brutal concrete walls separated to reveal a vast indoor stadium, stretching low beneath the visitor's feet. A change of scale suddenly rendered you much smaller. The impression can perhaps only be compared with the views of Fondamenta of Venice that emerge as one approaches it from one of the city's narrow streets, but this one was a decidedly modern, improbable view, more akin to a distorted reminiscence of Vilnius or perhaps an even more distorted one of Cyprus. Constantinos Taliotis, one of the Cypriot artists who exhibited two sculptural pieces, proposed a scenario where three young architects – Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius – travel in time to discover a niche market for Honda Chaly and Suzuki Landie motorcycles in Nicosia in 1992, and stay there; apart from providing a setting for the artist's own work, it is a fiction that drains Europe of much of its recent cultural history, sweeping the ground from under this particular sports palace too.

'Drawing on interest in forms of organisation rather than organisation of forms, it floats like life and plankton.' During the exhibition the sports palace continued its usual activities, allowing overlaps, two different events crowding in the same place: young girls with sports uniforms were cutting through the sports palace like an online search, I imagine, cuts through internet – keen, swift, thoughtless, swirling around the front desk as if it wasn't there. 'This way of curating is called *saviėiga*,' Anders Kreuger repeated several times during the opening night. *Saviėiga* is a Lithuanian word that implies a process where no particular will is involved in controlling relations between things or a thing and its context – it's an automatic sum of different inertias. It has an air of rest and generosity to it but also an alarming quality. It's when things take care of themselves, when they drift. Or cut through things.

The artworks in the exhibition felt rather anonymous, and if you followed the arrows that only asked you to choose between three flights of stairs or seven, there's a good chance your whole trip was an attempt to separate the two parallel events. Once you found them, it felt not so much as if you recognised some artworks being 'on' but rather the sports palace being 'off'. Think about the light signals in the symmetrically placed tableaux that appeared to be in screensaver mode, spelling out different variations of the project's title: oo, oO, 00, ... Or the cupboard inserted into one of the passageways which does not contain a single 90 degree angle (respectively by Dexter Sinister and Liudvikas Buklys). Or the games floor occupied by modules of museum walls and the pine needles scattered around them (Gabriel Lester and Jason Dodge). Jason Dodge also inter-





preted three tales by Lithuanian writer Vytautė Žilinskaitė for the projects' publication, emphasising rather than reproducing the spirit of the original. No other catalogue was published.

A publication different from what you expected, a game different from what you expected (I mean here not just the museum walls whose game has obvious political implications: the pavilion itself was noticed by the biennial's jury for bringing together two countries in a singular experience), a different kind of space – all of this could be

interpreted as a critique of traditional exhibition formats, but this critique is more constructive than deconstructive. The nice thing about the continuous choreography by Maria Hassabi that was performed in the main space was that it obviously introduced a much slower pace of time to the room, but it did not make you think about how slow the time was – instead, you had the time to think.

The fact that Cyprus announced of its bankruptcy just a few weeks before the opening of the pavilion, or the fact that the last attempt to incorporate the sports palace next to Arsenale into the Venice Biennial happened in 1970s with an intention to show work of underground Soviet artists (the exhibition never happened), accentuated the background of the exhibition as a field of countless possibilities of things being found, merging, vanishing and lying unseen.

How is Spotted Raphael anything like that? The stream there reads like the middle of a sentence, a deviation, a story of Baron Münchhausen's own hand pulling Baron out of the mud, a fragment of different tunes, an unfinished rhyme. Quite like rhyming, the obscure style of writing of Spotted Raphael is irresistible and contagious (I constantly find myself struggling to make a more traditional kind of sense as I write this, while Spotted Raphael is clearly involved in something else). The most obvious way to read Spotted Raphael's tweets is to regard them as a pavilion's model designed to function in the fragmented robotic background of internet – the kind of background most of us are dealing with, each in our own way, on a daily basis; but to *talk* to Spotted Raphael would mean to have courage and desire to be found, merge, vanish and lie unseen.

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Gintaras Didžiapetris *Untitled*, 2013
Installation view, oO, an exhibition spreading through the Cypriot and Lithuanian pavilions at 55th International Art Exhibition—la Biennale di Venezia
Photo: Nina Kuttler



Phanos Kyriacou *Eleven hosts, twenty-one guests, nine ghosts*, 2013
Installation view, oO, an exhibition spreading through the Cypriot and Lithuanian pavilions at 55th International Art Exhibition—la Biennale di Venezia
Photo: Nina Kuttler



oO installation view
Photo: Robertas Narkus
Image courtesy oO, an exhibition spreading through the Cypriot and Lithuanian pavilions at 55th International Art Exhibition—la Biennale di Venezia

Auridas Gajauskas in conversation with Elena Narbutaitė

about writing, limits and infinity

Photo: Robertas Narkus



I met the artist Elena Narbutaitė in a restaurant in Vilnius called *Kitchen*, amidst the chatter-clatter of kids and their moms. Elena Narbutaitė recently participated in the 55th Venice Biennale as part of the Oo project by Raimundas Malašauskas, curator of this year's Lithuanian Pavilion; in the summer of this year her work appeared at London's Lisson Gallery in the exhibition *Fusiform Gyrus* presented by the same curator. Her text-conversations feature in the magazine *The Federal* and at sunvysne.tumblr.com.

AURIDAS GAJAUSKAS: I recently picked up *Confessions* by St Augustine again. We are familiar with his style, with his 'O Lord, You know, I cannot see without You, I cannot see without light... That light is not of physical nature, as I could see in the dark as long as You do not part me...' A similar line by him starts with the words 'rendering in the language of pen'... I am curious how technology comes to speak in place of the speaker or the writer?

ELENA NARBUTAITE: For St Augustine, his pen must have been his informer. I have not read many of his texts, but I have looked through Hanna Arendt's study on St Augustine's *Love* and got a feel for how he wrote and how one can write on his writing. St Augustine appears as a strong intellectual thinker who develops his ideas with a lot of precision and consistency. He seems to render his idea just the way it is going to evolve, supplying a very precise explanation. For instance, by writing, 'the language of pen', he says a lot, creating a nearly meditative state in order to wake his readers from hypnosis. After reading several pages you find yourself so engrossed in the question under analysis that you become oblivious of the possibility of interpreting the question as a question. It is probable that St Augustine employs this address from the 'depth of the page' with the intention of distracting his reader from the literal perception of the questions and themes he has penned.

Meanwhile inventions and technology are really exciting as they emerge from imagination, from the foresight of a type of need that already exists or will come about. I like it that technology can recreate itself without self-awareness, but employing itself as information. It is characterised by a continuous and non-nostalgic transformation.

AG: And what is your perception of writing?

EN: I think of it as a way of sharing. There are legions of people, and I am one of them, one of the conduits. I do not find self-expression to be of great interest. By the way, I write little, yet it would be interesting for me. Just like everyone, there are certain things I am attracted to and I invest my time in the themes that I favour. If I feel I can share something new – and it is not simply 'me' that is sharing, but somebody informed – then I go ahead. So I reckon it is key to keep working at it, a way of creating this good atmosphere of forgetfulness, where there is no need to be afraid of anything and one can start transmitting. Transmission in itself is not interesting, but one can learn to do it well and that can be quite exciting, similar to combining information and practicing transparency. Each can find one's own way, and it is exactly that which makes your work interesting or dull. After having accumulated sufficient material, you start working with these notes and texts by organising them accord-

ing to given possibilities, and this is how these written texts or works come about. I tend to think of writing and producing work as sharing or as a surplus you feel like extending to others through words, colouring, arranging or something similar.

AG: But does this mean that the desire of self-expression is rather selfish? It is like sharing oneself rather than the content.

EN: Yes, exactly so. It could be that each of us is a depository of influences and knowledge. It is interesting to become more conductive and to occasionally sift your thoughts through entirely different ideas generated by other people. At least for me, this practice is very attractive as it seems to be the only way of perceiving and experiencing the environment. I wish I could occasionally become like an open organism, which keeps its individuality, yet at the same time is capable of complete disappearance and assuming a liquid shape that records the world. That is why writing is so interesting. It also makes reading so interesting.

AG: I feel tempted to ask you about marginality, especially because after the 1990s the concept of 'the marginal' – an addition to the vocabulary of pluralistic mentality – came into popular circulation. It is interesting that 'margin' in English means a border or limit. This seems to account for the usage of the words of *marginalija* or *marginalumas* in Lithuanian, but these words used to be and still are related to a certain experience of diversity when 'limits' are lost from sight. In other words, 'diversity' becomes a brand of identity, exclusive only of concrete terms under which it lends itself to mundane experience.

EN: The word 'marginal' seems to have a negative connotation, doesn't it? In public consciousness, somebody 'marginal' is perceived as weird and not really welcome.

AG: I say the one who is 'marginal' is also associated with stupidity. In Lithuania such a person is like a fool. What about yourself – how do you encounter the phenomenon of the limit?

EN: I am not really sure: I would like to give it some thought... Strangely enough, I have never thought of the 'margin' as 'a space beyond', neither have I perceived marginality as diversity. I believe all people without exception are inspired by encounters with diversity. With time, one gets used to it and it becomes commonplace. I reckon thinking could start where habitude is built. Diversity should not be interpreted only as difference – two continents very much apart can become more similar than next-door neighbours. Diversity would generate di-

versity of thought. Yesterday I happened to think of diversity as stipulating deeper thinking. Otherwise, without thinking, you risk of drifting on the surface and, chances are, come across something 'different', but in reality you will become a conqueror type fan of differences, greedy to consume as much as possible. This can also apply specifically to literature. In this case you simply travel across diversities of the world as a consumer of these.

If we develop this thought along the same lines, I feel like revisiting the question of what has surrounded man long ago. For instance, the sky and its nocturnal view. I am not sure if we can treat it as diversity or otherness, but what we see is infinity. Interestingly indeed, that ambitious and innovative attempts at grasping or exploiting infinity as a potential and useful phenomenon have not appeared so far. That is why I think that the sky and infinity always strike us as diversity, as it is impossible to get used to infinity, probably due to our inability to comprehend it.

The limit appears as a very strange concept, when you come to think of it, because, how, indeed, am I supposed to know that some kind of a limit has already been drawn? I am not even sure if it is a limit. The limit has more to do with the political movements and gatherings attempting to manipulate human consciousness, it is for this purpose that such concepts as 'the marginal', 'minority' and 'limit' are employed alongside with similar things, with high hopes to sell them to the world – though it is likely that limits as such do not even exist. So hell knows what these limits are. I would probably be for eliminating them in general. There is a similar situation with the state borders. Say, at school we learn about some kind of limits or borders of Lithuania only to find out that what we have learned only reflects some political discord. But how deeply do you believe in that limit? If you walk on foot and cross the border nothing is going to change.

AG: But some Polish guy with a rifle can decide he feels like chasing you.

EN: Ah, it is not an awful problem.

AG: 'Not an awful problem', indeed.

EN: That is what I say; it is a political map that keeps changing all the time.

AG: But Lithuanian borders have not changed in the past twenty years, and it is not such a short time...

EN: But if we come to think about much longer periods? I believe that the curricula of secondary school education or history course programmes supply children with quite a narrow view of themselves among others. Before they experience this on their own, before they encounter the real world, they can be converted to a belief

that one state is superior to another and similar, and it is allegedly of more importance. Such education, alas, does not propose any real relationship with the world and the next-door neighbours. It is always the issue of a relationship, not a single individual or unit. For these reasons my social stance would be to completely abandon limits for the time being.

AG: In general, there is no such thing as limit. We would have a hard time drawing the limits of one's body in the air, because the space of my body and the space of someone else's body overlap. In order to establish these limits (if this was our goal), we should be able to draw them, so in this sense limits do not exist.

EN: You know what limits are? They are our safety net or our cowardice, which almost all of us have. The limit may represent all these more interesting things, the limit as a common agreement. These encounters lead to situations.

AG: But if we imagine these limits do exist, we do not approach them, because it is not the limits that we want. I do not think it is fear, it is just self-defence.

EN: From somebody who can allegedly attack us. I wonder whether giving up the limit would eliminate this sense of self-defence.

AG: Without the limit there would be no self-defence.

EN: It is happening step by step. It is for this reason that there are so many discoveries in science, because we need to trespass certain boundaries. I always come back to the question of the perception of infinity, because having abandoned self-defence we could relax enough to acquire more power to imagine things. Now we imagine the infinity only in connection to the meaning of the word like something 'without limits', but under other circumstances we could probably find a totally different word to start with. Though what matters is not the word, but the potential of imagination.

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the Contemporary Art Centre.

Approaching the future

Curators are more than their biennials. Fulya Erdemci, curator of the thought provoking 13th Istanbul Biennial *Mom, am I barbarian?* is one of the key figures of the contemporary art scene in Turkey with more than twenty years of curatorial experience. Following the closure of the 13th Istanbul Biennial, as part of her post-biennial process of reflection, we speak about her vision for art, politics, poetry, and imagination.



Inci Eviner *Co-action Device: A Study*, 2013
Installation and performative live research
Courtesy the artist and Gallery NEV (Istanbul)

Övül Durmusoglu interviews
13th Istanbul Biennial curator
Fulya Erdemci

without losing sight of the past

ÖVÜL DURMUSOĞLU: I would like to start with a fundamental question to provide us with an understanding of the foundations of your curatorial practice. Since the 13th Istanbul Biennial was a focal point for the curatorial narratives you developed over the last twenty years, what is art for you?

FÜLYA ERDEMCI: That's quite a difficult question indeed! Let's try. Both theory and practice are located in the realm of the real and are bound to reproduce the existing structures, discourses and practices. Only art can open up the possibility of loosening the seams of reality and provide an experience of the otherwise utopian moments in our daily routines that have the capacity to call for another world. So it is political per se by definition without being thematically political.

In regards to art and the political, there is an ongoing discussion on the relationship between art and activism. Although activism and art may share the same aims of social change in times of urgency – a process that Turkey has been going through – they can also learn from each other, I think that they are subjected to different processes, create different modes of perception and experiences, thus, cannot be evaluated with the same criteria nor the form of impact.

I believe that art can open up a space for a transformative experience since it has the capacity to foster the construction of new subjectivities (symbolised by the barbarian!). I think that art can create a reflective experience appealing to our emotional intellect; it allows you to put the brakes on and think

about what it is that we are desperately in need of. Especially now, as we are going through a period of such turmoil (under the increasing state violence, detentions and arrests) and other powerful transformations, such as the resolution process of the Kurdish conflict and pacification of the Turkish army as a political force.

ÖD: You are well-known for the exhibitions you made such as *Organized Conflict* at Proje 4L in 2004 or *Modernity and Beyond* at santralistanbul in 2007 on problematising the experience of modernity in Turkey, which translated as the direct appropriation of modern forms without a preceding process, a kind of top down humanism you could say. Those exhibitions were an important part of my learning process when I started to study contemporary art in Istanbul. How did you begin to work with the problematics around the public?

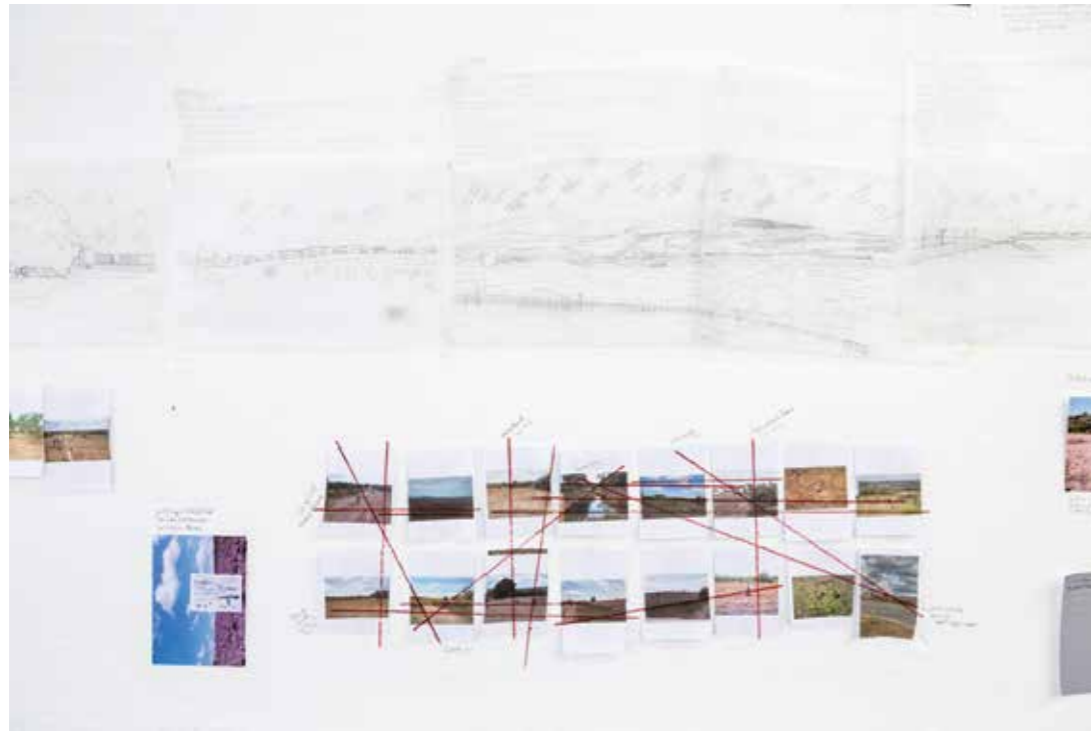
FE: Actually, the modern nation state is based on the assumption of a single public gathered around a general will. This forms part of our experience of the top-down modernity, in which the differences in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. are blurred, even erased. Because of the top-down authoritarian modernity, even 'public space' in Turkey is part of that blur and erasure; the urban public spaces and public institutions almost always mean state property. So, by questioning the modern state and the so-called Turkish public – from a non-progressive perspective and at the outer edges of identity and multiplicity discourses – almost inevitably resulted in the question of multiple publics becoming a focal point for me.

ÖD: How do you think an exhibition marks the temporality in which it happens?

FE: We can consider temporality in terms of time and space. Like Walter Benjamin's angel of history, approaching the future without losing sight of the past can be a method to mark the temporality of the exhibition. For that reason, in



Elmgreen & Dragset *Istanbul Diaries*, 2013
Performance installation where seven young men come to the space each day to update their personal diaries
Courtesy the artists



Maxime Hourani *A Book of Songs and Places*, 2013
Printed material
Courtesy the artist



Goldin+Senneby *Shorting the Long Position* with Jo Randerson (playwright), İsmail Ertürk (cultural economist), Ybodon (computer scientist), Anna Heymowska (set designer), Johan Hjerpe (graphic designer), Ayşe Draz/Gülce Oral (actors), 2013
Theatrical rehearsals and financial speculation
Courtesy the artists and NON Gallery (Istanbul)

the context of the biennial I endeavored to crack open a historical aperture between today and the end of sixties and seventies, in terms of social change, urban transformation and artistic practices.

Therefore, for this exhibition, novel artistic practices from that time were brought together side by side with more recent practices such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles with Amal Kenawy; Gordon Matta-Clark with LaToya Ruby Frazier; and Stephan Willats with Jose Antonio Vega Macotella. Furthermore, through the practices of Academia Ruchu in urban public spaces and specifically Jiří Kovanda's performance *Theatre* (1976), it became possible to contextualise the current performative protests like *Standing Man* by Erdem Gunduz within the art historical backdrop of the 1970s.

In order to anchor time spatially, in the exhibition I privileged the Southern hemisphere and the Eastern part of the world; certain geographies such as Latin America, North Africa, the Middle East and Turkey where the question of public domain and transformation of cities has been a burning issue for the last couple of decades. This way, the geo-political map of the world today was marked and highlighted.

Besides, there were ongoing performative projects that directly opened up the event character of the present. The experience of 'here and now' could be lived through and marked by such projects as Elmgreen & Dragset's *Istanbul Diaries* for which seven young men wrote their daily diaries in the presence of the audience or Goldin+Senneby's *Shorting the Long Position* in which the performers improvise to bring out a very personal aspect of the so-called 'scientific' high finances. We also had Maxime Hourani's process-based song writing workshops of *Songs and Places* and finally, İnci Eviner's bottom-up learning device *Co-Action Device: A Study* for which the function is decided collectively by



Héctor Zamora *Material Inconstancy*, 2012
Bricklayers, bricks
Courtesy the artist and Luciana Brito Gallery (Sao Paulo)

FE: Yes, it is not only related to the reading of the biennial exhibition from a position within life and maintenance of life but also refers to the position of art today. Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Maintenance Art* conceptually questions the *raison d'être* of art, reads labour as art and has made the most invisible visible. Works such as Ukeles' were revisited alongside current practices such as Héctor Zamora's performance *Material Inconstancy* in which he brought forth the construction workers' way of transporting bricks by throwing them to each other or Amal Kenawy's *Silence of Lambs* for which 15 men were hired to walk on all fours in a central Cairo street. In different ways, both works relate labour to art.

In the exhibition, we tried to look at labour geographically and gender-wise, too. There were works which bring out different modes of production from pre-industrial manual labour such as Praneet Soi's *Kumartuli Printer, Notes on Labour Part 1* to Mika Rottenberg's *Squeeze* that exemplifies post-Fordist off-shore manufacturing in the age of global capitalism through the use of a very specific frivolous language and features spectacular female figures.

ÖD: With the 13th Istanbul Biennial you built a bridge between the visual and the literary in contemporary art by highlighting the poetry of Turkish poet and writer Lale Müldür in your curatorial thinking. Here we should also note the prominent role literature has played in progressive thinking among Turkish intellectuals. And this link has never been clearly expressed in Turkey's contemporary art context before. If we take one more step further; how can poetry be translated into contemporary art more than being just another form?

FE: Certainly literature, specifically poetry, as well as music had a prominent presence in the exhibition through works like *The Castle* by Jorge Méndez Blake, which was a sculptural installation comprised of a brick wall under whose foundations rests Kafka's novel *Castle* as a structural but also



Lale Müldür & Kaan Karacehennem & Franz von Bodelschwingh *Violent Green*, 2013
Video, 28'
Courtesy the artists

the participants. All these performances are simultaneously happening with life and are therefore open to the precarious nature of the present.

ÖD: *Maintenance Art* by Mierle Laderman Ukeles works as one of your historical references for the 13th Istanbul Biennial. In particular this work researches the meanings of labour and erases the borders of artistic labour. Does the inclusion of this work also generate the ability to read the exhibition from a position within life?

FE: Yes, it is not only related to the reading of the biennial exhibition from a position within life and maintenance of life but also refers to the position of art today. Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Maintenance Art* conceptually questions the *raison d'être* of art, reads labour as art and has made the most invisible visible. Works such as Ukeles' were revisited alongside current practices such as Héctor Zamora's performance *Material Inconstancy* in which he brought forth the construction workers' way of transporting bricks by throwing them to each other or Amal Kenawy's *Silence of Lambs* for which 15 men were hired to walk on all fours in a central Cairo street. In different ways, both works relate labour to art.

In the exhibition, we tried to look at labour geographically and gender-wise, too. There were works which bring out different modes of production from pre-industrial manual labour such as Praneet Soi's *Kumartuli Printer, Notes on Labour Part 1* to Mika Rottenberg's *Squeeze* that exemplifies post-Fordist off-shore manufacturing in the age of global capitalism through the use of a very specific frivolous language and features spectacular female figures.

ÖD: With the 13th Istanbul Biennial you built a bridge between the visual and the literary in contemporary art by highlighting the poetry of Turkish poet and writer Lale Müldür in your curatorial thinking. Here we should also note the prominent role literature has played in progressive thinking among Turkish intellectuals. And this link has never been clearly expressed in Turkey's contemporary art context before. If we take one more step further; how can poetry be translated into contemporary art more than being just another form?

FE: Certainly literature, specifically poetry, as well as music had a prominent presence in the exhibition through works like *The Castle* by Jorge Méndez Blake, which was a sculptural installation comprised of a brick wall under whose foundations rests Kafka's novel *Castle* as a structural but also



Mierle Laderman Ukeles / *Make Maintenance Art One Hour Every Day* (Whitney Museum Downtown Branch at 55 Water Street, NYC throughout the 3.5 Million Square Foot Building, September 16 – October 20, 1976)
Colour photographs, drawing with collage, text pages, notebook, announcement, labels, button
Courtesy the artist and Ronald Feldman Fine Arts (New York)

destabilising element, and Shahzia Sikander's visual poetry *Pivot* including the performances of the Turkish poets and musicians. Video work such as *Violent Green* by Lale Müldür, Kaan Karacehennem and Franz von Bodelschwingh, demonstrate the embodiment of poetry in simple daily actions, blurring the line between art and life.

However, I took poetry as an interface between the private/personal and public and social realms pointing to the outer limits of the language in form and meaning. Thus, when language is released from its practical function, it has the capability of creating voids/gaps that can be filled by the reader or audience. These gaps create an interface that can be interpreted very personally or publically and relate to a collective sentiment. It is this structure of voids/gaps of poetry that had an impact on my curatorial grammar in selecting and locating the works to open up a space while simultaneously allowing the audience to have private and public experiences.

ÖD: At a point when images have become concrete and make us suspicious of reality in fast multiplication, what does imagination mean to you? Do you think the possibilities of imagination today are sometimes sidetracked because of the over-sharing and multiplication of images?



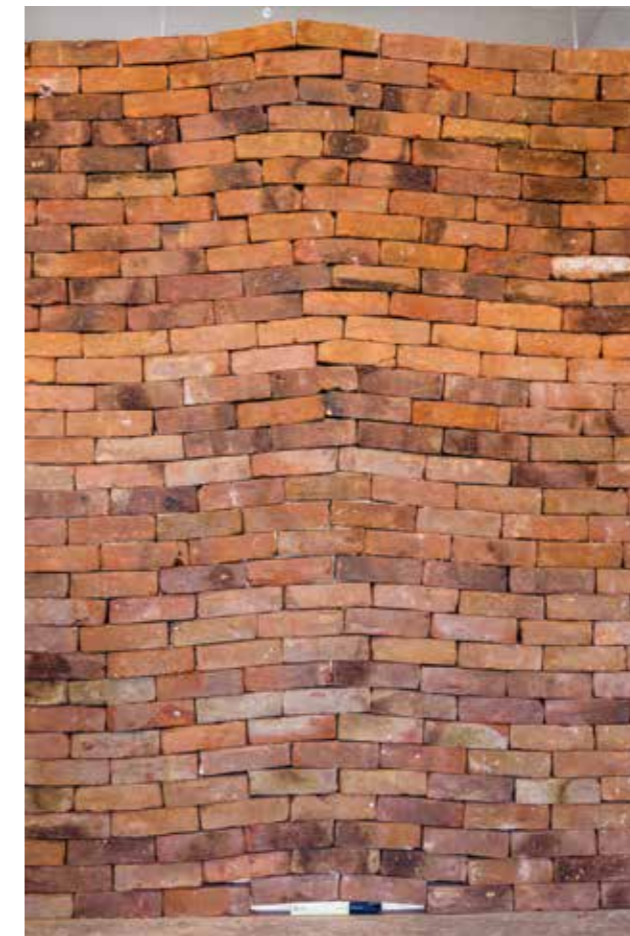
Shahzia Sikander *Pivot*, 2013
3 channel HD animation, 1540", music by Du Yun
Courtesy the artist

FE: Since the sixties, artists have tended to deconstruct, appropriate and reproduce abundantly produced images rather than create new ones. However, the multiplication you mentioned that has been fostered by technological advances in the internet is twofold. On the one hand it proposes an equalitarian distribution model as well as a consumerist gesture/habit, but in any case, by storing

the same visual data, it creates a collective archive and memory, thus, the possibility of collective imagination is created. However, on the other hand, the multiplication and fast track distribution is haphazard and mostly fed on commercial interest. Therefore, it carries the risk of unifying and standardising the collective memory, it may occupy too much, and maybe even, frame the collective imagination. Fortunately, opening up the imagination has more to do with alchemical processes than with such speculations.

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Jorge Méndez Blake *The Castle*, 2007
Bricks, book
Courtesy La Colección Jumex (Ecatepec, Mexico)

In-between Interiority and Exteriority



Raimundas Malašauskas' exhibition *Photo Finish* at the Contemporary Art Centre, 2011. Photo: Gintautas Trimakas

Kristupas Sabolius
and Nerijus Milerius
talk about imagination,
representation and
montage

KRISTUPAS SABOLIUS: I will start by noting that in Lithuania several philosophical works have appeared at virtually the same time that approach similar questions around visual culture, mediation, cinema, the spread of technology and imagination. I have in mind, Nerijus, your book *Apocalypse in Cinema: the Philosophical Presuppositions* (2013); a collective cinema research monograph *Film and Philosophy* (2013); as well as my own work *The Imaginary* (2013); and another collective monograph *Secularisation and Contemporary Culture* (2013). Several earlier works could also be mentioned: my monograph *Furious Sleep: Imagination and Phenomenology* (2012), Audronė Žukauskaitė's book *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's Philosophy: the Logic of Multiplicity* (2011) as well as a compendium of articles called *Intensities and Drifts: Gilles Deleuze's philosophy in the context of contemporary art and politics* (2011) also edited by Žukauskaitė. Similar questions were discussed this summer during an important international conference on *Nihilism and Imagination* held in Vilnius.

In this context the topic of visibility, image, imagination in the technologically mediated world is highlighted – it is researched what meaning and function an image acquires in different contexts, from everyday life to the politics of cinema, art and virtual realities. At the same time this topic is related to the question of representation as an artistic tactic – an Antique problem already, which is newly actualised in the work of various contemporary authors (Jacques Rancière, Giorgio Agamben, Richard Kearney, Georges Didi-Huberman and others). Thirdly, in this commensurable field the idea of montage becomes important, which could be employed to unfold the diversity of mentioned topics.

In your texts you note that although the technique of montage appears together with the epoch of cinema and becomes almost the most important principle of this artistic field, the discovery of montage paradoxically reveals its very universal nature. Various functions of montage can be seen on different levels of experience and relations with the world. For me, probably the most interesting is the parallel between montage and synthesis. This antique concept in the context of modern philosophy first of all goes back to Immanuel Kant, who stated that our experience is a unification of a chaotic stream, of multiplicity. According to him, a shift from chaos to order is a synthesis performed by nothing other than imagination. Kant introduces even more concepts that help understand this process – such as transcendental schematism. Kant was an apriorist, he was interested in disclosing the a priori conditions of experience. In his opinion, there is a separation, a crack, a differentiation between the mind and the world, which has to be overcome. In order for this gap to be articulated, an intermediate category is needed. Kant relates this transitional moment to a scheme created by imagination, which brings together multiple worlds and intellect as a specific order. The scheme is not totally ideal or universal – it regulates itself, but at the same time it constantly sets a common measure, a kind of a grid for the measurement of perception. It seems that here lies the first conception of montage in modern philosophy, which is clearly related to imagination as schematising and unifying the perception. Nerijus, how do you see this position of Kant in relation to (post)modern conceptions of montage or to what, for instance, Sergei Eisenstein says about montage?

NERIJUS MILERIUS: At the very beginning of cinema it was believed that its most important element was montage, but at the same time it was noticed that the principle of montage was already present in Antiquity. Same Eisenstein found it in Homer's work and in Antique architecture. Montage, as a combination of separate elements, is a universal principle, but namely in cinema it becomes a privileged element. Different tactics of montage were crystallised in cinema and some of them are very closely linked to earlier traditions of thought, among them the philosophical tradition. Kant's philosophy is also one of the instruments, purposefully subjected to cinematographic tradition by some of cinema's authors. Here we can talk not only about Eisenstein, but also Gilles Deleuze, who thought that an author like Jean Luc Godard could have rendered *The Critique of Pure Reason* in film. When interpreting Kant in his own way, Deleuze stated that it is not time that is inside us, but that it is us who are within time. In this way the so-called synthesis of time is not a product of our active mind; consciousness is externalised and therefore images of the mind directly correspond to cinematographic images. There is no substantial difference between mind imagery and cinematographic imagery – there is no strict separation between the internal and external.

K S: This is a convenient moment for me to join in – in my new book I am trying to introduce the concept of *the imaginary*. What do I have in mind? Long ago Henri Bergson stated that image is neither exteriority, nor interiority, but a link in-between. This perceived transitionality became the stimulus for Deleuze to create his own cinema theory: what Bergson identifies in the nature of image,

in Deleuze's philosophy is radicalised by a technologically mediated image having this dual and paradoxical status. Cinema in some way is material (it is visible), yet it is not entirely material.

My concept of the imaginary is based on an analogical premise, which rejects the dichotomy of internal and external. It is commonly perceived that the things we imagine are the inter-mental contents of our mind. Or, on the contrary, pictures, photographs, films are seen as external images. Meanwhile the imaginary is an in-between link, which can be differentiated neither as internal nor external. I call it a commensurable plane, which joins together material objects, the stimuli that accompany them, and also their field of perception. Deleuze reveals similar ideas by developing his *time-image* concept. And although Deleuze does not use the category of imagination, he talks about the brain as a screen, about virtuality, i.e. he indirectly acknowledges the role of ir-realizable function, which is very important to me. I understand this first of all as an expansion of suprasensorial – when something that does not exist empirically is detected.

INTERVIU: And how does the imaginary relate to imagination?

KS: Basically the imaginary contains fiction, artefacts, virtual realities as well as the impulses that created them and the movements in imagination that establish and perceive it. It is a unified field of imagination and its creations, which is characterised by paradoxical mutual dependence – external objects (images) exist only because imagination finds and perceives them in a certain way. However the imaginary is also an ontological category, because it constantly creates new regimes of existence and disobeys the strict separation between the original and its replication. These insights move us to another important question – I have in mind the tension of representation and non-representation. Nerijus, how, to your mind, does this topic of representation relate to montage?

NM: When we start thinking about montage and representation, we notice that in certain contexts separation between internal and external disappears. In the collective monograph *Film and Philosophy* I introduced a scheme in which I attempt to join the dots so as to mark out the place of the invisible (an interval) within the structure of montage. An interval – as well as montage and a fragment – is one of the central categories of modernity. One can understand *how* something is assembled not only from the way visible elements are joined together, but also from how the invisible intervals are skipped but implied. Then it becomes less important to unfold everything in the image, but to *visibly* disclose within the invisible, so that the viewer could not psychologically imply it, but reasons with it. It was not only Eisenstein, but Godard too who was convinced that cinema thinks. So, the invisible (an interval) is not merely internal, because it is not a product of solipsistic consciousness, but something that is determined by the structure of montage. However it is not solely external either, since it is displayed on the screen with the participation of, as you may put it, synthesising consciousness.

In cinema this invisible is being constantly elaborated. There are works in which the invisible is not only cut out, but also disposed of as useless. Then it is important to look at what appears in the place of this invisible, cut out and disposed-of zone. When relating this to your topic of the imaginary, it should be added that if something is not depicted or represented, this does not mean that it does not exist in the realm of the imaginary.

KS: And I would like to add to what you have already mentioned – to that which is disposed of by ideologies, which is cut out as useless, which remains in the plot as implied – one more very Kantian accent. In his *Analytic of the Sublime* he mentions things, which in principle cannot be represented, since an appropriate image cannot be found for them. And although the impossibility of their articulation and external representation is being stressed, on the other hand their influence on our everyday life is acknowledged. According to Kant, that is how the negative function of imagination is manifested – through not being able to express, it attempts to find an image and acts as an intensifier, as an accelerant, as an expansive force. Here imagination becomes an experience of a boundary and overcoming of boundaries.

Continuing this topic, I shall remind you that Rancière proposed two concepts of montage and distinguished between dialectical and symbolic montage. Dialectical montage creates a chaotic power of interruption, when shock works as an interconnection, when through shock we experience some kind of commonness. Heterogeneous elements suddenly acquire a certain link, though this is not a tactic of synthetic connectivity, when a complete whole is being sought, but a kind of unity, that exceeds

any predefined and imposed order or system. In the case of symbolic montage the element of enigma emerges. It is not a religious or metaphysical category, but an adjustment of non-commensurable elements in time and in a rhythmic mode. Rancière provides Godard's films as an example, where totally unrelated and often completely illogical images replacing one another suddenly create a certain rhythmicity. The adjustment of their time parameters creates *co-appartenance*, i.e. mutual dependence.

Here I would like to mention contemporary art. I think, the project *Oo* by curator Raimundas Malašauskas, which was presented at the Venice Biennale, proceeded in a similar mode – when a symbolic montage is replaced by a dialectic montage and vice versa. Non-commensurable elements in the exhibition are connected by a single common denominator – by the relatively common space of the sports hall. Different elements are assembled without attempt to articulate or connect them into a particular a priori set of genetic constellations. Here Rancière distinguishes two models of connective order: syntax is a subordinated grammatical order when all sentence parts depend on an a priori known subject and predicate; meanwhile parataxis is a kind of order to connection of different elements when there is no controlling centre. Then multiplicity itself finds its own rhythm, chaotic formations interconnect and create new dimensions of coexistence; they begin to resonate and extract something more than was foreseen. To my mind, this *more* is an essential plane of the imaginary.

INTERVIU: Perhaps this model is an algorithm in some way? After all it creates a certain system, without indicating all its possibilities, and thus operates as a programme?

KS: Well, yes and no. Algorithm is a dangerous term, because it attempts to generalise all the possible variants of the development. For example, Google creates algorithms in order to foresee our oncoming choices and basically to accomplish them for us. The aim of an algorithmic system is to be as closed as it can be, therefore it has to change itself constantly. To me a Deleuzian *diagram* or Kantian *scheme* are more appropriate terms. Although a scheme may become a stereotype, according to Kant, it has to change itself constantly. For me it is important to talk about self-changing systems. When changing we should not know the point we are coming to – distinct from the cases of ideological discourses, moralising or representational modes. The moment of unknowing is very important when we pursue freedom.

NM: I agree that your critique of the algorithm interpreted this way is very precise. However, we should also bear in mind that the algorithm was used by psychogeographers, by Guy Debord and others, in a slightly different way when creating the so-called algorithms to reconstruct everyday life. Psychogeographers stress that perception is blocked by ideologised perception structures, which impose certain schemes onto our imagination. Thus it is necessary to foresee an algorithm, which could help to deconstruct these ideologised structures of perception, to uncover their cracks and intervals. That is what is usually the aim of art actions that break standard narratives and perception schemes. Then instead of one ideologised story a number of different unfinished stories appear, which further develop independently as certain smaller narratives.

KS: A completely clean and pure consciousness does not exist. We have to start with given algorithms in order to change them.

NM: Yes, and this statement could be conveniently expanded in relation to my interpretation of apocalypse in cinema. The topic of apocalypse in cinema became particularly popular during the last two decades. So, at the moment we encounter rich schemes and clichés of the imagination, which automatically produce imagery of the end of the world. Hollywood not only attempts to depict the end of the world, but also to form the conditions for imagining the end of the world. Thus so-called 'auteur' cinema functions not only as an alternative version of the end of the world, but also as a critique of this turning of imagination into a series of clichés. Apocalypse is one of the most important mythological, religious and cultural narratives – very specific and very complicated, which Jacques Derrida sought to deconstruct as a grand narrative. However, I would say, that it is not the apocalypse that should be deconstructed, but the attempt to occupy the meanings of the end, i.e. to deconstruct the running ahead, the colonisation of the future with the help of the all encompassing totalising mind.

INTERVIU: Is imagination then also a narrative, which joins that which was previously disparate into a sequence?

N M: That is only one of its functions.

K S: Narrative is related to language structures and narrative logic. Imagination is not only narrative, though it correlates with different stories. For example, Rancière is using the term *l'image-phrase*. Image-phrase is the relation between what is said and what is seen, which continuously re-creates an uninterrupted sequence. Imagination analogically correlates with language structures. In the plane of the imaginary these elements of saying and visualising even intersect. An example could be the archetypal myth structure, which joins narrative and its depiction variations into a commensurable structure.

Here I would like to recall Derrida again. My thinking around the imaginary was overturned when I reread *Specters of Marx* in which the ghostly nature of the spectre is discussed. A spectre is primarily a dimension of obscurity. So this plane of the imaginary, which Derrida calls the spectral plane, continuously produces various images, representations, articulations. In this book, Derrida dedicates a lot of attention to the analysis of the expression 'the time is out of joint' used in *Hamlet*. If I am not mistaken, in Lithuanian it is translated as *sugverusi gadynė*. Derrida takes a number of French translations and notices that all of them are correct and wrong at the same time. From a perspective of the spectrality, there cannot be one final meaning. However the closest sense of this phrase is a split time, a dislocated time. Time in which present, future and past coexist.

N M: Broken away from a chronological chain.

K S: Yes, and this brings together everything we have discussed: the topic of apocalypse, the topic of non-representation and the yet undiscussed topic of Deleuze's crystal time, because crystal time is the coexistence of present and past. This is the dimension of impossibility. In my book I relate the topic of the spectrality to another project by Malašauskas – the exhibition *Photo Finish*. Here holograms reveal the temporal 'out of joint', i.e. the coexistence of several time phases in one space. This field of impossibility and non-representation is characterised by a very intensive temporal tension. It is wonderful that a material form is found for this, clear conditions for its appearance set and circumstances defined. This seems important to me, because this moment of spectral difference (*différance*, as Derrida puts it) cannot emerge in a vacuum; it appears only when intensely arranging particular elements. Thus art creates conditions in order to reveal that which cannot appear in any other way. Namely the conditions, but not articulations, or complete contents.

INTERVIU: Does this relate to what you mentioned earlier – to reveal the invisible through visible?

K S: Partly, yes.

N M: But here it is also necessary to stress that 'to reveal invisible through visible' is a general strategy, which on a tactical level branches out into a variety of different versions. To use an example from the apocalyptic cinema, one such version was implemented in *The Sacrifice* by Andrei Tarkovsky. Where does apocalypse take place in this film? Is it an idiosyncrasy in Alexander's 'head', is it 'a physical event', in other words, is it interiority or exteriority, or in the words of Deleuze, is it virtual or actual? Just like the image-crystal structure, there is no such separation. Tarkovsky shows that it is the ritual act that redeems the world that is important. And the place where this happens does not matter much.

K S: It can be said that when perceiving space in one way or another, we also experience time differently. There is a mutual dynamic between them, a game between the two variables. It is true that the concept of time is a bit more radical, because it is an intangible thing, which always takes us into the field of the invisible. This is the reason it becomes an essential category for Deleuze, because by manipulating it, one manipulates a human.

N M: To extend this thought by Deleuze, we could recall his contemplations about what cinematic time should be. Deleuze cites Pier Paolo Pasolini's phrase – which is particularly relevant to our talk – that montage in cinema has the same function as death in life. Death in our life puts an end to something, which, by the way, happened to Pasolini, when after *Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom* – prob-

ably his most controversial film – he was killed and this fact left a mark on his entire oeuvre.

K S: He edited himself.

N M: Yes, it was as if death edited him. So Deleuze remembers this thought by Pasolini and stresses its strength, but at the same time adds that this insight is one of the most dangerous and did the most harm to cinema. By this he refers not only to Pasolini, but to the whole of classical cinema which 'pins' cinema to the present. It is this coalition of cinema and present that is destroyed by the image-crystal structure in which, as it appears, there is no chronological time; time is not attached to the present. And we do not talk about flashbacks and fastforwarding here, because these fit perfectly inside a chronological line...

K S: Yes, past and present must coincide, this is the interesting thing.

N M: Yes, then a grid of temporalities and intensities is being created which begins to unfold in different directions. As for montage, it does not disappear, but transforms into a procedure, in which intervals are no longer the simple 'building' material, but operate as self-expressing fractures. That is what Deleuze was trying to highlight by borrowing the term *montrage* from David Lapoujade – from *montrer* (to show) and *montage* (montage). Montage as showing.

K S: Paradoxically, for me the topic of crystal time is best presented not in cinema, but in Malašauskas' hologram project *Photo Finish*, where Deleuze's intention is fully implemented. While watching a seven or ten second long video of the same object which is compressed into one hologram image, you simultaneously see different time phases of one object. In this way different identities could also be seen. We see a movement which at the same time is seemingly static. So, this tension of temporality, when statics appear as dynamics, from my point of view, is a condensate of Deleuze's thinking about cinema. From Aristotle's times, we know that substance is something that does not change, it is identical to itself. This principle of identity gets fully broken in *Photo Finish* – while watching a seemingly stable object, you understand that this stability is the greatest illusion. And this understanding with the help of this object allows access to a field of such variability, which is no longer an external movement, but time itself. We see a dispersal of time in space – through statics we begin to perceive the possibility of different dynamics.

KRISTUPAS SABOLIUS is a writer, philosopher and Associate Professor of Philosophy at Vilnius University. He is the author of the philosophical work *Furious Sleep: Imagination and Phenomenology* (2012), the novel *Bad Book* (2006), several plays and a film script of *The Gambler* (together with director Ignas Jonynas, 2013). His new book *The Imaginary* will be published at the end of 2013.

NERIJUS MILERIUS is a philosopher and Associate Professor of Philosophy at Vilnius University. For over a decade he has been teaching courses on the various aspects of film philosophy, religious cinema, everyday world and urban studies, developed on the basis of his research. He is a co-editor (together with Benjamin Cope, 2008) of *P.S. Landscapes. Becoming Urban* (in Russian) and an editor and one of the authors of a collective monograph *Film and Philosophy*. His monograph *Apocalypse in Cinema: the Philosophical Presuppositions* is due to come out at the end of 2013.

HOW DID YOUR CINEPHILIA START?

I got into cinema. A great French cinema critic Serge Daney said: 'I'm in cinema like a fish is in the water'. So I just felt from the age of eight I was swimming in movies, I just loved them so much. I came from a very ordinary family. There was no one working in cinema, my mother was a cleaner, my father was a motor mechanic, but I saw films on TV – Alfred Hitchcock films, Orson Welles films and they just made my pulse rise.

There's a famous movie *The Exorcist* (1973). I was desperate to see it. I was brought up in a very catholic family and my aunt said: 'We can watch this film, but when we put it in the video player, we have to get the holy water and bless the video player', because this tape was so terrifying, so dangerous... *Voilà!* Cinema is sacred, it is the devil, it is powerful – it's attractive and repulsive. So that was the background.

I was never good at reading, I had dyslexia. But I was very good at drawing, at imagery, at mathematics... And in cinema there was something about the composition and something technical about it. Another thing I would say is that I grew up in Northern Ireland, there was a war going on there. I was a nervous little boy, and when I went to the cinema, when the lights went down, when the curtains opened, I felt safe, as if cinema took me in its arms and almost hugged me. It was as if you fly away on a magic carpet. All these reasons: because it was dangerous, it was relaxing, because it lets you get out of yourself, I had to love it.

AND HOW DID YOU GO FROM BEING A FILM LOVER TO A FILMMAKER?

I studied film history and art history. But I did not think at all that I could get into cinema. Cinema for me was Hollywood. That's all it was. And that's over the rainbow. So I was a gardener, a furniture mover, security guard (I used to sit on building sites and watch the equipment). I did that for about a year.

Once I was in a café and wrote an idea on a napkin. I'd sent it to a TV station in London. And they commissioned a napkin. They said: 'We like this'. I was 21 and I was suddenly directing for TV. But I knew that there is something too transient in TV. TV dies at the moment when it's born, it doesn't last. I wanted to make something more lasting and I started making films.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST PROJECT?

The first project I made wasn't very good. It was the thing that I wrote on the napkin, it was called *Heavenly* (1988) and it was about a person who lives on a hill and he is an angel and he goes down to the city to meet real people.

You got to evolve your language, your style of filmmaking and back then I hadn't got that style yet. But then I started making other films. I made a film about Mikhail Gorbachev, another film about neo-Nazism, I made some serious work and I got better. You know, the joy when you are bad at something, and then you feel yourself getting better. I learned fast. The best thing I did was when I was working in TV: I was making tea and coffee for the people and I noticed that I knew far better about the subjects that they were making their TV documentaries about, than they did. So I said that I could jump over there.

WHAT ARE YOUR CRITERIA FOR BEING GOOD AT SOMETHING? ONE THING YOU MENTIONED – KNOWING THE SUBJECT. WHAT ARE THE OTHER CRITERIA? HOW DO YOU 'MEASURE' WHAT MAKES A GOOD FILM?

For me it is crucially to do with the composition or with frame. Also I like using very long shots. I recently made a film in Albania, and there is one shot which is 8 minutes long. When you walk into the room, if you are a good filmmaker, you immediately know where the camera should be and if you are still learning you don't know.

To take an idea for a walk

Ilona Jurkonytė interviews filmmaker Mark Cousins

Time is short and so I hurry to tell Mark about Kaunas' modernist architecture; the Ninth Fort, Lithuanian film history past and present, as well as some personal insights of Lithuanian history and the peculiarities of the local mentality. Mark listens carefully to what I say, but suddenly, without lowering his eyes, takes out a pen, and without looking at his notebook writes something down. I think to myself that this thought is probably not related to our conversation.

This summer his fifteen-part work *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* was shown as part of the CAC Cinema programme and in October Mark came to the Kaunas International Film Festival where he presented two of his latest films: *A Story of Children and Film* and *What Is This Film Called Love?*. The latter being the first film I had ever seen by this director. Just as I met him through this film I also saw him in Kaunas – continuously walking, always with a camera, writing things down in his notebook...

(An essay film can go anywhere, and should¹)

Fragment of the screenplay for *A Story of Children and Film* (2013)

¹ From *The Essay Film – A Manifesto* by Mark Cousins

HOW DO YOU FIND YOUR SUBJECTS? DO YOU FIRST HAVE AN IDEA AND THEN START MAKING IT, OR DO YOU STUMBLE ACROSS IT BY ACCIDENT, OR ACTIVELY LOOK FOR IT?

It has changed over the years. When I was making the film about neo-Nazism, the fuel for me was the anger at people over the genocide of the Jews. And that kept me going. And then I ran out of anger about that kind of stuff and I noticed that my films are more about travelling, I realised that I need to keep going places, that I am walking a lot, I regularly walk around 20 miles a day, I walk a lot across Beijing, Los Angeles, New York, Tirana, Moscow... Unravelling yourself. You know when you are walking or when you sit on a train and you are on your own, you daydream, your thoughts take over and they become sort of fluid – I love that. And that becomes the subject of my films, like *What Is This Film Called Love?* (2012) is exactly about that. And that's become more of the poetics of filmmaking.

IT SEEMS THAT A BIG SOURCE OF YOUR INSPIRATION COMES FROM THE URBAN SPACE.

The city is a maze, it's a thing to get lost in, to drift in. Lots of people have written about this idea that you drift. I love that game of losing yourself in the city. It is a bit like losing yourself in the film. I love getting out of myself. I don't find my own thoughts all that interesting.

DRIFTING IN THE CITY, MOVING IN THE SPACE... AND WHAT ABOUT THE MIND WALKING WITH THE HELP OF DRAWING?

The great Swiss artist Paul Klee said drawing is like 'taking a line for a walk'. I love that. To make a film for me is to take an idea for a walk and then you go with it... Two years ago I was in Mexico City and I had three extra days that I did not know I had: I thought I was flying on Sunday, but my ticket was on Wednesday. Three days! With nothing to do – no meetings, no emails – how rare is that?! Staying in this cheap hotel... I realised that Mexico City was a place where the great Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein had some of his best ideas about freedom. And an idea landed. Sometimes ideas land fully formed in your head and this was the case. I printed a photograph of Eisenstein and imagined that he was my friend. As soon as I realised that this film could be a conversation between me and him (even if it was sixty years after his death), then anything was possible. I walked and walked, fifteen miles a day, and that was just joyful.

Getting an idea is a bit like fishing. You've got the fishing line in the water, nothing is happening and then suddenly you can feel it. You have to be fast, because once the idea comes, it is really good. Getting the idea is also like an old radio – you used to twist the little dial and after the noise, you could hear a voice, some music. An idea is a bit like that – from fuzzy noise it suddenly comes.

HOW DID THE IDEA FOR 'A STORY OF CHILDREN AND FILM' (2013) COME TO YOUR MIND?

A Story of Children and Film was a film about how children are portrayed in movies and I was filming my niece and nephew with this little camera. My niece is eleven, my nephew is eight and a half. They both are very funny, very naughty children. I was filming them one day and they went from shy to nervous, to showing off, to fighting... And I thought: on this little camera, in this little moment I am seeing a whole range of emotions – children emotions, but also adults' emotions. And I thought – that's the idea for a film: a film just about a range of emotions.

ARE YOUR FILMS BORN AT THE MOMENT YOU GET THE IDEA, WHEN YOU 'TUNE INTO THE RADIO CHANNEL' OR ARE THEY INSTEAD BORN IN THE EDITING ROOM?

It's like making it twice. You make a film, and then you remake it in the editing room. You have this idea and you have to make it so it exits you.

It took me a while to get there. In my early filmmaking I thought it is about the camera, it is about the buttons, it is about the technology. And that's what I was taught... mostly by men, I have to

say. The male film industry taught us that it is about the technology. Once I realised that it is not about the technology, it is about looking beyond the camera into the world and seeing what moves you and touches you, what makes you think. I realised that I have to look beyond the camera out into the world for beauty or truth, for ugliness or anger or evil even, then I knew what I should be looking for... And when you work with an editor, you sit with your editor and ask: 'Have we got a film yet?' and the editor normally answers: 'Yes, there's quite a bit of a film here... but we're gonna have to work on it more...'

WHAT MOVES YOU ABOUT SERGEI EISENSTEIN?

What moves me about him [he shows an image of Sergei Eisenstein] is that he had spent years under the Soviet regime and been very free and then he went to Mexico and this was the land of colour, music, food, sexuality... And he loved it. This is what moves me. This was a story of freeing your mind.

IS 'WHAT IS THIS FILM CALLED LOVE?' A TRIBUTE TO YOUR BELOVED AND RESPECTED FILMMAKER, AN EXPERIENCE OF MEXICO CITY, OR ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR YOURSELF?

The film was meant to be called something else, but I was listening to this old song on the radio *What Is This Thing Called Love?*. I was on Twitter. I am obsessed with Twitter and I tweeted, that I am trying to make this film... It's a bit like a musical, it's a bit like a documentary, it's a bit like a film about Sergei Eisenstein. I said: 'What is this film?', and then – got you! Since I was listening to this song, the title *What Is This Film Called Love?* came to my mind!

This film was made with no crew, no budget, just a small camera and me. After making this big film about cinema *The Story Of Film: An Odyssey* (2011), I wanted to make a smaller portrait-film. Just as many painters end up painting self-portraits, because they are available and cheap, I was available for three days and cheap. So this film, I am afraid, is about me. It's done in the spirit of punk, and the great punk musician PJ Harvey created music for it.

When filming and talking to Eisenstein about his past, about Mexico City, about freedom, of course I realised that I am there completely on my own. I was making a film about what it is to grow up, to get older and to realise that every moment is precious. Three free days in Mexico City can be the best days of my life. Eisenstein had this idea – *ekstasis* – getting out of yourself. This is what the film became about – the joy of being on your own and being free.

I ADMIRE HOW YOU ALSO DE-MASK CERTAIN THINGS IN YOUR FILM. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WAY YOU APPROACH RELIGION...

Cinema is my religion. Music, painting, art, dance. As the great American writer Eugene Luther Gore Vidal says: 'I am catholic in everything, but faith'. I feel passion, which you see in catholic art, but I don't have the faith.

WATCHING YOUR FILMS, ONE CAN GET THE FEELING OF BEING A GUEST IN YOUR HEAD, FOLLOW YOUR THOUGHTS AND SEE THE IMAGERY THROUGH YOUR EYES... IT IS NOT ONLY ABOUT YOUR OWN BODY, IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE ANIMAL BODY, OTHER PEOPLE'S BODIES. YOU MANAGE TO PUT SO MANY THINGS IN YOUR FILMS. IS IT ALWAYS AS INTENSE INSIDE YOUR HEAD AS IN 'WHAT IS THIS FILM CALLED LOVE?'

When you make something that personal, there is the risk that everybody will think that it's just about you, not about them. But I hope that some of the viewers notice the bittersweet nature of solitude, which I sensed as well. I hope some people can identify with that. One of the great American writers Joseph Campbell used the phrase: 'the rapture of self-loss', and when you are travelling you sometimes feel that rapture of self-loss.

One more thing, I would like to mention is that PJ Harvey being a woman, with her music, especially with the last song, brings masculinity into the film. This film is about being old and young, happy and sad, male and female at the same time and I am happy that it is a woman who brings masculinity into it.

YOU HAD THESE THREE DAYS IN MEXICO CITY, YOU ADMIRE EISENSTEIN, MEXICO CITY IS IMPORTANT IN HIS BIOGRAPHY, BUT WHAT IF YOU FOUND YOURSELF FREE FOR A FEW DAYS IN ANOTHER CITY? OR TO PUT IT DIFFERENT WAY – IS THERE ANOTHER DIRECTOR WITH WHOM YOU'D LIKE TO HAVE A CHAT?

All places are haunted by those who lived there before. A place like Lithuania is very haunted by the past. Anywhere you can walk around is haunted with figures from the past. For example, once I walked around in Beijing with a picture in my head of a great Chinese actress. It is almost like having an app on your mobile.

YOU FILMED IN KAUNAS DURING YOUR STAY IN THE CITY. WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU ARE FILMING IN A NEW PLACE, HOW DO YOU SEE IT?

When you go somewhere new, it is as if your eyes see all the more clearer and fresher than when you are in already known places. You get this very strong visual impression and then you ask, what lies behind that? Some places, like the Ninth Fort make it clear what lies behind and it seems that other aspects of Lithuania visually try to hide, forget the past. To remember and to forget are very human things. Therefore it is exciting to be here.

DO YOU THINK LITHUANIA IS HAUNTED MORE THAN OTHER PLACES?

Some places, like Dubai, don't have that impression of presence of past. Here in Lithuania – multiple pasts, many histories. I try to discover and learn about that.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY LITHUANIAN FILMS?

I haven't seen many. I think I have seen around ten Lithuanian films and there is one thing that they all have in common – they look at what happens to the individual when the ground under his feet is moving.

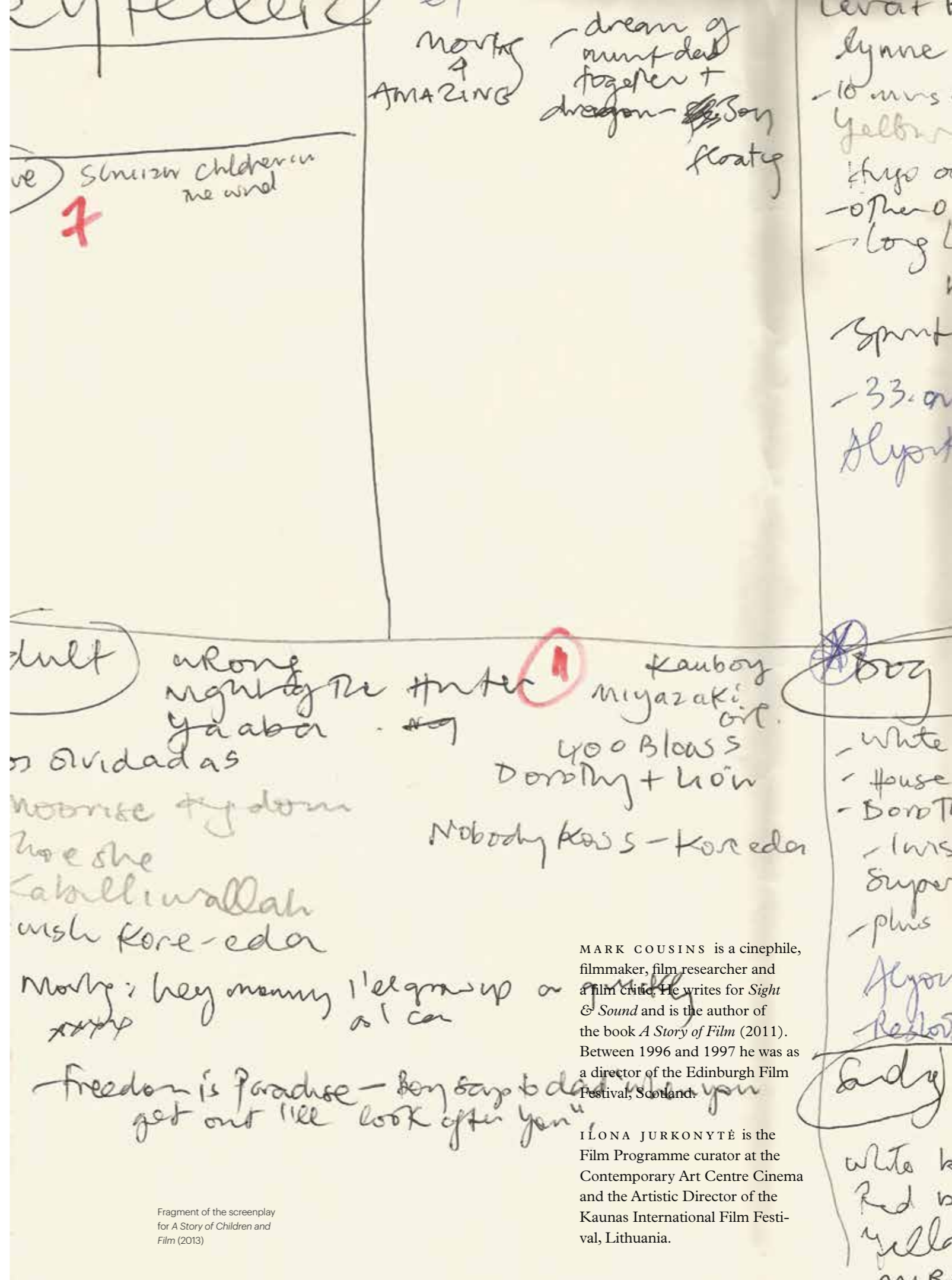
WHEN AND HOW DO YOU WRITE YOUR FILMS?

Often people write screenplays, but I don't do screenplays. This was a screenplay for *A Story of Children and Film* [shows it]. Instead of a screenplay I scribbled on a piece of paper: 'shy', 'different films about children', 'watching'... each box was a theme and then I scribbled further on... and that's what I showed to the funders. So it is often to me about a drawing or about a sudden idea. And once you've got it, you try to capture it fast. Then you've got to edit, work on it, bring it alive, give it energy, give it emotion.

Some people get adrenalin when they are doing sports. I find adrenalin in the filming process. That inspires the thinking process, so I write on the spot what that particular shot is about. Later I don't change it much, because the first attempt can often be the best. As with painters who appreciate the first sketch most, because they want to free themselves most, so the first sketch often has got the speed, the liberty, the energy. So my writing happens very quickly.

I PERSONALLY REALLY APPRECIATE THE FREEDOM, WHICH YOUR FILMS NOT ONLY MANIFEST, BUT GIVE TO THE VIEWER, I MEAN THE SPACE THE VIEWER HAS WHEN WATCHING YOUR FILMS...

This freedom comes for me from the kind of film that I am making – it's the essay film. If you are making a fiction film, and it is about a very realistic subject, it is hard to bring, for example, a spaceship into the film, because that film has its own world and it is hard to break that world up. When you are making an essay film, you can go anywhere, you can do anything. In *What Is This Film Called Love?* there are two secrets about the narrator, two transformations and only in essay film could you do that. That's why I've chosen to work in this area – shooting in documentary style and using dreams and voices and music... it allows you a complete freedom to take an idea for a walk.



Fragment of the screenplay for *A Story of Children and Film* (2013)

MARK COUSINS is a cinephile, filmmaker, film researcher and a film critic. He writes for *Sight & Sound* and is the author of the book *A Story of Film* (2011). Between 1996 and 1997 he was as a director of the Edinburgh Film Festival, Scotland.

ILONA JURKONYTĖ is the Film Programme curator at the Contemporary Art Centre Cinema and the Artistic Director of the Kaunas International Film Festival, Lithuania.

Inviting imagination to be

My first encounter with writer and curator Sofie Van Loo occurred at the SITAC XI symposium in Mexico City at the end of summer 2013. We happened to be on the same panel with the ambiguous title of 'Heavy Mental' in which Sofie presented a talk on her ongoing investigation into imagination and artistic research in the work of contemporary artists that encompasses group and solo exhibitions as well as writing. Later, when reading her texts on the work of some of these artists, which call for reader's attunement and render the work in question curiously present, I was intrigued to ask her what triggers this research and how she approaches art through curating and writing.



Adriaan Verwée, *Proposition II*, 2010
Cardboard, ink, paint
Courtesy the artist

Asta Vaičiulytė
interviews writer and
curator Sofie Van Loo

ASTA VAIČIULYTĖ: In your practice you blend curating, writing and academic work. How did you begin exploring the link between (artistic) research and imagination to the extent of writing a PhD? I very much like your approach to working out certain things in theory or practice when you say 'I had to do something about it'.

Did you feel you had to do something about this connection too? How do these seemingly different strategies of exploring a common ground (research) and pushing into terra incognita (imagination) meet in your work? You once wrote: 'Art structures its research in an imaginal way opening differentiating artistic time and space.'

SOFIE VAN LOO: For some time already, I have been fascinated by the fairly huge gaps that exist between art, art criticism, curatorial practice, art theory, aesthetics, philosophy and art history. From the moment neuroscience tried to localise imagination in the brain, the gap between imagination in art and scientific research on imagination/creation became even bigger. The idea of delay in thinking 'difference/ differentiation' is an underlying structure that only imagination in art seems to escape. In addition to this, I notice a kind of undermining of art, and actually also of curating and writing on art, especially when science and theory explains imagination in terms of perception/ perceiving on the one hand and representation on the other. It suggests there must be a choice – or that there is no choice – between the (affected) body and representation, even if there is the idea that both are related like a knife with two sides that each cut differently. However, when I see art I 'perceive' and 'understand' something quite differently. It seems to me that unlike art most new media technology still serves the old Aristotelian haptic idea of sentience, while on the other hand there still seems to be the desire of collapsing medium, form and the real; a combination which nowadays seems to easily (re)produce fictional 'monsters' which are reconstructed in reality.

A general thought on imagination still seems to be: if lots of people don't 'perceive' imagination or don't 'understand' it, and if it's a talent, but not something you can learn easily by mimicking, what's the point of investing in it? The point is that one doesn't have to perceive or understand imagination, in order to get close to and deal with it. By bringing research in a specific kind of situation where research, experimentation and imagination can coexist, one experiences where and when there is pressure on some particular points, and where and when this is not the case.

Originality doesn't refer back to 'an origin' and imagination doesn't have to be thought from the point of view of illusion either. As a curator and writer, I do not bring myself in the same situation as that of an artist – this is impossible and unnecessary – instead I put myself in a particular situation to be in touch with imagination in contemporary art and how it works on a double level, in both the work of art and its rooting in a specific period of time and space. The imagined suggestion or imagination 'in' the image is not 'begging' or 'asking' to be modeled outside' of the context of the image, but rather exercises the viewer in a playful and often humoristic way into the non-banalisation of imagination and reality.

Quite often imagination is directly or indirectly blamed for its suggestive and complex character and in that sense imagination is often disconnected from its main capacity; the creation of 'artistic' time and space. Through writing on art and curating I have come to realise that an artist 'creates' artistic time and space through

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Sofie Van Loo, *Imagination and artistic research in the contemporary art world of the 21st century: taboo, neutralization and realization*, PhD, KULeuven, 2013.



Julia Spinola, *Phrase (object). MOUTH*, 2012
Open sculpture with different objects, variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist, Heinrich Ehrhardt Gallery (Madrid) and Galerie Tatjana Pieters (Ghent)

imagination, which itself is in dialogue with artistic research and experimentation with (ir)reality fragments. When it is attuned, it is also in a 'live' dialogue with architectural space and times and spaces that have already been realised. I curate group exhibitions and write texts from the point of view of this artistic attunement, which seems to be primarily an atypical structural principle. Art should not be 'culturised' before it can be seen by a public as art.

AV: You refer to the art you curate and write about as 'abstract-realism'. (Though I also like another term I find in your texts – constellation art.) How do you define it and where does this work happen?

SVL: It's not easy to define abstract-realism in terms of conceptualisation, neither affect. Abstract-realism is not a (pre)concept, neither an afterimage, and it's not a mimetic transformation either. It could be thought of as a kind of scanning, shifting and creating modus that makes possible the artistic creation of space and time. Especially as a 'false twin' that is shifted to the level of the image and that, via a (closed) constellation, finds access through a method similar to, or one that has leanings towards, *écriture automatique* in an 'opening' or 'inventive' way.

In simplified terms, while artistic research is organised, imagination is triggered and allowed a time and space. This 'borderlinking-in-differentiation', a concept borrowed from artist, philosopher and psychoanalyst Bracha L. Ettinger², and which in this context, is tested and deployed in another environment and time, I call bi-modernist, bi-original or bi-sexual. I argue, *inter alia*, that there has apparently never been modernism, except in specific art, which complicates the relationship with postmodernism or re-modernism. In other words, a (life-)style, an idea, an architectural structure or an acceleration of media/technology is often closer to 'nature' than to 'modernism'. My research shows that the reason for this is because the stage of bi-modernism was skipped, something which, incidentally, cannot be included in a manifesto or scientific report, unless suggestively, because mankind apparently, finds it difficult, if not impossible, to suppress the propensity to follow, or resist, but inversion is not subversion. Since this is very difficult to study, the group exhibitions I prepare as a curator or the texts I write in dialogue with art should be seen, or read, in two ways: both as a way of addressing artistic imagination in contemporary art, which in itself handles different (un)realities at different levels, and as a way of handling certain worlds that hardly can, or want to, incorporate, or come to grips with this imagination (let's call it the pressure on imagination and reality).

'Abstract-realism' is thus an imagin(at)ed-(ir)realism which seems to be linked and different 'in' itself in terms of a 'borderlinking-in-differentiation' which I think of as 'bioriginal' and 'bimodernistic'. If we don't like that culture constantly collapses in nature this also means that contemporary art, and especially the research, experiment and imaginal potential have to be taken seriously. It fascinates me that artworks by Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Peter Buggenhout, Adriaan Verwée and Julia Spinola for instance are perceived easily by a public as 'sameness with minimal difference' (cfr. Derrida). For some, it doesn't look imaginal at all. This must be related to the fact that we are not educated and used to activating our imaginal capacities. Imagination is an artistic capacity and it would be nice that it is seen like that.



Anna Barham, *Double Screen (Not quite tonight jellylike)*, 2013
2 channel HD video, 32'
Courtesy the artist and Arcade (London)

2

Bracha L. Ettinger, 'Art as a transport-station of trauma', In *Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger. Artworking 1985-1999* (tent. cat.), Ludion: Brussels and Ghent, 2000, p. 97: A web of movements of borderlinking, between subjects and partial objects, becomes a psychic space of trans-subjectivity when matrixial affects signal that a passage from Thing to object-and-subject takes place in jointness. This passage in itself makes minimal sense, but it generates more meaning through the work of art. Borderlinking is thus enabled by minimal difference of affect or by affective minimal differentiation, in the passage from Thing-Event and Thing-Encounter into partial-subject and partial-object.

3

Chapter 9 of my PhD (KULeuven, 2013) is on Julia Spinola (pp. 342- 363). The text was originally written in English for the magazine *Tatui* (January 2013, Sao Paulo) and an extract will be published in my paper for the SITAC XI symposium, Mexico City (2013). I have continued to work with Julia Spinola and since 2008 started to write on every single work she made. Next year *Posture Editions* (Ghent) will publish part of my PhD-essay in English.

4

Vanessa Desclaux, 'Anna Barham. Step into Tangram Rule', In *Volume*, Issue 2, 2011, p. 95.

double' inside and outside of him/herself. Dealing with this (fake) double, as an automatic writing that introduces this (fake) double into an image, which is copied in the closed circuit of the constellation from one work into another work, where the (fake) double is shifting, jumping, turning-over differently, signifies that imagination can be opened up to deal with this (fake) double in another way than (re)presentation and metaphor. On Julia Spinola I wrote:

One of these experiments deals with inventing/creating a gesture with elements of the interval, the sequence in between two actions, two systems, two codes, two gestures, related to specific situations of reality and the act of speech and writing. She shifts the (fake) double. Such a specific 'sequence-gesture' could be named a rhythmic figure-object, which she further invests in the public atmosphere and the contemporary art world and since recently, as public sculptures in the street. This artistic 'sequence-gesture', which can be understood as 'action-code' if it's injected in public space, can be called a new form for giving/gaining an observation, for knowledge and also can be understood in terms of nano-communication. They are placed imaginal in-between two actions, two movements, two systems, two codes in order to create more physical, differentiating and relating space. A sequence-gesture and an action-code don't need to be interpreted as a political-(in)correct action or an attitude producing the repetition of a form.³

Artist Anna Barham said herself:

We might say then that the glitch names two moments or movements. To break a world and to make a world. In fact these two are never really divorced from one another: to dissent means invariably to affirm some where/thing else. To affirm an elsewhere we have to turn from that which is already here. The glitch is then a moment of critique, a moment of negation – but also a moment of creation and of affirmation. Indeed, the glitch – in whichever regime it operates and ruptures – is the 'sound' of this something else, this something different attempting to get through.⁴

In some works of art the double or copy can be a confrontation with a differentiating 'fake original' (see Gabriel Kuri, Laurent Dupont-Garitte, Adriaan Verwée), which can be understood as a reaction against the discourse of the 'original fake', and seems to become a 'fake original', which cannot be 'solved' anymore with a reproduction of an 'original fake' to cover that up. Imagination comes into play as a rhythmical structuring of both sources, artistic research and an *écriture automatique* as a (fake) 'double', as parallel worlds, which are leaping and shifting in the image(s) of a constellation art.

I don't think that TED-conferences for instance have anything to do with imagination, but rather with the desire to be 'credible' as an innovative creator. It's really about time that people see the difference between 'imagination', 'speculation' and 'innovation'. Like artist Michaël Van den Abeele wrote: 'If you run fast enough, spinward you'll catch up with your former double, becoming your future double – it is a paranoid comedy – it's impossible to know to what extent or not my observation differs from yours.'⁵ Instead of running after the other, it's more

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Michael Van den Abeele, *Habitat Wheel 1 and 2*, 2013 (text soundpiece)

interesting to run after yourself. This artistic doubling can be thought of as differentiating and relating 'parallel worlds' (cfr. Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Pierre Huyghe a.o.)

AV: When reading your texts – on the work of Adriaan Verwée in *Posture Editions* or work of a group of artists in *Time Space Poker Face* exhibition catalogue for example – I keep on thinking that these texts do not represent the work but instead do it again – writing about art becomes a space of art. How do you approach writing?

SVL: It's true that I don't 'represent' the work in text, but I don't do the 'artwork' again by writing either, because if that was the case I actually would (re)present it and we would never leave a vicious circle of mimesis anymore. Image and text, the artist and I don't fall together through the myth of animism either. I think that the perceptual and representational views on imagination are probably the schemas of Kant and Heidegger for instance who were still thinking from the point of view of an imagination which had to 'serve' perception, representation and theoretical conceptualisation. At the moment I think that it's the other way around: perception, representation and theoretical conceptualisation must 'serve' imagination, and that is what I try to do. In texts on the work of a single artist, in this case Adriaan Verwée, I prefer to write 'to the artist', though not in the form of a letter⁶. In *Time Space Poker Face Book*⁷ I made a kind of imagined-realized walk through this exhibition. Cultures often make us think that we have to break the code of 'analogy' through a certain form of 'synaesthesia' in order for culture to (make) profit from art or imagination, but actually I don't think it is the code that must be broken, but rather that it is the 'artistic' – whatever this is and how anti- or sub- it may be – that must be respected. The most adult people that I meet in the world, are often artists, and artists probably play the most too. I don't think that everybody should be an artist, but it could make a real difference in society if people took the risk to really experience imagination in art, because it would shift their perceptions and reflections and wouldn't let them fall over and over again into a repetition of their interpretations and projections, which is what often happens out of fear and banality.

AV: Are errors and misunderstandings important to you? Not in the way of glitch where errors become the building matter, but more in the sense of errors acting as factors that make one develop something in relation to them. For example, when writing becomes live playing (and I have a sense that it is, at least to some extent, in your case) it has the possibility to go either way at any given moment, constructing the whole continuously and reacting to everything that happens around it. This, of course, is also to do with speed – you have to be rather quick to be able to include and refer to the changes happening around you. Here I recall the talk you did at the SITAC XI symposium in Mexico City this August, where you rewrote your presentation a couple of days before our panel and read from two text versions simultaneously.

SVL: I wrote in the SITAC XI-text⁸: "reference/referencing" means: become it as a misunderstanding, function as its representation and replace what was misunderstood by its misunderstanding;'. It's probably true to declare that I can be a bit oversensitive about particular kinds of manipulations that push art and the experience of art into an impossible zone,

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Sofie Van Loo, 'Adriaan Verwée's abstract-realistic imagination is a foxburrow where Don Juan has spent the night and where Doña Juanita might wake up', In *Adriaan Verwée. Toca da Raposa, Posture Editions*, No. 1, 2012, p. 1-7.

7

Texts by Sofie Van Loo and Joëlle Tuerlinckx in: *Time Space Poker Face* [exh.cat.], Be-Part, Waregem, (curator: Sofie Van Loo), MER.Paperkunsthal: Ghent, 2013. Artists: Nel Aerts, Peter Buggenhout, Adriano Costa, Laurent Dupont-Garitte, Willem Oorebeek, Alex Reynolds, Jani Ruscica, Julia Spinola, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Joke Van den Heuvel, Adriaan Verwée.

8

Sofie Van Loo, *Abstract-(ir)realism in contemporary art: bi-sexuality on an elementary level of the imagin(at)ed image*, SITAC XI, Mexico City, 2013.



Time Space Poker Face exhibition view at Be-Part, Waregem
Laurent Dupont-Garitte, *Objects of Brussels*, 2011-2013
Various dimensions, mixed materials, 4 neon lights, timer: 5 min.,
light every 25 min.
Courtesy the artist, image: Dirk Pauwels



Adriaan Verwée, *A Thin Air Spoil Tip*, 2011
Wood, stained meranti, plastic, glass
Courtesy the artist

namely that of survival strategy. What works on an elementary level of subject and object particles, doesn't automatically work on the level of the whole, namely separate, but connected bodies or institutes for instance. There is a problem when knowledge of an elementary level and constellation art is injected without an in-between space into bigger wholes, because it is exactly this kind of action that creates holes and huge blind spots. Under pressure it easily becomes a metaphor and symbol and this kind of delay closes off imagination. I don't have any problem with symbols and rituals, if there is still a breathing space for imagination too. In the last few years, the way that imagination has been dealt with pushed it into the direction of speculation, which was not only a violent act, but also a complete misunderstanding. For these kind of things you cannot go to the international court of justice in The Hague, but I do think that a crime against imagination is a crime against humanity. A funny question in this context could be: does imagination need these errors and misunderstandings in order to be 'necessary'? We think of error and misunderstanding too often in a social-economical (classed) way.

In the days preceding our panel discussion at SITAC XI, I came to the idea that the powerpoint and my lecture were okay and that I had all material for my talk – I don't think of a lecture as the reading of a text, but more as a possible preparation of a new text – however, it seemed that everything was written in the wrong direction. Suddenly I realised that my conclusion was my introduction, that the last images had to come in the beginning. Actually, this thought had already crossed my mind during the transatlantic flight above Canada, en route to Mexico-City. And by the time that I had arrived at the airport, taken a cab with a colleague, looked through the window of the cab and arrived at the hotel, I knew for sure that I had to change the order of my text. Of course you don't turn a text backwards in five seconds and I had prepared for a two-hour lecture, and one mustn't think of it as 'wasting time' but rather as the background of my lecture, which may be the foreground in a forthcoming lecture.

To be honest, I love to take these kind of risks, but I don't risk the artwork in the same way, and this is the most difficult part of taking that risk. My lecture was more a performance with contemporary artworks, a kind of virtual small-sized group exhibition, but it was not disconnected from reflection. Maybe I brought the double 'live' into my lecture and showed how easily imagination can fall into the gap of metaphor. Of course, I understand that this is not the classical 'format' used for conferences and symposia, but I cannot leave my working space at home just to give the public what they already know.



Time Space Poker Face exhibition view at Be-Part, Waregem
 Left: Joëlle Tuerlinckx, *Time Table (SPACE/EMIT/Time (SPACE)/...)*, 2013
 Table (found object), marker on plastic, polycarbonate, artificial lighting and
Volume d'Ombre (2013), stainless steel, acryl (detail)
 Courtesy the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler (Köln and Berlin) and Galerie nächst
 St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder (Vienna)
 Right: Willem Oorebeek, *MORE ELLE (Chinese)*, 2011
 Digital print
 Courtesy the artist, photo: Laurent Dupont-Garitte

AV: This could also be the case on the level of perception, in reading for example; like when you read and do not understand what you're reading fully but it affects you anyway (thanks to your imagination). It is as if a certain level of distraction serves in projecting a new meaning.

SVL: I must admit that there are readers of my texts, who almost have a heart-attack, especially when they begin a text, and in some other cases throughout, because if you cannot leave the idea of format or style, it looks like my texts are quite destructive, even aggressive at certain moments. It can't be easily classified as a seductive way of writing, that's for sure. Seduction works very differently in my texts than in many other texts written on art (which I can love too). Maybe the link between the work of the artists and my writing is that we both bring the viewer or reader into a position (lessness) whereby s/he must use his or her imagination without inviting the viewer into a kind of interactive installation. I don't underestimate my readers. The act of perceiving and understanding, interpreting and projecting doesn't work in a 'usual way' in the artworks I like to write on, but it doesn't work on the level of my texts either. And yes, writing in an imaginal way on imagination in contemporary art is also trying to make imagination repetitional in an (art)historical sense. From the moment imagination starts to work as a hyperrealist abstraction instead of an abstract-(ir/sur)realism, the sublime comes back into 'the picture' and its perception, which is a kind of blinding of imagination and reality, always working in favour of a kind of 'narcissistic psychopathology', which gets easily projected onto who and what (for instance: imagination/creativity etc.) it is not. This is not the responsibility of the artist, but rather that of the (art)world. At the moment we see it more clearly in the art historical representation of the work of artists from the beginning of the 20th century. It's not the work of Malevich that turned backwards, but the world itself. It would be quite stupid to fall into the same gap in our time: so, mind the gap.

AV: You also describe imagination as a 'realised' fact. When and how is this realisation (of art work or writing) complete(d)?

SVL: With imagination as 'realised' fact, I simply refer to the imagin(at)ed image in or of contemporary art. It's quite curious that artists who use imagination often don't find their limits easily. If imagination were about knowing when to stop, these particular artists seem to do something else entirely. However, it is a kind of precision too, knowing when and where to stop, but another kind of precision to that we are used to. Artist Joëlle Tuerlinckx wrote in 2000: 'I work until the moment where one cannot cut anymore (in) the space.'⁹ Imagination is realised when one cannot escape the creation of artistic time and space anymore.

AV: Beautifully put. I often think that ways of speaking or writing could be divided into a couple of strands – one that knows how the sentence or statement will finish and one that doesn't. So instead of asking how do you begin to write, I would like to ask how you finish your texts.

SVL: It seems that I finish a text when it has entered the twilight-zone. At that moment it is as if I can take my own fake double back in, which was triggered in the first instance by experiencing contemporary artworks. My text for the *Time Space Poker Face Book* begins with a song by Frank Zappa and ends with a cantata by J.S. Bach. The *Ich habe Genug* song by Bach is such a layered composition and it has a very funny, quite ambiguous title: *I have enough*. Yes, when and where is it enough and for whom? Maybe, I don't want to conclude (yet). So, to be continued.

SOFIE VAN LOO is a writer, researcher and curator based in Brussels, who holds a PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Among her recent exhibitions are the group shows *Time Space Poker Face* (Be-Part, Waregem near Ghent) in 2013 and *Coming People* (S.M.A.K., Ghent) in 2011. Between 2008 and 2011 Van Loo taught as a guest lecturer at Sint-Lukas Brussels and Sint-Lucas Antwerp. She has written essays on many contemporary artists, among them Bracha L. Ettinger, Peter Buggenhout, Orla Barry, Paul Hendrikse, Julia Spinola, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Adriaan Verwée.

ASTA VAIČIULYTĖ is the editor of *CAC Interviu* and works as a curator at the Contemporary Art Centre.

On frijoles saltarines,



From left to right: Justina Zubaitė, Juan de Nieves, Jennifer Teets.
Photo: Audrius Pocius

RUPERT, an educational programme, dedicated to young artists, writers, architects and other creators, and called para-academic by its initiators, began in June 2012. This summer RUPERT moved into a newly designed building (architect Audrius Ambrasas) in the neighborhood of the second Valakampiai beach in Vilnius. Together with new quarters RUPERT's activity has also expanded – the programme became a transdisciplinary education, residency and exhibition centre. RUPERT's Educational Program lasts for nine months and operates on a project basis – one of the criteria for future participants is their readiness to implement an independent project during the programme, be it exhibition, publication, artwork, lecture series, etc. The history of RUPERT, which has now entered into its second year, no longer seems so brief since the institution keeps growing and trying new methods of (self)organisation. One of the fragments of this history that you will find here is a conversation that took place this summer on the same beach. Those participating included two graduates of the first edition of RUPERT's Educational Program Audrius Pocius and Justina Zubaitė, as well as Juan de Nieves, director of RUPERT at that time, and Jennifer Teets, who between 2012 and 2013 participated in the programme as one of its tutors.

Audrius Pocius, Jennifer Teets, Juan de Nieves and Justina Zubaitė: a conversation

Kierkegaard's father, and being Charlie's Angels

AUDRIUS POCIUS: We actually had a joke in the early days of Rupert that nobody knew who Rupert actually was, so we were kind of thinking about ourselves as Charlie's Angels. Nobody knew who this Charlie was but we just kept getting orders, *Next week? Okay, I will be there, ciao ciao.*

JUSTINA ZUBAITĖ: While I was thinking about Rupertian practices and a text that might spring out of it, I honestly wanted to avoid being somehow directly nostalgic, reminiscent or futurological. In this case, all my doubts finally resulted in a conversational proposal: asking all of you to try to think about Rupert as a kind of imagination machine as well as a variation on the para-educational type of art and education projects. First of all I would like to remind you of a partial autobiographical sketch written by Kierkegaard, entitled *De omnibus dubitandum est*, which references a 'method of education' that his father was said to have practiced. Joakim Garff in his book *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography* cites a passage from the sketch, in which an image from the childhood of a young man called Johannes Climacus is described:

When Johannes occasionally asked for permission to go out, he was most often refused, although one time his father made up for it by offering to take him by the hand and stroll up and down the floor. At first glance this was a poor substitute, but like the homespun coat it concealed something quite different underneath. Johannes accepted the offer, and it was entirely up to him to decide where they would walk. They went out the city gates to a nearby country palace, or down to the seashore, or here and there on the city streets, wherever Johannes wished, because his father was capable of everything.¹

The last words of the paragraph – 'because his father was capable of everything' – for me, interestingly, somehow echo Joseph Jacotot's universal method of teaching, analysed by Jacques Rancière in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*² where the author provides us with the idea that a father – and not necessarily one that is well-educated – can easily teach his child things he himself doesn't know. Thus the first question would be whether Rupert is capable of becoming Kierkegaard's father or whether he has already become one?

AP: I think that, first of all, Rupert has not got anything to do with knowledge. In my opinion it is first and foremost a school of practice or maybe, if you want something more abstract, a way to think about practicality. And namely in this sense we could see Rupert as having something in common with Kierkegaard's father. Although I find one major difference – Kierkegaard's father always knew his own position in the face of life, let's say. But the whole learning process as such was generated by Søren's anxiety towards his father as well as his father's expectations and guilt towards his son. So in order to make a contribution to this analogy between Rupert and Kierkegaard's father I find it quite useful to comment on Kierkegaard's own thinking about education. First of all, Kierkegaard was thinking of *ways to show a person a more rich or genuine path to go on*. And his response to this was to forget everything that you already know, to simply enter into a conversation with a person and – this is important – never show to the other that you are one step ahead. Actually this is not just a sense of showing you are ahead, you should not be ahead at all. This is why Kierkegaard used pseudonyms, like Johannes Climacus among others.

1

Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 14-15. Cited from: <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s7809.html>.

2

Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, California: Stanford University Press, 1991.

JZ: The idea of ‘not showing that you are ahead of someone’ reminds me of some statements made by Rancière on the purpose of education. Rancière classifies it first and foremost as emancipatory, i.e. as aiming to emancipate a person or an ignorant by showing him that he is capable of learning everything he wants. Then the emancipated one can do nothing as well as something. And a ‘schoolmaster’ in this case should not be responsible for teaching an ignorant something concrete e.g. science, language etc. but just to emancipate, just to empower him, just to let him go down his own path.

AP: So we are talking more about life experience than about knowledge. Thus I suppose we should leave knowledge out of the question.

JZ: Life experience, exactly. And the case with Kierkegaard’s father was probably closer to the attempts to accelerate or empower his imagination than to transmit any knowledge. So might it be that the educational method applied on young Kierkegaard is a variation of the ‘emancipation method’ or ‘universal training method’ by Rancière?

3
Émile Perverti, ou Des rapports entre l'éducation et la sexualité (Perverted Émile, or On Rapports Between Education and Sexuality, 1974) by Shérer rephrases and refers to the title of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s treatise on education *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (Émile, or On Education, 1762).

JUAN DE NIEVES: Maybe it is worth remembering *Émile Perverti, ou Des rapports entre l'éducation et la sexualité*³, a book by René Schérer. Do you know him? He was a French philosopher who was very active in the context of the social movement in the 60s. He is also a brother of the important French filmmaker Éric Rohmer. Schérer was actually a kind of controversial figure in that time because of his essays on paedophilia. Anyway, he structured all of his theory around the idea of de-schooling. In *Émile Perverti* he argues against the ‘master theory of education’, which according to him started with Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

JENNIFER TEETS: Let’s not forget the notion of the self-taught inside of alternative thinking. Yet, it is my view that self-taught people are more specialised in their chosen areas of practice, at the cost of versatility. It is a passion-driven mind form.

AP: Once again I would like to propose an example of Rousseau who did not have any training at all. Okay, he was an engraver’s apprentice but what he did have was a perfect reflection based precisely on life experiences and he also loved reading. And reading as well as writing is particularly connected to the learning process as such. You know, the medium for reflection and the medium for learning first and foremost is language. And we should bear this in mind while we are speaking about Rupert as an alternative institution for self-education. I mean we should reflect on how we use language in our practices and we should know the capabilities of the language we use. The question is how abstract this learning should get? Or can we find a practical aspect of abstract notions, i.e. can we accelerate the baggage that these words or notions have and bring it to the everyday life?

My answer would be that education as such should be brought about by literature, and by fiction more specifically. Thus Rupert might find a way precisely by analysing or writing texts simultaneously and not for the production of some publication. I am talking about writing fiction or analysing fiction as everyday practice. You know, once a text is written, it is incorporated – using Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept – into a mechanical unity, but when it is being written it is still organic.

JT: Personally, I am particularly attracted to thinking in the sense of a walk across a surface, let’s say a page. Back in January 2013, I lead a writing and reading workshop triggered by a situation that was created one day prior to the workshop itself – a mud bath at the Druskininkai Health Resort and Spa. The intention was to generate an understanding of performative writing or a form of life-writing. That same situation led us to think about *kūlgrindas*⁴ and the possibility of creating a metaphorical *kūlgrinda*. I was introduced to these hidden underwater stony roads via the participants in the program and began to think about page writing as

sculpture. How could you build the body of a text formally (mimicking a path) in order for it to lead you through a visceral state, in the sense of inner navigation, only to plummet out across a textual surface? How to create a structure from something that is viewless, that is invisible, but that can propagate on the page?

JDN: Was your workshop focused on that?

JT: Not solely on that, it also focused on ‘muddy time,’ a methodology that I have been working on for a couple of years. The purpose of the mud bath was to reflect on how the earth is capable of being assimilated and how to trace the sinking, hindered, and entrapped in writing – a kind of ‘ceramics without the fire’. I introduced texts such as Steven Connor’s *The Dust That Measures All Time* and Annie Dillard’s *Living by Fiction* to begin a weave of analysis and narratives. Later, we created a textual thread within the group, using the mud bath experience as a kind of buffer for the topological problems expressed therein.

JDN: So invisible seems to be a sort of keyword for this topic? I just recently discovered the possible origin for Rupert. It stems from an experience here in Lithuania, which was closely linked with the Soros Foundation⁵ and went by the name of the Invisible College, it was very innovative in the 90s.

JT: An artists group?

JDN: No, they were more focused on philosophy. And it is important to say that one of the minds behind Rupert – Jonas Žakaitis – was part of this programme as well. Honestly, I noticed that by accident. I had a meeting one month ago with Artūras Vasiliauskas, the director of the British Council in Vilnius, and he told me that he had been the director of this Invisible College and that Jonas was also part of it. And last week I had a meeting with Jonas and I mentioned this to him, because I was really curious about it, and he, in a way, confessed to me that obviously Rupert or the main idea behind Rupert came from this Invisible College. By the way Jonas sent me a list of Lithuanian philosophers that were involved in this, let’s say, para-educational programme. Jonas, at that time, was among the students starting philosophy and this ‘college’ was like an extra activity. That was quite similar to Rupert, actually. And the name of the programme is interesting, is it not? Invisible College – as if education could be something invisible.

4
Kūlgrinda (from Lithuanian *kūlis* meaning ‘stone’ and *grinda* meaning ‘pavement’) is a hidden underwater stony path found in swamps and swampy areas and used as a strategic and defensive mechanism in the history of Lithuania. Other variations exist: *medgrinda* (a path made of wood) and *žemgrinda* (a path made of earth, ground).

5
 Open Society Fund Lithuania (OSFL) is one of a network of foundations established since 1985 in Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Haiti by Georges Soros. OSFL initially aimed to encourage democratic reform (education, law, government etc.) in Lithuania and other countries in the region. Today it states fulfilment of ‘open society’s vision’ as its main goal. The Invisible College was an institution established by the OSFL in 1997, to provide gifted students of the humanities and social sciences with the chance to extend their knowledge in critical thought and independent research work alongside their basic studies, and to expand their range of interests by combining special and interdisciplinary studies. See: www.osf.lt/eng/main.htm

J T: How do you imagine the upcoming transformations in Rupert's identity?

J D N: I would like to imagine the next edition of Rupert like a bunch of experiences more than a group of workshops, lectures, trips etc. And I have the impression that last year you lived experiences more than incorporated knowledge.

J Z: Yes, I think that the last Rupert somehow managed to step away from the explanatory nature of teaching or educating. And that might also be related to the fact that various kind of machines, viewless or invisible objects and speculative prophecies were frequently referred to in many of our projects, as well as in the workshops or reading and writing sessions with the guests we have welcomed. So it seems that somehow we loved the objects, processes or phenomena much more that asked for our belief, faith or trust in them. *Kūlgrindas* is the case, Jennifer.

What about a newly-found *kūlgrinda* in the district of Kretinga? We were discussing it with artist Gediminas G. Akstinas and Mindaugas Bundza several weeks ago. An interesting thing that they mentioned is that the photo of a lake next to some web article is not necessarily a photo of that lake with *kūlgrinda*. Though we are somehow

forced to believe that this might be the case. Anyway, it can equally be a photo of any lake, I mean, *kūlgrind-less* as well. It is also quite similar to the Mexican jumping beans (aka *frijoles saltarines*) I mentioned in my e-mail.⁶ They also ask for our trust that there is either an insect, an elf, or 'another life' etc. inside. Otherwise, we can just cut one up to find out the truth.

J D N: So you are more on the side of Breton?

J Z: I do not know. From the perspective of Caillois, trying out *kūlgrindas* or touching them barefoot, as well as cutting the bean open, produces new kinds of possibilities for the poetic assumptions. Today I was talking with Mindaugas about chess and he told me about the situation for the pawn in the game when the concept of 'openness of the closed' emerges. Beans and *kūlgrindas* to my eyes inevitably produce that feeling of 'openness of the closed'. By the way, has any of us visited any *kūlgrinda*, such as the most known one in Sietuva?

J D N: But this is a big dilemma, I mean, because leaving the beans closed relates to imagination and opening the bean relates to curiosity.

J T: Imagination and curiosity are imperative to each other.

J D N: I find a paradox here because curiosity in this situation becomes totally related to imagination.

J Z: And I am just curious – what film or theatre piece or fairy-tale do you imagine would like to host Rupert?

J T: You can introduce Rupert into the figure of Ruprecht in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (1988). Ruprecht becomes a newly born Rupert.

J D N: But there is a problem. You know, the masculine transmission of the institution. Be careful with that! Why is it Rupert and not, for example, Rūtenė? I can tell you about my own experiences. One year ago I suddenly discovered this open call for the position of Rupert's director. And I thought, *Wow Rupert, Rupert*. And there is seriously something good about Rupert's name, because

I suddenly started imagining things that in the end appeared not to be true at all. I was totally convinced that Rupert's name came from Martin Scorsese's movie *The King of Comedy* (1982) with the character Rupert Pupkin (Robert de Niro). By the way, I have to confess something...

J T: That you brought Robert de Niro to the interview?

J D N: No, I prefer to keep this a secret actually.

A P: That you have met the real Rupert?

J D N: No. The important thing, sorry maybe that was a bit naive, is that this name somehow manages to stimulate my imagination. It is not important if those visions were true or not. I still suspect that, in a way, the name came about from this Scorsese film.

AUDRIUS POCIUS is currently studying philosophy in Vilnius University and is also interested in aesthetics, intonations of inner language and forms of narration.

JUAN DE NIEVES is an independent curator.

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JUSTINA ZUBAITĖ is part of [six chairs] BOOKS.

6
On the 25 December, 1934, Breton and Caillois had been at a friend's house for a Christmas party along with Jacques Lacan and some other people. At that time, Caillois was a 21-year old superstar of Surrealist movement, with the possibility of being anointed the new leader. What happened at this party was that someone had brought some Mexican jumping beans, which were a total novelty in Paris at that time. Everyone at the party was astonished at the beans, and everyone agreed that was a marvel. Then Caillois suggested that they cut up one to see if there was an insect inside. Breton got very upset at this suggestion and said: "What kind of Surrealist are you if you want to destroy the many possibilities suggested by this particular phenomenon by finding the one mundane truth?" Cited from: Sven Lütticken, Sina Nahafi, Dieter Roelstraete, 'Can Criticism Be a Productive Force for Speculative Thinking?' In *The Critics, The Curators, The Artist*, Rotterdam: Witte de With, Post Editions, 2010, p. 26.

On education and creative resistance:

Linara Dovydaitytė

Book review

lessons from Artūras Raila's textbook *Anti-Sport*

Juozas Miltinis. Photo from Tomas Sakalauskas
book *Monologues: Life of Miltinis* (1981)

The first artwork by Artūras Raila which I saw and which has been engrained in my memory ever since was about education. Raila's film *The Girl is Innocent* (1999) was assembled from footage, which captured the students of M. K. Čiurlionis Art Gymnasium, exhibiting artwork for teacher assessment, and the ensuing heated debate by the teachers. In the film, the art education institution emerges as a battlefield for the encounter of two differing approaches on how someone can be taught to create art. When I watched it as a student, the only thought in my head was 'to hell with education'; I believe, my current students think the same when they analyse the work during their classes on video art. In spite of (or maybe, because of) the fact that, Raila's ideas about teaching art were received with strong antagonism in the film, he took root in the field of academia and today holds a professorship in the Department of Photography and Media at Vilnius Academy of Arts. His textbook published in 2013 is dedicated to the interdisciplinary art study courses taught at BA and MA-degree levels and is a typical product of the higher education system. In Lithuania, publishing this kind of a book demonstrates the author's 'pedagogical activity' and secures him or her, a particular academic rank (of lecturer, associated professor or professor) within the hierarchical structure of academia. But *Anti-Sport* by Raila, besides being instrumental in the process of education, appears as a book that stimulates a more general reflection on education as a whole. This particular angle will be explored in my review, and I am going to leave all other interpretations to the students, not only of Raila, and to those who follow the artist as well as other readers.

I find self-reflection, in terms of content and rhetoric, to be the main and most important feature of Raila's book and it also bears the most relevance to the contemporary education context. It can also be defined as the 'eternal question', introduced by the author in the preface of the book: 'how to reconcile reason and feelings, or, in other words, to what degree a methodological approach is applicable to creative agency.' (p.4). Raila comments on the 'eternal question' by citing *The Confusions of Young Torless* by Robert Musil, in which learning is compared to an old bony hand, squeezing the brain out of the head. He also shares the insight of philosopher Peter Sloterdijk that 'intellect and the sensory are inseparable' (p.5). Considerations on the theme can be radicalised by bringing to mind the Uruguayan conceptualist Luis Camnitzer's idea that the biggest issue with teaching art is the application of the same sequence as in teaching how to read and write, when one starts with teaching reading, and only afterwards moves on to writing. In other words, one begins with copying the familiar things, and afterwards starts creating. How can this system be reconciled with the teaching of art, which is supposed to train for an investigation into the unknown?¹ Raila has his own answer to the question: 'the essence of studies in art is in the liberation of an individual's creative potential – not in the

overwhelming excess of information [...] Thinking, creation should be a pleasant activity, philosophy – a joyful science, art should be born from a fulfilling life experience – from the mixture of different feelings, of intellect and emotions. In order to sustain creative intuition and passion for productivity, some things should rather *remain unknown.*' (p.5, my italics).

In the book, the motif of knowing and unknowing calls for a revisiting of the figure of the teacher. Using his own experience (whom do we recall of our teachers?) and taking stock of new opportunities for information dissemination in the contemporary world of new technologies, Raila points out that the teacher stops being the source of knowledge and consequently the teacher's power is diminished. But power does not depend exclusively on possession (of knowledge): it can be exercised through roles. The task for the contemporary teacher is to interact and collaborate with one's pupils: 'nowadays students need attention on daily basis, an individualised relationship with the teacher and a cooperating environment.' (p. 6). 'Teacher' as an institutional status is replaced by 'teacher-personality'; the teacher-pupil relationship is personalised and enters the dangerous territory of the unexpected. On the one hand, such an approach seems to take us, in a time machine, back to pre-modern times, to the days of the master-teacher, teacher-guru. On the other hand, it strikes as very sobering in the context of fee-paying higher education, where a phantom of a new teacher – deliverer of a service – is being modelled with the growing intensity.

The title of Raila's book can also have a sobering effect. His concept of 'anti-sport' is borrowed from the stage director Juozas Miltinis: according to him, 'art is anti-sport, because it is creation...Where things are fluid, they must be complicated, complexity and variety should be sought.' (p.7) Art indeed pursues goals different from sport, even though it is common for artists to appear in all kind of biennials, similar to the Olympic Games, to compete in contests and win awards. For this reason Raila perceives art education as a complex process where the conditions of sport do not apply. The idea of anti-sport is relevant in general for the entire education system, which has been for a long time already defined by the buzzword of 'competition'. Competition, the anchor of the assessment system of student achievement, has recently engulfed much wider areas. Students, professors, scholars, study programmes, universities – each and every one is involved in competition. Under conditions of economic depression and demographic crisis, or, the influence of Neoliberalism, this universal and relentless competition connects with the existential question of survival. The idea of anti-sport provides for an opportunity of retreat and reflection on the problem of existential meaning.

¹ Luis Camnitzer, 'Art and Literacy' In *e-flux journal*, February 2009.

How does the idea of anti-sport manifest itself in Raila's book? According to the author, 'it should impregnate the entire text as a paradox without claims to fixed answers.' (p.15) The idea seems to operate on several levels. In terms of content, *Anti-Sport* can be defined as an intellectual flânerie across the territories of 20th to 21st century theory and history of art with the goal of reflecting on three elements of artistic creation – object, space and subject (which forms part of BA degree studies) and conceptualise creative process (the MA degree element of studies). Each chapter of the book is composed in a different way, e.g., one of them brings together artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys and Jeff Koons, another is dedicated to a discussion between the art theoreticians Nicolas de Oliveira, Claire Bishop and Miwon Kwon, and one more relies on Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault's quotations from Madan Sarup's *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*. These names are not going to come as a surprise to professors of contemporary art courses at academies and universities. More interesting is the fact that Raila refuses to tell the traditional history of art in terms of sources, development and achievements connected with the ideology of Citius, Altius, Fortius. Instead of presenting a consistent narrative of contemporary art, the author tries to locally re-think global ideas and practices, by connecting his personal interpretations with the 'objective' facts. This leads to the emergence of unexpected links between, for example, installation art and the Hill of Crosses (site of pilgrimage in northern Lithuania), between performance art and political activist Petras Cizikas' hunger action in the last years of Soviet regime, or between French Post-Structuralist Gilles Deleuze and Lithuanian metaphysic Arvydas Šliogeris. In reading the book, one is under the continuous impression that Raila, besides presenting things he is well versed in, or even 'knows by heart', is first of all sharing his own insights. See, for example, the fragment from an introduction into the theory on the problem of the subject:

The concept of an individual personality is connected with the Renaissance idea of 'Self' and is addressed by most contemporary theorists and culture professionals as a relic of modern times. I understand that corporate or bureaucratic capitalism makes the situation of a separate individual tragically precarious, but why, in citing the opinion of any of the creators of this drama, am I supposed to reference the source and give its page number? Because, otherwise I am in danger of violating the author's right as an individual who denies individuality. (p.118)

In terms of form *Anti-Sport* reads not so much as a dry textbook, but as an exciting piece of fiction, or, rather, a kind of a cross-over of the two genres with elements

of a detective story. Look at the titles of book's chapters alone: 'Beware: a bony hand', 'Temptations of shop windows', 'The return of the businessman', 'Provocation, but not the end!' Raila combines different modes of speaking in his book, from a highly informal writing style (sections open with questions asked by semi-real, semi-invented students), witty academic argument ('The Baroque style of Jean Baudrillard and the apocalyptic, prophetic intonations are incomprehensible to the youngsters of the 21st century who have discovered that a TV set and a PC has a "shut down" button. The third cycle of "simulacrum" is still lingering in provincial folks' desires to appear on TV, but this medium has become exclusively the property of the retired and the sick', p. 132) and 'educational' jargon, intrinsic to papers generated by higher education workers ('Within the strategy of the Department, this course is integrated as a consistent continuation of the first two years, and is synchronised with the learning objectives and goals of other subject courses, delivered in parallel.' p.12) The result is a textbook which besides conforming to all bureaucratic demands of the genre is a great pleasure to read.

Hopefully, students reading this textbook will get the message. From his target reader, Raila expects what the content and style of the book implies: creative resistance, independence, imagination, individual discoveries. It is for good reason that after a traditional teacher's gesture of providing a list of 'dispensable' references, Raila admits that 'their professor would be mostly pleased to see a youthfully infuriated student bring in, instead of the listed ('obsolete') books, following a great personal discovery, *The Federal*, *Parkett*, or *Reading Room* magazines or texts of relevance to the contemporary art.' (p.45)

As a finishing touch I offer a note on the margins of the relationship between art practice and theory. If we were to compare the space dedicated to art practice (works of art) and theory (philosophical concepts) in the book, the latter would win with an obvious advantage (neither Raila nor I have managed to avoid sports terminology). Not only that, the author considers that theory precedes practice and teaches his students the same: 'Students learn of the immense influence of philosophical discourse around artistic creation, through concrete examples of artwork from different periods they can see how theory reflects on practice.' (p.141) But does theory really impact artistic practice? Maybe the direction is sometimes reversed? Or, perhaps, it is a mutual two-way process? The analysis of contemporary art history provides for positive answers to all of the questions. But in this case, I am not concerned with the right answer, but with the consequences of such an approach. Is it not likely that the magnifying of theory has contributed to the over-production of pseudo-theoretical or pseudo-academic texts in accompaniment to each piece of art, as inherent part of the process of art education and, in general, of dissemination of art? According to Dieter Lesage,

the demand for accompanying texts in the studies of art points to either disbelief that a work of art can be meaningful by itself or the inability of the audience 'to read' the artwork created by increasingly varied media. But what if a graduation project comes to be realised using the media of the novel – should it also be supplied with a textual annex?² I would be interested to hear the answer from the author of *Anti-Sport*.

²
Dieter Lesage, 'The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts' In *e-flux journal*, March 2009.

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