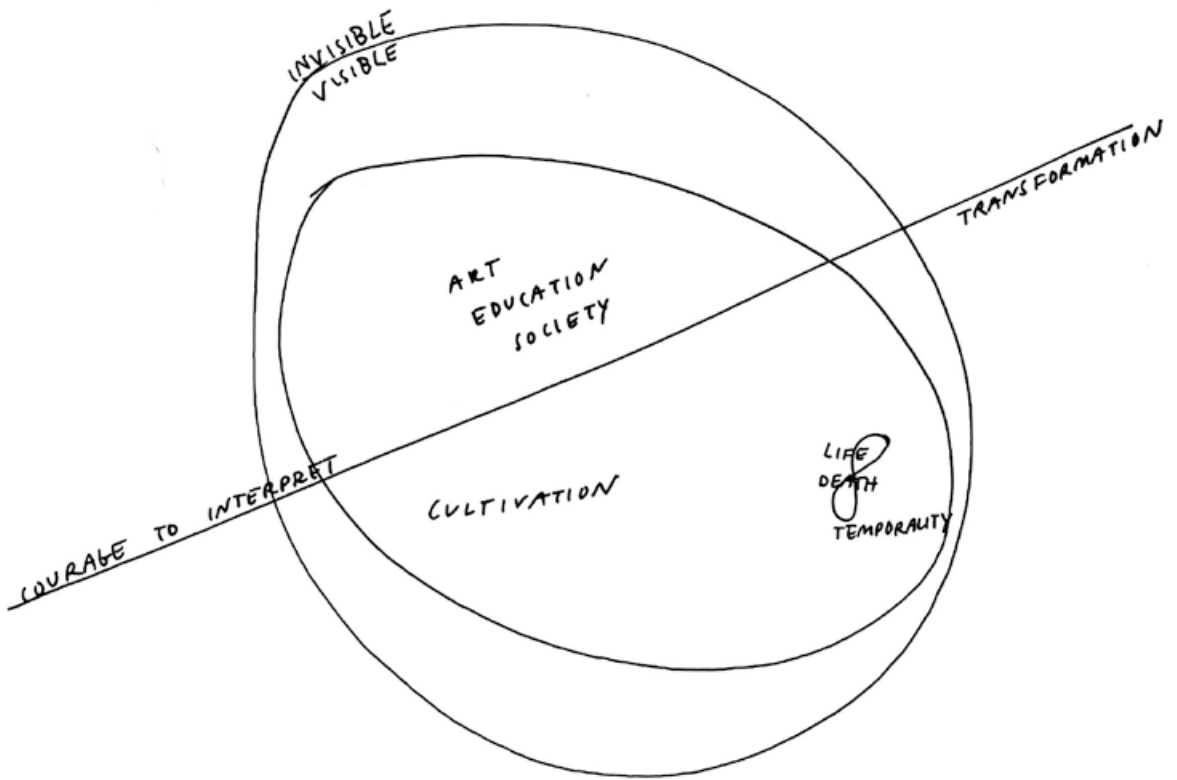


RESIDENCES

ENVIRONNEMENTS

LEARNING

Milan - 29th / 30th
of June 2015



Introduction

Angela Serino and FARE
(Beatrice Oleari / Barbara Oteri)

The following pages attempt to present to a distant audience some of the inspiring ideas that emerged from the International Meeting of Residences held in Milan on 29th and 30th June, 2015. While acknowledging the current debate surrounding artists' residences as a significant tool for cultural exchange and social development, in this meeting we have looked at residence programs from the specific point of view of (self) education and knowledge production. We started by asking ourselves and participants of the meeting if residences can be learning environments, places for collective and personal self-development that are complementary to the existing educational paths available for artists (i.e. Bachelor, Masters and PhD programs for the Arts), as well as to the educational programs currently offered by museums and art institutions.⁰¹

The invited guests, each of whom came from a different region of the world, have contributed to this discussion by offering several examples based on the experiences of the specific residence framework they work with. Some proposed a compelling analysis of how the residence institution itself can be considered a 'learning subject' which changes and grows thanks to the processes instigated by the resident artists (Sara Al Adl). Others have suggested the role of residences in relation to the formal education: residences are close to the model of self-taught art or artist-run academies (Amanda Abi Khalil); they are a different and necessary complement to the existing art academy and Phd programs (Vytautas Michelkevičius), or – in countries without art schools – they act as replacements for art education, the artist/

⁰¹ residences can be learning environments, places for collective and personal self-development that are complementary to the existing educational paths available for artists

teacher in residence becoming a significant contribution to the development of the local artists (Bayan Al Barak Kanoo). A residence can also stem from very different reasons: while in some specific areas a residence is seen as a relevant tool to enlarge the existing international art map and establish new opportunities of development for local artists (Giuseppe Moscatello, Farid Abdullayev), in others, artists and professionals from other disciplines come together, and by stretching residences' existing models and structures, they use them as temporary or prolonged occasions to practice ways to live together (Emilio Fantin), or enhance awareness on social issues, like environmental sustainability, rural regeneration and cultivation of time (Marie Fol, Gaetano Carboni).

Overall, by bringing together visions and experiences grounded on very different premises (institutional residences and artists' projects; European and non-European perspectives; one-time residences next to more established regular residences) inspiring conversations have been initiated and new affinities have emerged. What you will find in the following pages is not a faithful description of the conversations held at Frigoriferi Milanesi (Open Care) – for that we refer to the video recording available on-line¹ – rather, this booklet comprises essays and several interviews with our Italian and international guests collected after the meeting. For each of them we have selected the statements that we have found most inspiring or challenging: words and ideas that provide us with the opportunity to expand our vocabulary – and consequently – our imagination about which kind of knowledge we produce in a residence and which kind of residence program we need and want for the future. We would like to continue our conversations from this point on.

Within the contemporary art world, FARE takes on the task of listening to the system and its operators: what is missing, what needs to be done, what would people like to do. Our dominating attitude is connection, planning research tailored around sharing idea, interests and strategies inside and around contemporary visual arts. Thanks to a programme that extends over many levels, set within a precise sphere but with an open approach, we have created an international network, aware that this constant exchange between different personalities helps develop ways of thinking that lead to an openness towards new scenarios, "worlds of change", as well as occasions for new interactions among different organizations and institutions that can attract new resources.

FARE

Beatrice Oleari,
Barbara Oteri

With this philosophy we have created www.artinresidence.at, the Italian network of artist residences, an online platform constantly updating that promotes the dialogue between the residences. As an effective instrument of cultural exchange, it allows the various structures to get in touch each other by promoting the creation of a system that facilitates the mobility of artists and curators. The platform on one hand provides with news, announcements and contents relevant to the Italian residences and their international partners, on the other it stimulates and encourages the national dialogue, placing itself as interlocutor and point reference for the foreign institutions.

We have long felt the need to create an opportunity to meet and exchange for cultural workers, which in different countries and in different ways, dealing with mobility and artistic residences. It gave rise to the idea of the International Meeting that we wanted to characterize as international observatory on the practices of residence, to compare the researches coming from experiences, cultural backgrounds and different disciplines. We think it was a great opportunity of enrichment for everyone and for *artinresidence*, who was able to expand the network of contacts by laying solid bases for future collaborations.

We would like to thank all the participants for their enthusiastic commitment and for their generosity in sharing their ideas and experiences; the support of the institutions without which this would not have been possible; artist Marianna Maruyama, precious witness to the meeting and whose visual contributions beautifully has distilled a lot of the thinking and talking processes that accompanied this publication.

Conceived and promoted by FARE, the theme of the International Meeting was developed by Angela Serino, who curated the two-day program. The meeting was realized by FARE, in collaboration with GAI - Association for the Circuit of Young Italian Artists, in partnership with That's Contemporary, with the contribution of Lombardy Region and with the support of Open Care, Frigoriferi Milanesi and World Trade Center Milan.

On Artists' Residences

Sustaining open processes and unframed knowledge with long-term effects¹

Several definitions have been used in the last few years to describe the value of artists' residences and to identify their specific function in the attempt to understand where they stand as new institutions in the art field.

Angela Serino,
curator

Jean-Baptist Joly, director and founder of Schloss Solitude – one of the first residence fellowships in Europe – once stated that “residences are not museums, since they do not preserve collections”, neither schools “since there are no teachers” but “forums of affinities”. For Joly, what makes a residence unique is the possibility of bringing together a group of talented people in a place imbued with a special history or spirit. “Over the time – he continues – residents develop a sense of closeness, a lasting relationship – in some cases even friendship.”

While Joly emphasizes the value of the informal network built by and around a residence, for other professionals, like Luuk Nouwen director of FLACC in Belgium, a residence is above all a space that provides artists with facilities –such as workshops, assistance and support – to carry out ambitious and innovative works that would not be realized otherwise.

Somehow overcoming this seeming opposition between a residence as a place to rest, or to produce, to think and share or create tangible results, there is the position of IASPIS director's Johan Poussette, calling our attention to the very nature of a residence.

Residences as Learning Environments

¹This is a revised version of the introduction given on 29 June 2015. Several ideas and opinions presented on this occasion are drawn from 'On Residences', an ongoing research on residence models and experiences started in 2015.
(You can read more here: <http://onresidences.tumblr.com/>; www.angelaserino.com)

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In *Re-tooling Residencies* he writes:

“In a society running at an increasingly frenetic pace, expectations of measurable results, income generation and instrumentalisation of the arts is creating a polarization between populist and rigorous artistic research, when a residence center succeeds to facilitate open-ended processes and – where needed – allow them to stretch out in time, this can lead to an innovative advance in contemporary art that few other kinds of institution can bring out.”ⁱⁱ

Whether it is through research, collaboration or new production, a residence is above all a process with unpredictable results, motivated by the search for unknown paths: results can become visible a long time after a residence period is finished.

Continuing in Poussette’s direction we would like to further explore this idea of ‘openness’, and propose to look at each singular moment or activity of a residence – even the seemingly unproductive ones (like cooking a meal or exercising together) as an occasion to produce and put in circulation a specific knowledge that can eventually but not necessarily lead to a new work. In short, with this meeting we would like to propose the idea of residences as learning environments, and the residence period as a catalyst for processes of collective and personal (self-) development.

By proposing such hypotheses, we ask:

- ← In which sense do residences produce knowledge?
- ← If residences really are learning environments, who learns from whom?
- ← What and how do we learn?
- ← Who are the actors of this exchange? Is it just the resident artist or are there also other figures, or protagonists involved in such process?

Irit Rogoff’s compelling analysis of several kinds of knowledge available in the current social and cultural contexts offers inspiration in relation to these questions.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ p.58, Johan Poussette, “Artists in Flux”, in: “Re-tooling Residencies”, CCA Ujazdowski Castle & A-I-R Laboratory, Warsaw, 2011
ⁱⁱⁱ Irit Rogoff, “Free”, E-flux Journal #14, March 2010.

In particular, borrowing Rogoff's idea of a 'free knowledge', we would like to describe the knowledge produced in a residence as 'unframed': that is, a knowledge that does not follow one specific method or technique; that does not demand specific curricula, nor is it certified or subjected to the common mechanisms of assessment used in art academies and Universities.⁰¹

We rather see it as an intentional and personal act, including one's openness towards learning with and from others; as a learning situation that entails processes of transformation, (personal or collective); as a situation that affects the life as well as the work of the resident artist, but also the ones who enter in contact with him.

These are the hypotheses that we wanted to test with our guests over the two-day meeting. The specific practices of the invited residences programs are indeed examples of learning processes activated through the presence of resident artists in specific cities, neighbourhoods or regions of the world. From here we hope to formulate specific observations in relation to ideas of residences and education. We are of course aware that this occasion is just the first step in this direction of research and investigation, which will require more occasions and more time for a complete articulation.

With this topic we certainly do not enter an empty field. Art and Education has indeed been widely discussed in the last decade in the arts. Without making any attempts to summarize the academic and curatorial debate on the 'Educational Turn' in art here, I would like only to point at two specific areas that are at the intersection of the fields of art, education and society and which are examples I believe can guide and inspire us through this investigation.

The first is located at the intersection of education and society and is the area of what is commonly referred to as 'Critical or Radical Pedagogy': a terrain of practices that includes popular education, co-research, collective practices, popular theatre, critical literacy, participatory action research, and social justice education. One example of this area is for instance, L'Ecole Moderne,

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⁰² we do not accept the so-called new knowledge economy as the framing understanding of knowledge.

We work with forms of knowledge that are fleeting, fluid, schizophrenic, uncompromising; subjective, uneconomic, produced in the kitchen, produced when asleep or arisen on a social excursion – collectively

founded by Elise and Celestine Freinet in France and active from the 1920's until 1966. Celestine Freinet was a communist educator who broke from traditional party education processes to produce practices of cooperative learning with children of the working class in rural areas. What inspired his actions was clearly the principle of 'learning by doing'. The core feature of every Freinet school was, indeed, a collectively owned and operated printing press. Students learned to read and write by making collaborative newspapers based on their observations of the world. Freinet called the printing press and other teaching practices developed in the popular schools as 'techniques for living'.

The second area, placed at the intersection of art and education, is what we can call the 'Artists' Schools and Educational Projects'. As with the first case, here too, the list of existing projects is quite long and includes several artists who envisioned or initiated projects in the form of alternative institutions for education. To name a few examples: we have Joseph Beuys' Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research (founded in 1974); the Copenhagen Free University in Copenhagen (founded in 2001) by Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen; and most recently The Silent University developed by Ahmet Öğüt (launched in 2012).

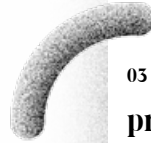
Here I would like to quote an excerpt from the manifesto of The Copenhagen Free University. Started by Heise and Jakobsen in their apartment, they describe the Copenhagen Free University, as "an art institution dedicated to the production of critical consciousness and poetic language. We do not accept the so-called new knowledge economy as the framing understanding of knowledge. We work with forms of knowledge that are fleeting, fluid, schizophrenic, uncompromising; subjective, uneconomic, produced in the kitchen, produced when asleep or arisen on a social excursion – collectively.⁰²"

I believe that there is a dynamic relationship between each artists' initiative or educator's initiative that I have mentioned and their institutional counterparts. Institutions and non-institutions are in relation with one

other. This can be a relation of 'conflict' or differentiation, or of fruitful collaboration and partnership. In any case, it is a relation that evolves (and has evolved) over time, making the boundaries between art, education and society even more porous and unfixed.

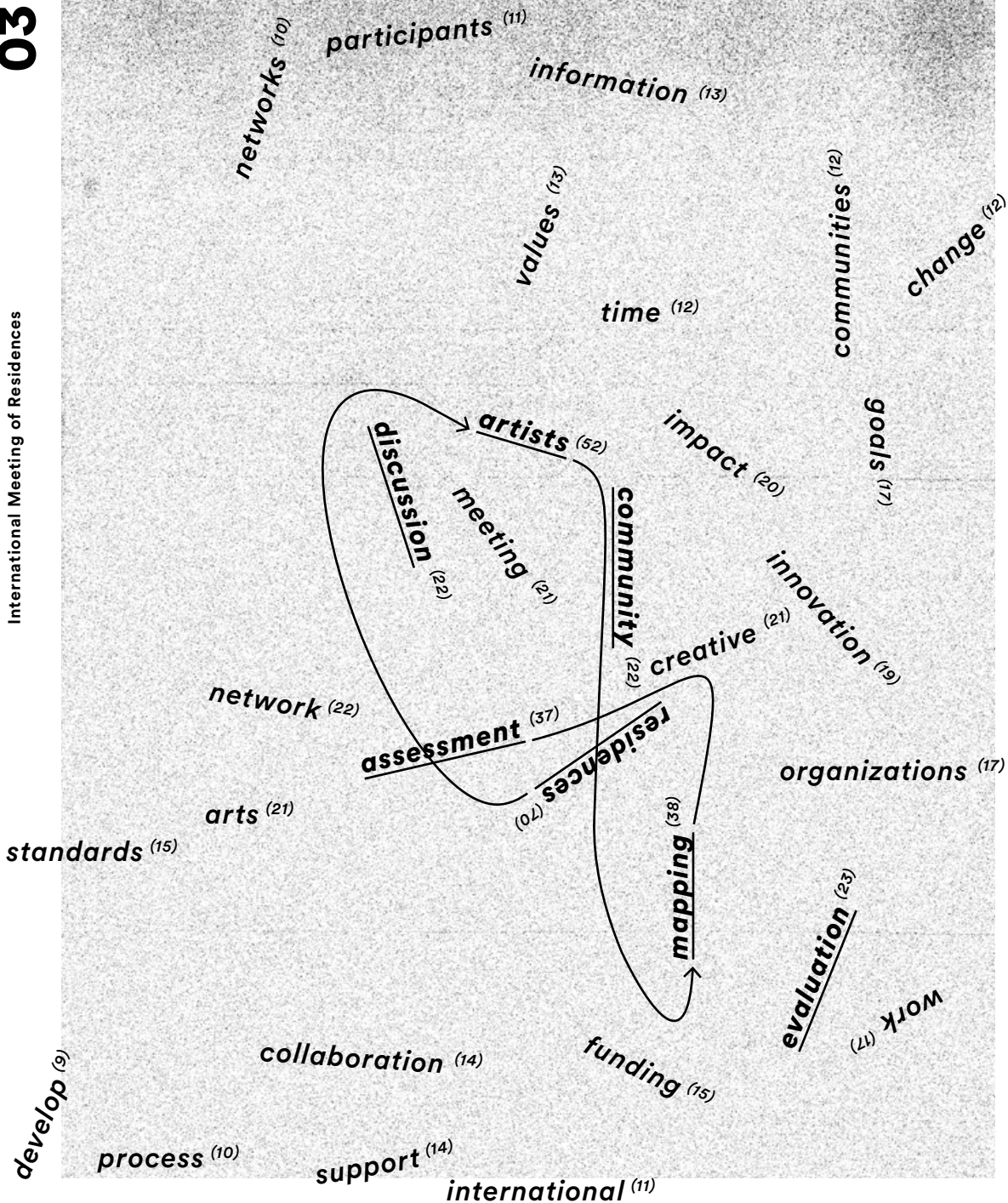
To think of residence programs as learning environments means to start drawing a place for residences in between these three areas, each of which has a long and engaging history.⁰³

Let us keep this temporary map in the back of our mind, and eventually see what we can borrow from these histories and experiences.



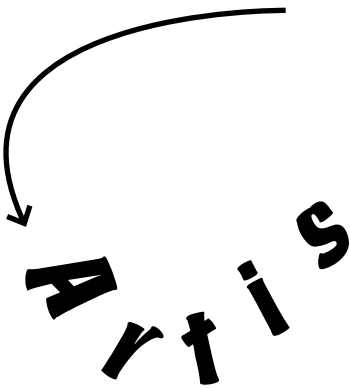
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Primary Keywords*



Worldwide Network of Artist Residences:

2 9 7 common words used
in the artist residences' discourse



Active since 1993, Res Artis is today the largest network of artist residences, counting over 500 centers and organizations in over 70 countries. Through vis-à-vis meetings and online presence, Res Artis aims to promote the role of residential art programs as a vital part of the contemporary arts world, stimulate the creative development and mobility of artists and further intercultural understanding.

Invited to present Res Artis' role and profile, current Res Artis Managing Director Mark Vennegoor shared with us some of the results of the general meetings held by the organization in the last three years.

Vennegoor pointed out some of the results that came out of the General Meeting in Bellagio, Italy (in 2012), where members of the organization were asked to answer key-questions such as: what shared values are most important in the field of artist residences? The values listed as answers were, in order of frequency: respect, freedom, tolerance, generosity, inclusivity, responsiveness, learning. The second main question was: what shared goals are most important for the field of artist residences? The answers collected in this case were: artistic development, exchange and communication, creativity, creation of new opportunities for artists, diversity empowerment and collaboration, positive social change, community engagement, learning.

As pointed out by Vennegoor, in both cases learning did not figure among the first and most relevant values perceived as a benefit of a residence program. However, it is also true that learning – like the other concepts – was not individually fully explored.

(*) Vennegoor has also shared with us the content of the most recent general meeting held by Res Artis. The list of collected terms at the beginning of this text is a selection of the primary key terms used in the reports compiled by Res Artis. With this simple operation, we attempted to visualize the main words used in the current discourse of the artist residences field and see if any of the new words collected by this international meeting already have a space or place in it.

The primary words are taken from: Res Artis Meeting in collaboration with the Alliance of Artists Communities, Bellagio Center, Italy (April 4 – 6, 2012); Res Artis General Meeting, Tokyo Wonder Site, Tokyo, Japan (October 25 – 28, 2012); Meeting of the Asia – Australia-Europe Creative Residency Network (AAECRN), in collaboration with Asialink, University of Melbourne, Australia (May 9 – 12, 2014).

An Unfungible Fallout Between Challenges

and Desires

T = e v a l u e of Education:

Education is crucial; everybody agrees about this. Less unanimously agreed upon is the meaning itself of the word, which is being abused just like art, culture, family, ethics and a wide range of labels often adopted to justify and support partial and biased views. Considering its etymological roots, education means to lead out of the comfort zone, action that needs a critical view fed by doubts and arguments, not certainly the mere dimensional accumulation of notions⁰¹. Culture is not erudition, art is not bizarre illumination; education cannot be the mere endowment of technical norms and mnemonic information.

In such a respect culture can be considered both the source and the outcome of education:⁰² in its endemic mobility and evolution, on one hand the cultural approach – still, its etymological roots show us the properties of cultivation: a relationship between seed and soil, and the multiplication of value⁰³ – generates critical views and therefore educates individuals; on the other hand, education as a process strengthens and widens cultural views. In the present years culture and education are passing from the conventional nature of decoration needed by a trivial bourgeoisie to the powerful response aimed at the prevailing urgency in contemporary society: the representation of the self. We could object that it has always been like this.

Michele Trimarchi,
Founder and President
of Tools for Culture (IT)

Residences as

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True, but it was abruptly interrupted by the industrial revolution, when entrepreneurs understood that it was advantageous not to represent themselves as they really were.

They simply borrowed the pasts of other cultures, from ancient Egypt to Renaissance in order to prove some kind of 'blessed' fortune by history: the undiscussed illusion of capitalism as the golden age which humanity was bound to since its appearance.

In such a dimensional and mechanical paradigm the leading values used to be efficiency, competition and excellence; everything was easily measured, and this could generate rankings able to affect individual and social action. Its metaphor is the symphonic orchestra, where each single artist has no power to choose, and only the conductor (a sort of ritual leader) decides every move. It's Fordism.

Such a simple (simplistic?) paradigm is fading away, maybe slowly but certainly in a clear way. The emerging economy, defined as either a knowledge-based economy or a sharing economy, or given similar labels, is based upon the rise of smoother values: experience, relationship, and proximity. The economic orientations may appear to be magmatic, certainly they are evolutionary and finally release the rigidity of rationality, maximization, full information.

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Normal actions, such as the use of time and resources without a precise exchange value are no longer anomalies, and what mainstream economists were able to label 'generosity' is bound to be considered the simple acknowledgement of non-measurable value.⁰⁴

In order for us to understand the emerging paradigm we can quickly interpret the recent commercial, social and cultural trends through the evolution of games. To play is among the most serious human actions: players are prepared to suffer and even to be hurt, if they want to win or to lose with honour. In the 1970s, it was pinball, an athletic sort of game involving all our body and negotiated with strength. In those years society was experiencing unexpected conflicts (also students were protesting and occupying schools and universities), culture was divided into élitist and popular: clothes had to appear worn.

Then, in years of weakness generated by workers', feminists' and students' challenges, playing was dematerialized: Pacman and Supermario were evanescent, and games only required the use of an eye and a finger. The social peace of the 1980s had to overcome a more complex identity, and we were cloned in a sort of optimistic, aggressive and a-critical model; clothes were labeled, in order for people wearing them to be protected by their 'griffes'; culture catered to blockbuster hits, with popular exhibitions and three tenors' concerts.

Since the turn of the millennium we have been experiencing a new, complex and intriguing paradigm, dominated by digital language and by the expanding touch dimension. We could define such a playful framework 'delicate exploration'. It is not occasionally that the frequent and varied festivals being realised in many countries prove a powerful way to reconquer the urban texture. Having been isolated in ivory towers for too long, culture, artistic production and versatile creativity has come back in our ordinary lives everywhere, redesigning the urban spaces: it is a new *forma urbis*, where culture is the main driver and source of shared identity. If we manage to unformat our views, and to unlabeled the arts, then the resident community will become again the main stakeholder of the cultural system⁰⁵. Visitors will come, since they ask to be embedded in a lively community rather than visit beautiful and boring cemeteries.

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In such a framework, art residences become a powerful source of value and identity. Rooted, connected and possibly multicultural, they will exert a unique impact upon local society and economy, generating less income flows and employment of commercial centres, but strengthening territorial identity, residents' sense of belonging, appropriate outcomes for human capital, socialization, reciprocal listening and tolerance, social inclusion. Each of these benefits is measurable, and each also generates monetary flows, although this is not certainly the main goal. This is the unfungible value of the arts and culture. Only a widely and deeply educated society can not only appreciate such a value, but also contribute to build its channels and outcomes. A substantial design of the urban areas, where the presence of the arts and culture is simply the norm, would prove perfectly consistent with the economic and social paradigm of our future.



A Knowledge Alliance Between 19 Partner Organizations

an interview with

Marie Fol,
Dutch Culture | TransArtists
Programme Manager,
Amsterdam (NL)

GALA stands for Green Art Lab Alliance and it is a project that developed over two years (May 2013 – May 2015) through a network of nineteen partner organisations based in eleven European countries, as well as in Georgia and Singapore. Started from DutchCulture|TransArtists (NL) and Julie's Bicycle (UK), the project brought together different kinds of organizations – artist-in-residences, but also art and cultural organizations, and grass-roots activist organizations already involved in the promotion and discussion of environmental sustainability. As stated in the project's official page: "GALA's approach was to use creative research and imaginative thinking to help create a more sustainable Europe. It was conceived as a pilot that would test different approaches intended to engage the European creative and cultural sector in promoting environmental sustainability through the work produced and the way it operates.[...] The main starting point was the visual arts and design field, but GALA embraced a broad interdisciplinary art practice. Several projects developed an approach that connected artists, scientists, environmental activists and communicators, while others took root in the histories, present day concerns and habitual work activities of local communities."

We have asked Marie Fol, currently DutchCulture|TransArtists Programme Manager and one of the project managers of the GALA Project, a few questions looking back at the conception and development of such a project.

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Angela Serino (AS): GALA brought together organizations with different level of expertise and experience around the urgent and complex theme of sustainability. As one of the main mediators/leaders of such a process, what were the main challenges faced by TransArtists in order to create a common ground and a shared vocabulary among all the different partners? And which ideas shaped your working method?

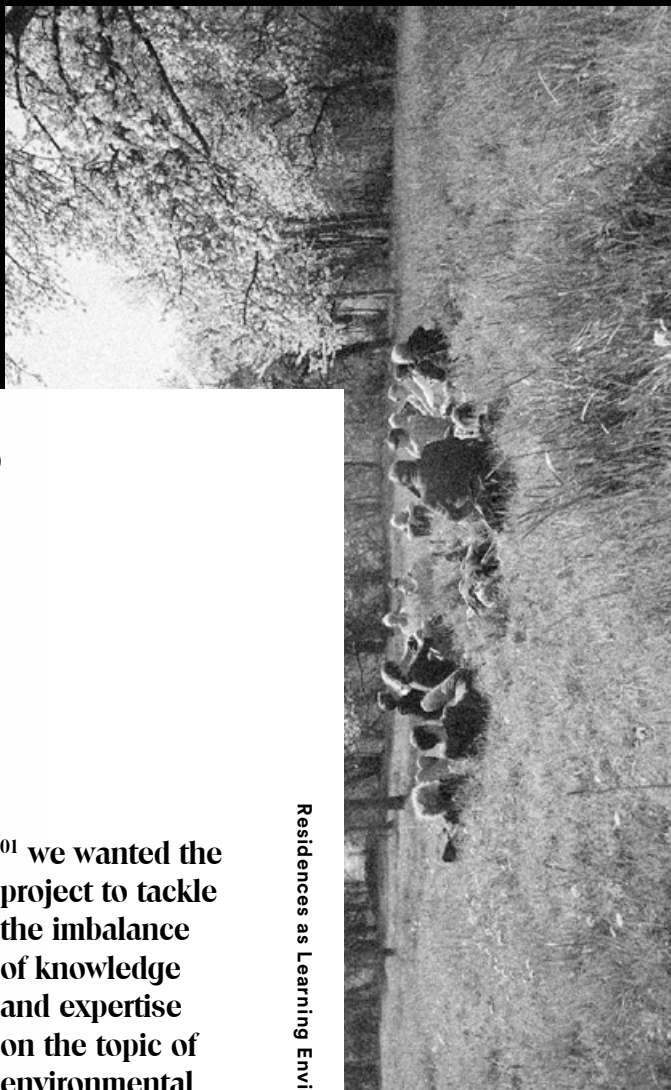
Marie Fol (MF): The GALA project was developed slowly, before we got the main funding for the project (European funding from the Culture Programme, running from 2013 to 2015).

A big part of the process started when we identified the different partners: indeed, we wanted the project to tackle the imbalance of knowledge and expertise on the topic of environmental sustainability in arts and culture organizations, what turned out to be the development of a knowledge alliance.⁰¹

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Residences as Learning Environments

Milan - 29th / 30th
of June 2015



Presentation by Mick Zwamborn during
Cross-section of a Landscape, Walk 1, by
Mick Zwamborn & Yeh Wiersma.

GALA lab at the Jan Van Eyck Academie
(2015) © Yeh Wiersma

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This was a challenge, because we wanted to include organizations already working on this specific topic who could share their expertise and learn from others (Julie's Bicycle, Cape Farewell, Translocal, Tipping Point UK, Creative Carbon Scotland, Pollinaria,..) as well as 'newcomers', organizations that identified this topic as an urgency but didn't yet have the knowledge and the tools to go further with it – and also everything in between, meaning organisations that have had some involvement but wanted to go a step further.

This imbalance in expertise and experience was definitely a challenge – but also a great strength for the project since we knew this would be something we needed to address⁰². As we were very transparent about this imbalance, I believe it helped others to connect with our project and feel at ease with taking part in it. I'm thinking specifically of local partners who identified to host or join certain GALA activities: they easily understood that they didn't need a specific level of knowledge to be part of our Alliance, and could identify with at least one of the GALA partners in the issues they were facing themselves.

On purpose, our project proposal remained very open: we knew we would have to adapt each and every planned activity to the wishes and needs of the context in which these activities were set to take place. Furthermore, we knew there should be place for try-outs and an experimental approach, as the topic of environmental sustainability can be difficult to tackle, due to its various expressions in Europe. There also needed to be time for discussion, for the development of a common understanding of what we were actually talking about.

This is why, at the time we planned the project and applied for funding, we decided to present the work plan in two parts: workshops and labs. The basic idea was that workshops would deal with more practical issues, and were to be led by an expert from Julie's Bicycle. On the other hand, labs were a more open framework and could take the form of a residence (but also not necessarily), and were to involve artists more directly.

This work plan was a very flexible, open framework in which every activity could be shaped based on the context in which it was taking place. I believe this approach allowed for organic development to adjust the possibilities to act with (and within) the project, as well as allow for personalization of the content of the activities – which is key when one deals with a topic as complex as the one at hand.⁰³

As the coordinating organisation – but also in terms of communication to a larger audience, this was a great challenge to deal with. How do you manage a project that is composed of so many small parts, each defined according to their (local and/or conceptual) context? How do you make sure there is a red thread throughout the project?

I believe that the extra component of partners' meetings was key for us to create a common ground, a shared approach for all the partners to address the issue together as well as in their own constituency. Throughout the project we had three partners' meetings, hosted by Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht (NL) in June 2013, Riksstallningar in Visby (SE) in May 2014 and Glasgow Arts & Creative Carbon Scotland in Glasgow (UK) in March 2015, to which all 19 partners were invited. The discussions started in Maastricht (and continued throughout the project) were key: together we addressed the wishes and challenges each of us saw in GALA; we decided to write a document together about the vision and mission of this specific project; and finally we also tackled the term of sustainability itself. These meetings set the basis for a common ground, a shared approach to allow knowledge to develop and be shared in a group that couldn't be more diverse.

AS — Reflecting on the GALA project, how did this project help you and the participating organizations shape your ideas about sustainability

MF — The GALA project focused its activity on the environmental part of sustainability, meaning for instance the impact of climate change, the human influence on the environment, and so on.

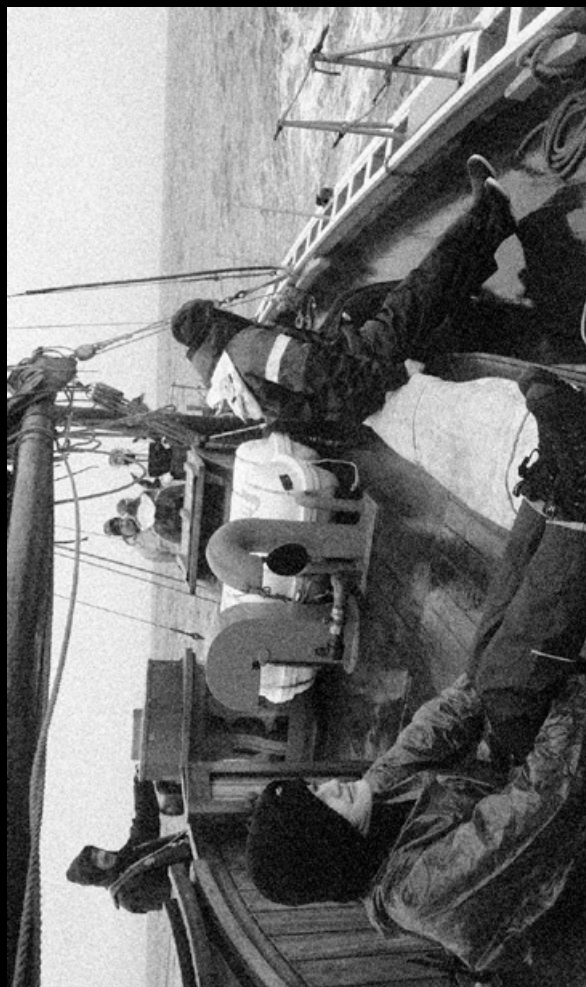
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However, after two years working on the topic, I can say that we have incorporated sustainability in a larger discourse – one that is not new but I think fits better with how arts and culture can be actively involved with sustainability.

As stated on the project's website, "A commonly accepted model involves the 'three pillars' of environmental, economic and social factors which must overlap in order to achieve sustainability. More recently there has been a growing movement towards including a 'fourth pillar' in this model which recognizes culture as playing an essential role in growing more sustainable societies through social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability."

Through its organic development, GALA tackled issues that go beyond climate actions – I'm thinking for instance of the activities developed by CCA Ujazdowski Castle (PL) around well-being and the importance of sustainability in the work place. I think we have worked more toward including the two other pillars, economic and social factors into our idea of sustainability. The economic factor is obvious in the cultural field: money is often lacking and we need to use long-term thinking to make sure the money we invest in a project or a programme will have its impact. Regarding the social factor: this is also key within the cultural field – we often have to prove and reaffirm the value of the arts, the value of culture, and its relevance for society.

On the Swan boat during the 2013 Sea Change expedition,
GALA floating lab by Cape Farewell around the Shetland Islands (2013)
© Cape Farewell



I believe that the research Yasmine Ostendorf (past staff member of three GALA partners: Trans Artists, Julie's Bicycle and Cape Farewell) is currently undertaking in Asia on "creative responses to (social and environmental) sustainability in Asia" is a great example of the idea of sustainability we have reached with the GALA project.

To sum up, sustainability⁰⁴ is the combination of the above-mentioned pillars. It is about social change, environmental responsibility, economical viability – in a word, long-term thinking⁰⁵. And we need to take action according to these lines.

AS — As a result of such a project, DutchCulture|TransArtists and the other GALA partners have developed what you have called a "knowledge alliance". Could you tell us a bit more what this term stands for?

MF — GALA was set up as a cooperative project between a diverse range of organizations working together toward the same goal: help create a more sustainable Europe by promoting environmental sustainability. The term "knowledge alliance" fits for this project quite well, when we use the definition provided by the European funding programme Erasmus+: "Knowledge Alliances are transnational, structured and result-driven projects (...). Knowledge Alliances are open to any discipline, sector and to cross-sectoral cooperation. The partners share common goals and work together towards mutually beneficial results and outcomes."⁰⁶

For most of the partners, working on environmental sustainability issues in the arts and culture field has been a pioneering process during the lifetime of the project. Experience and expertise were shared during the activities:

← The workshops focused specifically on this aspect of knowledge transfer, but the workshop leaders also learned a lot about the different meaning of sustainability in various European contexts, which helped them develop a more suitable approach on how to communicate their expertise.

⁰⁴ sustainability... ⁰⁵ is about social change, environmental responsibility, economical viability – in a word, long-term thinking

⁰⁶ knowledge Alliances are transnational, structured and result-driven projects (...). Knowledge Alliances are open to any discipline, sector and to cross-sectoral cooperation. The partners share common goals and work together towards mutually beneficial results and outcomes

⁰⁷ many partners reported that they went through a journey of learning, both professionally and in a more personal way. There was a lot of trust among the partners, as they remained open, curious and critical throughout two years of collaboration. The knowledge developed and shared in the GALA project was not intended to be validated by any authority, so we have not developed a formal learning component in the project

- ← Building and sharing knowledge took also place in the labs, each time being set up to offer the best possible means to encourage common learning and sharing outcomes (residences, conferences, artists' walks, expeditions, etc.). The process was horizontal, experts and newcomers equally brought value to the project.
- ← Partners' meetings allowed moments for the partners to find solidarity in their experiences, challenges, doubts and insecurities – all of this allowing the partners to move forward with best practices, solutions and new ideas to work with the topic.

Also, many partners reported that they went through a journey of learning, both professionally and in a more personal way. There was a lot of trust among the partners, as they remained open, curious and critical throughout two years of collaboration. The knowledge developed and shared in the GALA project was not intended to be validated by any authority, so we have not developed a formal learning component in the project.⁰⁷

The project is much more designed to be open and transferable further, both in its content as in its format. In terms of content, we produced the 'GALA funding guide', so artists and arts organizations working with this topic can identify funding sources more easily – partly based on the funding sources we identified for our own activities in the project. In terms of format, the "Reflection on the GALA project" by EU expert Judith Staines offers key points for organizations to understand how we worked and how to develop a similar project.

I would not per se consider all GALA partners and participants as *experts on European sustainability* – but for sure they have considerable experience in sharing knowledge, building and working in such an alliance with international partners, and in long-term social and environmental vision for their activities. There are many more steps to become experts on European sustainability – but at least we are on the way.

AS — About the legacy of the project, how did you plan to collect, promote and make accessible the knowledge that all your partners have developed so far?

MF — The legacy of the project is in the connections developed between the partners, in the trust built between each other, and in the dissemination of the outcomes, the content and the project's structure – both during the lifetime of the project, and after.⁰⁸

This is a key aspect for the project during its funded period – and one that has been a challenge. Many of the activities of the project were immaterial: walks, talks, expeditions, etc. Therefore, the legacy of such activities has proven difficult. However, some of our partners produced publications (books or magazines) that are still available and present a good part of the knowledge developed in these activities⁰⁹. I'm thinking for instance of *The Dark Side* – an outcome of the lab of Studio Umschichten at CCA Ujazdowski Castle AIR Laboratory (PL), *River Ecologies: Contemporary Art and Environmental Humanities on the Danube* – a publication from Translocal (HU) as an outcome of their GALA lab 'the River School'. Furthermore, Translocal has offered to make use of their physical library in Budapest (HU) to host all the material compiled about the project, so artists and researchers can access it if they are looking for information and knowledge about environmental sustainability.

A large part of dissemination of our knowledge also went through online channels and remains accessible there – as well as widely promoted through media partners (Culture360.org, TransEurope Halles and Imagine2020) and other GALA partners (on www.on-the-move.org and www.transartists.org, for instance). Our facebook page is still active and we continue to maintain a link with our virtual community through social media.

And TransArtists committed itself to make knowledge about artist residences working with art and environment more searchable through its online database – which will be continuously developed and made accessible freely in the coming months.

⁰⁸ the legacy of the project is in the connections developed between the partners, in the trust built between each other, and in the dissemination of the outcomes, the content and the project's structure – both during the lifetime of the project, and after

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¹⁰ there are other activities that continue beyond the lifetime of the EU funding

There are other activities that continue beyond the lifetime of the EU funding¹⁰: Consortium Instabile, the project developed by Pollinaria, is still being broadcasted on Italian radio and exhibited at the MAXXI Museum in Rome, Italy. Many GALA partners are also joining forces to continue and make our newly acquired knowledge accessible in larger events – such as the ArtCop21 in Paris, FR.

International Meeting of Residences

Milan - 29th / 30th
of June 2015

Presentation by Miek Zwamborn
during Cross-section of a Landscape,
Walk I, by Miek Zwamborn & Yeh Wiersma,
GALA lab at the Jan Van Eyck Academie (2015)
© Yeh Wiersma



Consortium

06

a treehouse
living above ground, but woven
closely to the tree
above ground gains perspective
one can see a sunrise before those on the ground
and can make a small symphony to announce
the rising of the sun or use mirrors
to re-direct the sunlight down to the ground
where a small fire is started.

it takes this perspective to start fires
fires of ideas
fires to make people jump above the ground...ouch hot ground
in the jump they let go
a suspended moment
where we forget
and when we land we are in a new territory of space/time
and openness.

a tree house raising
together we pull it up.
we make our own rope
we make our own pulleys
and decide together the form
and how it raises.

a small space
to feel we have escaped
but not to escape, just to see a scape
in the land.

please join us as we lift ourselves
above the ground for one day.

an interview with
Gaetano Carboni,
Founder and Director
of Pollinaria,
Abruzzo (IT)

Residences as Learning Environments

Credits
Futurefarmers' invitation for the first launch of
"Consortium Instabile" at Pollinaria, in 2014

Milano - 29th / 30th
of June 2015

01 Pollinaria is a cultivation of time



Pollinaria is an organic farm on the hills close to the Gran Sasso mountains, in rural Abruzzo, where artists and art collectives are invited to develop specific research projects at the crossroads of art, agriculture and science. In the words of Gaetano Carboni – founder and director of this programme – Pollinaria is a “concept of regeneration for the agrarian environment, a radical and composite organism design to distil the essence of a new rural archetype.” Similarly to the act of pollination for plants, the name already suggests a set of practices aimed at activating new processes and a will to contribute to developments of new behaviours in the rural contexts.

Angela Serino (AS): Art, Agriculture, Habitat, Code are the main key-words offered to the on-line visitors of Pollinaria’s website confirming once more the will of this organization to operate at the crossroads of several disciplines and fields of expertise from a relative liminar position: an organic farm among the hills close to the Gran Sasso mountains. Using only a few words, how would you describe the main focus of Pollinaria today, about eight years after its beginning?

Gaetano Carboni (GC): Pollinaria is a cultivation of time⁰¹. A principle of regeneration that seeks expression through a variety of research fields and concrete actions converging towards a common goal: the imagination of the future rural environment and civilization. After eight years, Pollinaria keeps intact the spirit and overall aims that have inspired its origins. At the same time, the knowledge and experience gained over the course of these first years of operation has broadened its perspectives toward new territories that expand our notion of rurality. These are explored through a more inclusive participation of local and international communities in the initiated programmes.

AS — Consortium Istabile¹ is the main project that Pollinaria developed in the collaborative framework offered by the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) project. Can you tell us something more about this project’s premises and development?

GC — Consortium Instabile is an experimental architecture, radio, research and public programming



Consortium Instabile. Futurefarmers in their base camp at Pollinaria, 2014.
Ph. / Daniela d'Artelli

project that operates in Abruzzo and other rural regions within the European context. Its core is represented by a rural radio station developed by Futurefarmers on a tree house designed and built by the art collective at Pollinaria.

⁰² Consortium Instabile acts also as an interchange of ideas and various initiatives aiming to give voice to a dispersed network of agrarian protagonists in a continuous effort to achieve rural regeneration

Consortium Instabile acts also as an interchange of ideas and various initiatives aiming to give voice to a dispersed network of agrarian protagonists in a continuous effort to achieve rural regeneration.⁰²

It all started from the invitation to take part of GALA, by proposing a project reflecting the involvement of a cultural organisation in environmental sustainability and applying an approach capable of engaging public communities on multiple scales and forms. The project involves the creation and broadcasting of radio content focusing on the future of agriculture and rural areas and societies; it also fosters various activities of farmers and seed custodians devoted to the preservation and sharing of endangered species of grain.

One of the first points of contact between Consortium Instabile and its audience was an exhibition held at MAXXI in Rome, where members of the agrarian community along with artists and scientists were invited to participate in a live radio debate about the issues central to the project. The exhibition also featured documentation illustrating Consortium Instabile's activities and a selection of items designed by the artistic collective Futurefarmers during the first two years of operation.

AS — Consortium Instabile in GALA: what did you learn and what did you unlearn by taking part in the GALA project? And from whom did you learn the most?

GC — The GALA project has proved to be the ideal environment for the project to germinate and develop. We tried to capture the spirit of the network by involving a variety of rural communities geographically related to some of the other participants and this work has resulted in concrete, interlinked actions. The idea of realising an initiative in direct contact and with the participation of local actors has also made possible to achieve our aim of initiating with this project a new field of engagement for Pollinaria: one that combines research in art and agriculture with an activist attitude, with the intention of reinforcing our identity as an agent of change that goes beyond its own borders to embrace rural citizens in what takes the form of a collective effort and objective.

Live Together How to

31
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07

... so that they become receptive to the inpouring forces of the Cosmos.

In the tiny seed-formation there is chaos, and away in the far circumference there is chaos once more.

Chaos in the seed must interact with chaos in the farthest circles of the Universe. Then the new being arises.

Rudolf Steiner. The agriculture course. Bio-Dynamic Agricultural association, Rudolf Steiner House, London, 1958.

Since *rhuthmos* is by definition individual, *idiorrhhythm* is almost a pleonasm: the interstices, the fugitivity of the code, of the manner in which the individual inserts himself into the social (or natural) code. Has to do with subtle forms of way of life: moods, unstable configurations, phases of depression or elation; in short the exact opposite of an inflexible, implacably regular cadence.

Roland Barthes. How to Live Together - Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces, Columbia University Press, 2013.

Più questa "vita" pensa di avere tutte le ragioni dalla sua parte più deve accorgersi che c'è una "assenza" (il generale, l'unico) incomprensibile ed avanza la morte. La vita si trasforma in morte e la morte si trasforma in vita. Io permetto a queste categorie moderniste di prendersi gioco di me, scambiandosi i ruoli continuamente.

an interview with

Emilio Fantin,
artist member of
Free Home University,
Lecce (IT)

Residences as Learning Environments

Milieu - 29th / 30th
of June 2015

La speranza è che questo lavoro di morte possa un giorno liberare la sua promessa di vita. Come a primavera quando i lillà sono liberati dalla terra morta.

Francesco Matarrese. Contributo al progetto L'inadeguato, di Dora Garcia, Padiglione spagnolo, Biennale di Venezia, 2011.

Angela Serino (**AS**): With 'Free Home University', the idea of a residence is shattered and becomes rather the occasion to think and practice of how to live together with others. What do you think each word in the title of this project (freedom, home and university) adds or leads to this development?

Emilio Fantin (**EF**): I guess that the use of the term 'university' was inspired by some alternative movements since the 1970s, like the FIU (Free International University, 1973) by Joseph Beuys, or the Anti University of London (1968). They experimented with a different structure of the school and the classroom. Instead of hierarchical organization between students and teachers, these schools were organized horizontally through a peer-to-peer forum. In the context of FHU, we discussed what the word 'university' meant to us. We found that the term

'university' was not appropriate to describe our intentions. We didn't want to be an

alternative institution but rather a Home, a place to learn how to live, and live together⁰¹. Regarding the term 'free' we found it to be too generic, but in the case of FHU it means to be free of payment.

AS — What is the idea of education that underpins the FHU?

EF — The idea was to question ourselves on the form of education we wanted to research together. Our practice was organized to develop in each one of us a self-educational approach.⁰²

AS — "The Celebration of the Dead" is one of the activities you did at the FHU. You said that it came from reaching the understanding that "if the visible community exists, it must also contain the invisible – those who are not present."

⁰¹ we found that the term 'university' was not appropriate to describe our intentions. We didn't want to be an alternative institution but rather a Home, a place to learn how to live, and live together

⁰² our practice was organized to develop in each one of us a self-educational approach

Can you tell us something more about this shared experience?

EF — “The Celebration of the Dead” is a sort of pilgrimage which takes place each year on November 2nd, on the occasion of the Day of the Dead, a traditional Catholic celebration, in which people go to cemeteries and pray for their dearly departed. We, I mean Lu Cafausu, a collaborative art project by myself, Luigi Negro, Giancarlo Norese, Cesare Pietroiusti and Luigi Presicce, tried to propose something different. We thought that to face death and look for a dialogue with the dead is an important key to understand our existence and our relationship to reality⁰³. For the last edition of the Celebration of the Living, we asked everyone to metaphorically bring with them someone dear, a friend, or someone who passed away. People can communicate with the dead through prayer, meditation, or different practices and rituals, and of course through their feelings. A community of living beings is based on some ideal values which allow feelings and ideas to be shared, also when people are not physically present.⁰⁴ This immaterial aspect of human beings is what continues to live after death. It is key to connect the living and the dead: the ‘invisible community’ is the idea of a community in which people are not only considered for their physical presence, but also for their immaterial substance. Feeling is both necessary to nourish the immaterial substance of the living and the spiritual essence of the dead.

AS — Which are your reasons to decide not to ‘represent’ (or document) this activity – as well as the others – in any form?

EF — We thought about developing an idea of documentation which was a direct consequence of our living together – not a documentation of what we have done, but a nucleus of knowledge in term of values and thinking, to keep with us, individually.

AS — In several of FHU’s experiences – as well as in your practice as an individual artist – there is a strong interest in looking at the cultivation of nature and agriculture as a possibility to look for other imaginaries and understandings of art.

⁰³ we thought that to face death and look for a dialogue with the dead is an important key to understand our existence and our relationship to reality

⁰⁴ a community of living beings is based on some ideal values which allow feelings and ideas to be shared, also when people are not physically present

Can you elaborate a bit more on this?

EF — In FHU we developed our sensitivity in relation to agriculture through food. We were very careful about what we were eating, not only to take care of our health, but also as a consequence of our relationship with natural elements and our respect for living organisms.

AS — During your talk, you remarked that there is a “visionary aspect” involved in “producing ideas and rituals” and this has to do with an underlying cosmology.

⁰⁵ I'm very interested in biodynamic agriculture, where imagination and practice meet. Agriculture and art share this same approach

EF — I'm very interested in biodynamic agriculture, where imagination and practice meet. Agriculture and art share this same approach⁰⁵. Biodynamic agriculture is focused on the soil as a living organism, an organism with a physical body that reflects a cosmogony. To access this idea, one has to project her or his vision beyond pragmatic thinking and a purely technical approach. Imagination is the link between biodynamics and art. In the context of the FHU, I promoted the biodynamic course with artists, farmers, intellectuals and entrepreneurs. Not all of them were ready to understand such a cosmogony, but all of them agreed about the beauty and the poetics of the biodynamic agriculture when they saw the results of the what grew.

Curatorial Space Between the Vilnius Academy of Arts, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the Doctoral Education

Angela Serino (AS): Nida Art Colony is a residence programme that since its beginning has been connected to the Vilnius Academy of Arts. According to you, in which way is the Nida Art Colony programme different but complementary to the Vilnius Academy of Arts?

an interview with

Vytautas Michelkevičius,
Artistic Director of Nida
Art Colony, Vilnius (LT)

Vytautas Michelkevičius (VM): Nida Art Colony (NAC) has not only a residence programme, but also runs and hosts a variety of educational and knowledge exchange activities (workshops, laboratories, conferences, seminars, symposiums) and produces exhibitions and publications. The Academy of Arts does the same, and only the residence programme makes the biggest difference between these two entities. The main mission of the Academy is professional art education and research. Among its goals are also cultural services to society (exhibitions, publications, etc.), but they are not at the forefront. NAC has much stronger focus on contemporary art and operates mainly internationally. Eighty-five percent of the fifty residents per year are from abroad. The artists-in-residence programme helps to make both the education programme of the academy and the art scene of Lithuania more international. NAC, like the academy, does not only work with visual art but also with all applied arts, architecture, design, art history, curatorship, culture management and politics – mainly with all the disciplines taught and researched at the academy.

AS — What made it necessary to found it?

⁰¹ we always say that we do not literally continue the historical colony (which was mainly an expressionist painters' colony) but we are inspired by it and we try to reinterpret the tradition and make it work in a contemporary world

VM — Firstly there was a need to make an infrastructure for a creative and programmed retreat for students. This tradition of the academy students and professors going out from the city and working on a specific theme is still very active. The academy has now four remote places which host students and professors, but only NAC has a programme, whereas other places mostly function as guest houses. The tradition of 'plein-air' in contemporary art practice has lost its vitality and we are looking for new forms of it. We can name it a programmed educational camp, retreated or displaced workshop, but two important elements are still needed to make it work – a suitable location and a helpful infrastructure. Not to forget professors, students and curricula, which is always different from the usual one at school.

In the 1990s, the academic and artistic community from the academy was looking for a place not only to satisfy educational needs, but also to find a place for creative retreat. The idea of the artist displaced in wild nature and breath-taking scenery is still lively. And Nida was the most seductive place, with a history of former artists' colonies since the end of nineteenth century. It was especially lively in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1999, active professors with the help of the academy administration bought old abandoned storage houses in Nida, and used them during the summer for students' workshops (but only in summers). Finally in 2008, the possibility to get funding for reconstruction was found and the process began. It was decided to build an international art and education centre with a much more open attitude, to use it not only for inner needs of the academy, but also for a community of international artists and students. The international artist-in-residence programme was a key instrument to reach these goals and build a lively colony. So there is a mutual relationship: the academy needs more international artists and students and the colony attracts them. We always say that we do not literally continue the historical colony (which was mainly an expressionist painters' colony) but we are inspired by it and we try to reinterpret the tradition and make it work in a contemporary world.⁰¹

AS — How (in)dependent is the Nida Art Colony from the Art Academy?

VM — Financially the NAC is running almost on its own with small subsidies from the academy, so the programme is quite independent and mainly financed by us. We have an agreement to host students' and professors' workshops three months per year and the rest of the time is programmed and organized by our team. Now with the opening of the second building in 2016, which will host the Nida Doctoral School, we will probably need more subsidies, but in exchange we will provide an international environment for practice and theory-based PhD students in the academy. We have an intention to focus more on postgraduate students and research and, together with the academy, this will help us reach that goal.

AS — With the Inter-format Symposium and the Nida Doctoral School (a non-degree doctoral program you started this year) you bring together and challenging artists, researchers and curators who do not necessarily feel comfortable in their fixed roles. Can you tell us a bit more on how these programs work? What are the main remarkable experiences that you have

Residences as Learning Environments

NIDA Art Colony,
Inter-format Symposium 2015

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02 Nida Art Colony seemed the right place to host such an event where people with different roles meet and try to exchange their roles, or try to overcome their barriers



generated with the Inter-format Symposium and what makes them unique?

VM — I started to organize Inter-format Symposium in 2011 when I was tired of boring academic conferences (I defended my PhD in Vilnius University in 2010) and very intangibly expressed art events. I was inspired by other inter-events balanced between art and something else.

Nida Art Colony seemed the right place to host such an event where people with different roles meet and try to exchange their roles, or try to overcome their barriers⁰². Since then, together with other 40-50 participants, I have been enjoying performative lectures by academics and theory building dance workshops by artists. The goal was to bring artists together with scholars from social science, humanities and sometimes natural science, researchers and curators to exchange knowledge on a specific topic and try to re-invent the format of presenting them. We hosted the symposiums “On Flux of Sand and Aquatic Ecosystems”; “On Critical Tourism”; and this year it is “On Time” (both about time and on time). It goes back to the very important element of any knowledge and experience exchange event – time, its planning and experience. Why do we have such long presentation slots and such short coffee breaks if people have come together to meet and exchange? In one session we will swap presentation time with coffee break time and drink coffee for 1,5 hours.

Having experienced four symposiums, I can say that they really work as a productive meeting and exchange platform. Firstly everybody is together in an informal and relaxing environment, and secondly, curatorial work and programming make people comfortable losing their fixed roles and trying to experiment with them. The symposium is also a platform where different NAC programmes and goals meet: it is a knowledge and experience exchange platform with an educational touch and it connects with residents through their produced work or interventions.

The Nida Doctoral School was coined as a platform to host international PhD students (practice-based and theory-based) in intensive summer and winter courses (schools) to give them a longer period of time to work,

reflect and write in the residence (one to two months). So far we have done several events and we are starting to do them regularly in collaboration with Aalto university and other schools hosting practice-based PhD programmes for artists. You can read more about them here: <http://nidacolony.lt/en/nida-doctoral-school>

AS — Nida is relatively isolated. It's a five-hour drive from Vilnius and it is in the middle of a forest, the Curonian Spit National Park in Lithuania. However, I believe that retreat from the city does not mean disengagement from the world. Based on your experience as the artistic director of Nida Art Colony, how do you think that projects – both artworks and ideas – produced at your place have a wider scope than other residence places?

VM — NAC is a very well networked retreat.⁰³ There are quite a few well known places in the world like Banff Centre in the Canadian Nature Park, or Akademie Schloss Solitude, which are far from the city and successfully achieve their missions. We actively take part in contemporary art activities. For example, this year we organized the Lithuanian Pavilion in the Venice Biennale (the artist Dainius Liškevičius was in our residence and shot a movie (shown in the pavilion) in the dunes). We try to work and form a position on contemporary art both nationally and internationally. Now we are organizing a curated and production-oriented residence in Lithuania, Norway and Iceland, which will end up as a traveling show. Most of the time the effect of the residence is long-term and you can grasp it only after three or five years. We have successful examples of artists who developed their careers after getting inspiration in our residence, which was the first residence they had done⁰⁴. Sometimes artists get along well together in the colony and invite each other for collaborative projects in other countries. Time to time, our artists make shows in different neighbouring cities like Vilnius, Klaipeda, Kaliningrad, Riga and others, and this helps us to connect with the art world.

03 NAC is a very well networked retreat

04 most of the time the effect of the residence is long-term and you can grasp it only after three or five years. We have successful examples of artists who developed their careers after getting inspiration in our residence, which was the first residence they had done

NIDA Art Colony,
Inter-format Symposium 2015



On ⁴¹Temporariness, Education, Public(s) and Invisibility⁶

Angela Serino (AS): 'TAP Temporary Art Platform', the curatorial platform that you founded in Beirut, has the specific nature of developing temporary interventions in Lebanon. What were the reasons for you to initiate such a platform and what are the benefits of working with such a methodology, i.e. time-limited interventions?

Amanda Abi Khalil (AK): Establishing more institutions when the existing ones have proven all their limits vis a vis artistic and curatorial flexibility and freedom was always a question that interested me. After having worked in Lebanon and having run an institution, I didn't want to create yet another body dependent on regular funding and impermeable to the context in which it operates, which is by nature (the context of Lebanon) very precarious, unstable (politically) and dependent mostly on the dedication and energy of individuals. The idea of Temporary Art Platform came up from my profound interest in contextual art and projects emanating from communities' needs, and produced in collaboration with local partners like municipalities, associations and educational bodies. The philosophy of TAP is that it is context-responsive.⁰¹

It mostly reacts to needs formulated by other partners, communities and artists, and it operates when all the factors, (including the funding factor, of course) are reunited.

There are quite a few art institutions in Beirut but very little is happening outside the capital or in collaboration with local partners.

an interview with

Amanda Abi Khalil,
Founder and Director of
Temporary Art Platform,
Beirut (LB)

⁰¹ the philosophy of TAP is
that it is context-responsive

⁰² the philosophy of our work reflects the pace, the temporality and the nature of our society

Tackling questions around contexts and public space, particularly in Lebanon has to be temporary. The philosophy of our work reflects the pace, the temporality and the nature of our society⁰² somehow.

AS — Last year, TAP promoted an international residence in Meziara, a relatively remote village in Lebanon. What brought you to choose a residence as the best way to intervene in such context? What were the results of this experience for the local community and the participating residents? Would you say that had an 'educational' value? (If so, how?)

AK — The Meziara artist residence that took place in August 2014 came up when an artist, Souheil Sleiman introduced me to his native village, which is not remote, but quite far from the city. The characteristics of this place, its nature, its history and demography offered a unique opportunity to look at a rural village in Lebanon today and study its environmental problems, its social complexity and its relation to the rest of the country. The residence focused on an environmental issue: the presence of industry in the village's main forest.

When I first met the mayor of the village, he shared his concern about the future of his village related to the environmental damage and social problems his village was enduring because of the industries that are illegally implemented on the land. He stressed that there was a need for mediation between the villagers, the industry owners and the stakeholders involved in shaping the future of the forest, the relocation of the industries and the long-term environmental plan for the village. Artists' residences in villages and in contexts outside art institutions in Lebanon are not common, and this was probably the second time it had ever happened. I suggested we invite artists to look at this site and engage with the villagers and the stakeholders on shaping a vision or at least starting a conversation on this environmental catastrophe through a participative approach and an informal residence⁰³. We didn't set a heavy programme, and the artists were invited to produce a work or just research in their own rhythm and in their own way.

⁰³ I suggested we invite artists to look at this site and engage with the villagers and the stakeholders on shaping a vision or at least starting a conversation on this environmental catastrophe through a participative approach and an informal residence



It was a great success on many levels. Firstly it did help the villagers shape a newer representation of the forest through informal conversations with the artists and through the public presentations and talks we organized. Secondly it was a very interesting approach for the participating artists who were all able to develop new works without any kind of pressure or agenda; the seven artists participating teamed up so well that they are now applying together for other residences!

The whole experience was eye opening to the villagers who got to engage with their forest and start conversations among each other on the social and environmental realities of their village. It was also a very interesting informal mediation of contemporary art practices in a context where art and especially contemporary art is not present.

For the artists, it was also a very enriching experience, as they had to interact with a new context, a new culture (six of them were non-Lebanese) through a very specific issue that combines political, environmental, cultural and social aspects. In a short time, the artists had to develop tools and methodologies allowing them to comprehend the territory and its complexity while engaging with it artistically, aesthetically and politically.⁰⁴

⁰⁴ in a short time, the artists had to develop tools and methodologies allowing them to comprehend the territory and its complexity while engaging with it artistically, aesthetically and politically

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International Meeting of Residences

⁰⁵ I believe that the most interesting interactions, projects and processes that happen in the art world today are the ones that are invisible (as a conscious choice or as result of a process which does not privilege visible results). I believe a lot in the potential of the informal to operate connections, mediations and trigger critical thinking. Therefore residences provide privileged time and space for these kind of interstitial processes

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AS — During the International Meeting in Milan, we have often talked of a residence as an experience that triggers invisible processes that may become tangible only over a longer term. As such, you stated that a residence can be an appropriate tool to trigger critical thinking. Would you like to comment on this statement?

AK — I believe that the most interesting interactions, projects and processes that happen in the art world today are the ones that are invisible (as a conscious choice or as result of a process which does not privilege visible results). I believe a lot in the potential of the informal to operate connections, mediations and trigger critical thinking. Therefore residences provide privileged time and space for these kind of interstitial processes⁰⁵. There are many forms of residences and one should also be very careful while defining the structure, the goals, the program and the way



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a residence operates depending on each context. Nowadays, boutique hotels and hostels host artists' residences where artists have to contribute financially to take part in collective exhibitions after the residence is over. For me, residences are closer to the model of self-taught art or artist-run academies⁰⁶. The program should remain flexible enough to allow all type of encounters and unusual interactions to take place!



⁰⁶ for me,
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academies

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The learning curve of hosting experience

Sara El Adl,
Curator
Townhouse Gallery,
Cairo (EG)

Past meetings on residences have featured conversations on almost all issues that could possibly come out of the topic, from the value of mobility, cultural exchange, funding and state structures and the different sizes of institutions, to production vs. process. But there isn't much space for storytelling or conversation about the intricate and, one can say, intimate dynamic a resident artist can develop with a host, a relationship that develops through both contention and agreement. Everyone is an other and no one is; these lines are blurred and the formality of dealing with a systemic language of 'cultural exchange and dialogue' pales in comparison to some of the ethical, philosophical and social undercurrents accompanying residences that take up spatial context as an object of interest, and the subjectivity the residents induce over a host institution.

⁰¹ questions and discussions triggered by some residences also contributed to the creation of a cumulative identity for the institution and a long-term discourse of understanding experiential artistic production

I am going to speak about snippets of Townhouse history, where questions and discussions triggered by some residences also contributed to the creation of a cumulative identity for the institution and a long-term discourse of understanding experiential artistic production⁰¹. Parts of these stories I was there for and others were collected through conversations, reflections and questions, both answered and unanswered.

Raeda Saada, a Palestinian woman and artist who came to Townhouse in 2003, was one of the first residents to trigger conversation on a communal level.

Interested in class and gender dynamics, Saada decided to poke at the politics of the street and the community in which Townhouse resides, in the heart of downtown Cairo. She took note of the shoe shiners, who, for her, seemed to reside at the bottom of the class chain on a street that believed itself to be homogenous and devoid of class differences. After lengthy sessions and conversations with the shoe shiners, who were generous enough to speak to her about their familial bonds and their secret tapping language, and who even lent her some of their clothes (with all their sweat and blood) to wear, Saada went out onto the street to reenact their profession, walking around the coffee shop and shining men's shoes. Fights erupted between those who let her shine their shoes and those who didn't, with the latter seeing the act – with its physical positioning of a woman holding a man's foot and kneeling on the floor opposite to him – to be implicitly sexual and unsettling. They were irritated and deeply uncomfortable with the fact that she was wearing the exact same 'filthy' garment one of the shoe shiners had been wearing only a few hours before. The entire street was in fits. How could a woman, an Arab woman, do this? It was 'unacceptable'. They were wondering what she was even doing on the street. She's a resident artist who's expected to be in her studio, painting or making something. And this is when people around Townhouse were invited to have this discussion, to explain what a residence means to different communities and come up with an answer that they would accept.

They were invited to understand what it means to host artists who might dabble with and question intimacies and aesthetic choices – artists who would be interested in the way people around them lift their coffee cups and whether they would be more anxious at a particular time of the day than at other times throughout the day. They would be in contact with artists who would carry out performances such as Saada's, in close proximity to daily life and unchangeable conceptions. Saada was somehow the beginning of this conversation that took place on an immediate level, both temporally and spatially, before conferences and meetings erupted to discuss the growing mobility of artists.

02 the institution had to go through a phase of creating a narrative that is acceptable to the constant community around it

The institution had to go through a phase of creating a narrative that is acceptable to the constant community around it⁰². A conversation about gender and Saada's performance went on for months on our street.

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin came to Townhouse in 2010. During their residence, a show that was just about to open was censored by the state and had to be cancelled. Broomberg and Chanarin were offered the vacant exhibition space to use for their residence. They came across a short paragraph in the Maria Gollia's book *Photography and Egypt*, about a local surrealist movement that was founded by George Henein, an artist who had been a close friend of Andre Breton, the French poet and writer. They decided to explore the history of this movement that they had never heard of. According to the artists, the group, which had been described by most sources from the Ministry of Culture as "a largely Francophile, libertarian movement producing mostly derivative work that was of no relevance to contemporary Egyptian culture," proved to be, through deeper research, a much more politically influential movement than Broomberg and Chanarin had originally suspected. Townhouse hosted an exhibition by the two artists that showcased their findings, which were quite limited given the time scope and the lack of resources on the topic. The institution also supported the creation of a website, displaying and calling for any information, images, texts or films that could be found about the local movement. The artists also realized that the small print house on the street on which Townhouse is located, which had been there since the beginning of the century and was owned by an elderly Italian couple, was also the same house the movement used at the time to print their manifesto. To print their own exhibition materials, they even managed to use the exact type of paper the surrealists had used decades before.

The project opened the door for writing and research on the topic by Egyptian platforms and researchers who hadn't paid attention to the movement before. Very few knew how influential an author such as Albert Cossery was on French literature and his work was not widely read or translated to Arabic, for instance. Having triggered

interest in the movement and attracted attention, Chanarin and Broomberg's work was also heavily criticized and battled, called superficial and overly romantic. Lawsuits were also filed over copyright issues by the families of the members of the movement who had never given the artists permission to exhibit any of the documents they had provided to them in good faith.

Chanarin and Broomberg raise an interesting point of contention when it comes to artists who produce during the span of a short residence. Are these 'parachutes of experiments', the phrase they used to describe their work, thus justifying any lack of depth to their project, successful in generating knowledge or meaning? How is this knowledge sustainable after the completion of a project in relation to that space? Does it represent the space? Does it speak to it? Or does it use that space and leave fast before someone notices that they were used?⁰³

This brings us to a few years later, when Fatma Bucak, a Turkish artist, arrived in Cairo in 2013 with an overwhelming amount of fear. Constantly hearing of political turmoil and violence and then arriving to a swelling sense of paranoia, and an 'economy of fear,' as journalist Tom Stevenson once put it, Bucak felt she was unable to work during her time in Cairo. She decided eventually, after struggling with a stifling sense of fear, to define it and work on objectifying the feeling. She eventually created a multi-channel sound installation that echoes perceptions of fear based on seven local participants she had been introduced to by the gallery during her residence. They used objects they believed represented fear. Bucak requested to work with participants who had gone through abuse or other traumatic experiences that caused long-term anxiety and would be willing to take part in an experiment to try and articulate that gnawing emotion. She held daily meetings with these participants and concurrently spoke with a therapist in Istanbul over Skype every night to guide her through her conversations with them. The work, which was undoubtedly powerful, raised many questions in regards to process, power and expectations, and the use of human experience for artistic production. As involved as Townhouse was with conversations around the conception of the project, no one knew the nature of this collective of

⁰³ how is this knowledge sustainable after the completion of a project in relation to that space? Does it represent the space? Does it speak to it? Or does it use that space and leave fast before someone notices that they were used?

people who met everyday. What was their bond like? What was their relationship to Bucak? Were they equals, as she claimed, or were there subtle power structures at play that made this use of their experience unethical? Was there an expectation of therapy or did they fully understand that this would end once the project was completed – once fear had been objectified, aestheticized and exorcized through this residence?

The question that could be asked about Broomberg and Chanarin's project could and should also be asked here: did Bucak just use these participants and leave fast before anyone could notice that they were used?

William Wells writes about Bucak's project in a publication called *I Must Say a Word About Fear* published by the artist herself:

[...]by transforming her experience of fear into the object of an artistic process, it seems that Bucak was attempting to swerve her position away from being a subject in this affective economy, in fact to nullify her own subjectivity altogether – a position that is intriguingly situated within the broader confusion about subject-object relations at this murkily defined point in human history.

⁰⁴ the institution can be likened to the artist and her transformative powers; it alters between object and subject. At a point, the institution stops being a structure that merely provides support, an object of facilitation and a mine of resources and itself transforms into a subjective being with emotions, opinions and ethical questions at stake, forced to participate and explain its identity and temperaments

With this quote in mind, the institution can be likened to the artist and her transformative powers; it alters between object and subject. At a point, the institution stops being a structure that merely provides support, an object of facilitation and a mine of resources and itself transforms into a subjective being with emotions, opinions and ethical questions at stake, forced to participate and explain its identity and temperaments⁰⁴. The lines are consequently blurred on an individual level as well, and the facilitator becomes a subject. As someone who works with resident artists on daily tasks, between regular questions about procedure and a sudden digression into questions that are so invasively personal, my own subjectivity is questioned. Am I a window to your generation of knowledge? Am I a subject? And more importantly, am I forced to answer these questions about myself to myself?

51 60 Nurturing locally. international building 11

Angela Serino (AS): With the residence program at Maraya Art Centre you have initiated several exchange programs with international partners, such as Delfina Foundation, the Biennial of Yogyakarta and Seoul Art Space Geumcheon. In this growing network of international relations that you are establishing, do you also look at the regional area?

an interview with

Giuseppe Moscatello,
Director of
Maraya Art Centre,
Sharjah (EAU)

Giuseppe Moscatello (GM): We are an art institution in the Gulf region, so, it is strictly important to create links with regional institutions. We want to emphasize the non-profit organizations in the Gulf (in Bahrain, Kuwait, etc.). The region is going through an unprecedented growth and development process, and cultural institutions are playing an important role as part of a hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, creating relations with international institutions is highly important as it helps cultural understanding between countries, and gives opportunities to artists to interpret these relations.⁰¹

AS — If so, how do you operate in those two different levels – regional and international?

GM — We have two residence formats: the exchange program, where there is an Emirati or UAE based artist going to the host country with the counterpart coming to the Emirates; and the other option is a single residence, where we send the Emirati or UAE based artist to spend his or her residence at the partner organization. This second option describes what is happening right now with Zainab Al Hashemi, who is at the Delfina Foundation in London.

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⁰² we are not a big organization, therefore we tend to have direct engagement with the artists, helping them to gain more knowledge about the region



The expected outcomes are slightly different, but we mostly try to provide a platform for the artists to research, interact, and eventually, if required, develop a specific project.

AS — Does your residence programme have a specific goal on the regional level?

GM — One of the goals of hosting a guest artist in Sharjah, is to create more awareness about the Emirate and the whole country. Especially when they come from another part of the world, they also get to know the history and culture from the Middle East as a whole.

AS — How have the activities of the resident artists contributed to the development of the local artists and of a local art public? Do you think that the residence program has an educational impact in Sharjah and the EAU?

GM — It is a matter of fact that all the residences, short or long, have always engaged with the local community, which is in a way our method of engagement between the guest artists and the local community. We are not a big organization, therefore we tend to have direct engagement with the artists, helping them to gain more knowledge about the region.⁰²

AS — Which kind of art institution do you wish to become in the future? And how can an international residence exchange program contribute to it?

GM — When Maraya was established, what we had in mind was a format that could complement what was already happening in the region, and that could in a way fill the gaps. Residence programs are surely a powerful tool for dialogue, and surely help the creation of cultural bridges between countries and different cultures, especially when they are organized and supported by official institutions. In the future, I see Maraya continuing to foster art produced in the region, and promote it on a more international level; also organizing more residences and research programs; and of course, becoming a more established art hub in the region.

Angela Serino (AS): Via the residence program you have initiated several exchange programs with international partners and art professional from abroad. In this growing network of international relations that you are establishing, do you also look at the regional area? And what is your specific goal on the regional level?

Farid Abdullayev (FA): From January 2016, we will be implementing a new structure of residences that responds to the new cultural policy we are going to implement. There are several visions on what we are planning to do with the eight studios that we have in our dedicated building – Yarat Studios. We will have a curated residence program aiming to foster young voices with new experimental practices and an interest in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The curated residence will host up to eight artists in total. Two residents will be local and stay six months a year. Six international residents will stay for three months each. Each resident will be offered a certain amount of money (the amount is TBD) to produce the artwork(s). A group of advisory curators will propose a group of artists, who will be then selected by an internal committee.

AS — How do the activities of the resident artists contribute to the development of the local artists and of a local art public? Do you think that the residence program has an educational impact?

FA — We consider the residence program as professional development in an educational context⁰³. The residence program is managed by the educational and curatorial team of Yarat.

The residence educational program consists of educational blocks consisting of an international art trip with all residents and curators; a meeting presenting opportunities for entering art competitions; assistance for artists regarding career opportunities; support for artists with applications; meetings with Yarat curators; artist presentations; and small scale solo exhibitions for each international artist.

an interview with

Farid Abdullayev,
Executive Director of
Yarat Contemporary
Art Center,
Baku (AZ)

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⁰⁴ we aim to be a cultural hub for the region, and to contribute to the future cultural activities in the region by providing possibilities to create, research, teach and learn

AS — Which kind of art institution do you wish to become in the future? And how can an international residence exchange program contribute to make such vision real?

FA — We aim to be a cultural hub for the region, and to contribute to the future cultural activities in the region by providing possibilities to create, research, teach and learn⁰⁴. The residence program will give an opportunity to document real creative actions from the region of Caucasus and Central Asia, to fulfill the collection of Yarat Center, and finally to share knowledge and vision with local residents.

an interview with

Bayan Al Barak Kanoo,
Director of
Al Riwaq Art Space,
Manama (BH)

Angela Serino (**AS**): With the international residence program you have initiated several exchange residence programs with international partners and art professional from Europe and the West. In this growing map of international relations that you are establishing, do you also look at the regional area?

Bayan Al Barak Kanoo (**BK**): Without a doubt, establishing long-term relationships in the area is one of our main goals. There are many institutions developing very interesting projects in the region, and being part of that network will help develop the local and regional art scene, and broaden international connections.

⁰⁵ by establishing international and regional relationships we are building a two-way road

AS — Does your residence programme have a specific goal on the regional level?

BK — Of course we face differences working with regional and international institutions, but at the end our main objective is to develop the Bahraini art scene, so the nature of our activities doesn't change that much.

By establishing international and regional relationships we are building a two-way road⁰⁵; we can give Bahraini artists the possibility of going abroad and working in different environments, while bringing international and regional artists to Bahrain to develop their work.

AS — How do the activities of the resident artists contribute to the development of the local artists and of a local art public?

BK — Through our residence program and the activities linked to it, we create an environment for international and local artists to interact, exchange ideas, show different creative processes and develop new techniques. In a country without an art school, that is a significant contribution to the development of local artists⁰⁶. As for the general public, we create activities that engage the community and provoke creative thinking.

AS — Do you think that the residence program has an educational impact?

BK — The residence program has a strong educational impact, not only in the professional art scene, but also in the growing circle of people who want to explore their creativity. That is why we created the figure of Artist/Teacher in residence, to nurture the educational aspect of the residence program.

AS — Which kind of art institution do you wish to become in the future?

BK — We will continue to work on establishing Al Riwaq Art Space as a meeting point for everyone interested in art and creativity, to continue developing programs that reflect our society, and build a strong platform for artists that will reinforce the Bahraini multi-cultural scene.

AS — And how can an international residence exchange program contribute to make such vision real?

BK — The exchange program gives the possibility of seeding new ideas, to showcase what other professionals are doing and to make Bahraini artists visible. We live on an island but we cannot be isolated: we need to be open and ready for dialogue.⁰⁷

⁰⁶ through our residence program and the activities linked to it, we create an environment for international and local artists to interact, exchange ideas, show different creative processes and develop new techniques. In a country without an art school, that is a significant contribution to the development of local artists

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AIR artinresidence | the network of residences

The network AIR – artinresidence is a platform for artists' residences. The project started in 2010, thanks to FARE, with the aim to be a point of reference for all Italian artist residences. Today, through an implementation within the platform 'that's contemporary', AIR – artinresidence has a new layout and new services that facilitate exchange and communication with the intent to encourage intercultural dialogue.

www.artinresidence.it

Al Riwaq Art Space

Situated in the neighbourhood of Adliya in Bahrain, Al Riwaq Art Space is a not-for-profit institution dedicated to promoting local contemporary art and design, and connecting with developments in these fields at regional and international levels.

www.alriwaqartspace.com

DutchCulture | TransArtists

DutchCulture | TransArtists combines and shares expertise on international artist-in-residence programmes and related issues for artists, cultural organisations and policymakers. It offers tools and services to artists, stimulating and encouraging them to make an efficient, innovative, independent 'use' of what residences offer them.

www.transartists.org

FARE

FARE is an organization that, in addition to the traditional format of a residence, develops educational programs, in collaboration with academic and international partners. Based on interdisciplinary research, sharing of knowledge and exchange of experience, the programme investigates different areas of interest: the know-how of residential practices; the relationship between art and the public sphere; audience development; capacity building of artists, curators and cultural operators.

www.farearte.org

Free Home University (FHU)

Free Home University is a pedagogical and artistic experiment created in 2013 by an international group of artists and thinkers in Southern Italy wishing to rethink and redefine art education. It focuses on generating new ways of sharing and creating knowledge by experiencing life in common. In FHU self-directed, collaborative, and open-ended inquiry is shaped by the desires and the interaction of those present, in relationship to the analysis of local and global issues.

www.freehomeuniversity.org

GALA Green Art Lab Alliance

The Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) is a partnership between 19 European cultural organisations which aims to explore what environmental sustainability means for the visual arts and design. This ambition was acknowledged by the European Commission, which co-financed the GALA project in the framework of the EU Culture programme 2007-2013. During the two years of collaboration (May 2013-May 2015) the partners investigated the challenges and opportunities that environmental sustainability implies for artists and art institutions.

greenartlaballiance.eu

Maraya Art Centre

Established in 2010, Maraya Art Centre is a non-profit creative space located in Sharjah, UAE. Since its inception Maraya has offered the public an innovative curated exhibitions programme with leading Middle Eastern and international artists, multi-media facilities, a video archive, an art library and regular public programme of workshops and events designed by its in house team and guest curators.

www.maraya.ae

NIDA Art Colony (NAC)

NAC is a 'meeting place' for experienced and emerging artists, designers, architects, curators, art critics and researchers from around the world. Artistic, curatorial and educational 'process' lies in the core of its activities, which mostly focus on professional development of artists and informal art education for the young. Through 'collaboration' with international and national partners as well as cooperation with departments of Vilnius Academy of Arts it develops and runs a variety of art production and art education projects.
www.nidacolony.lt

Pollinaria

At the heart of rural Abruzzo, pollinaria integrates research programmes for artists and scientists with practices of organic farming that preserve and support local genetic patrimony. Concentric fields of study and action shape a constantly evolving system through art, science, agriculture and other cardinal factors.
www.pollinaria.org

Res Artis - Worldwide Network of Artist Residences

Res Artis is the largest existing network of artist residence programs, representing the interests of more than 300 centers and organizations in 50 countries worldwide that offer international artists the optimum conditions for producing art. Members of the organization include a wide variety of facilities that take may take the form of an art colony, an artist-run space, or other regional residence networks.
www.resartis.org

Temporary Art Platform (T.A.P.)

TEMPORARY. ART. PLATFORM (T.A.P.) is a curatorial platform that develops art projects relating to the public realm. It aims to shift art practice and discourse toward a complex contextual network of public interest and concerns. T.A.P. is also concerned with legal and artistic research that stimulates more proactive attitudes toward curating art projects outside the art world, including private partners, municipalities and councils.
www.temporaryartplatform.com

Townhouse Gallery

Townhouse is a nonprofit art space situated in the heart of Downtown Cairo. It holds an iconic position in the story of contemporary art in the Middle East; a key driver behind what has become a culturally rich, regional art scene. Established in 1998, Townhouse has initiated a breadth of activities in its various spaces: key regional symposia, meaningful community outreach, landmark exhibitions, and international residencies for artists, curators, writers, and filmmakers. It has also incubated several important art spaces within Cairo that have gone on to impact the cultural landscape.
www.thetownhousegallery.com

Yarat Contemporary Art Center

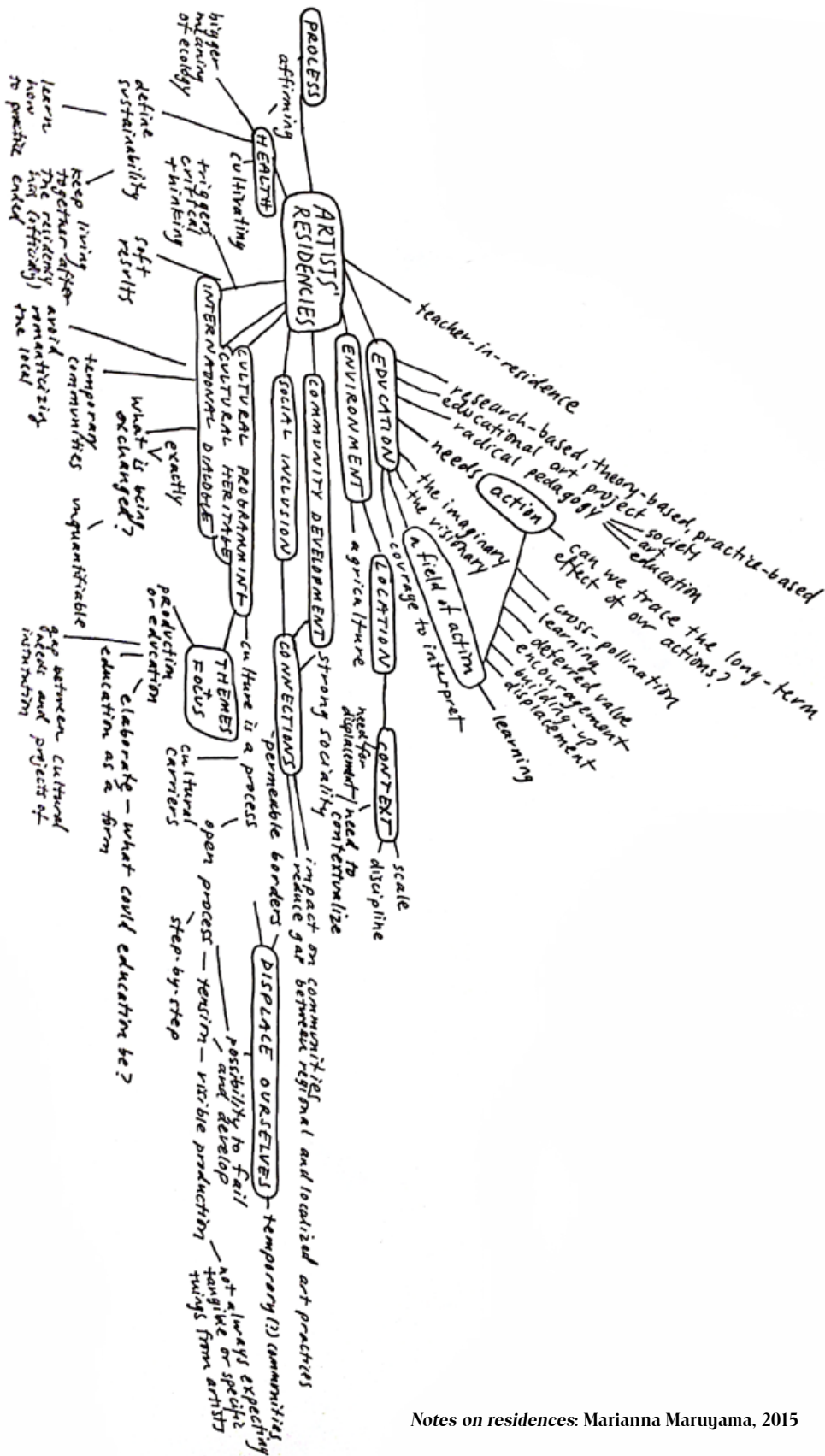
YARAT is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to nurturing an understanding of contemporary art in Azerbaijan and to creating a platform for Azerbaijani art, both nationally and internationally. Based in Baku, YARAT (meaning CREATE in Azerbaijani) was founded by Aida Mahmudova in 2011. YARAT realises its mission through an on-going program of exhibitions, education events and festivals.
www.yarat.az

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International Meeting of Residences



International Meeting of Residences

29th and 30th June 2015

Frigoriferi Milanesi, Milan

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