

**Liane Ditzer**

**Networks in Performance Art. Network  
Theory Applied to Artists' Structures**

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**Bibliographic information published by the German National Library:**

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**Imprint:**

Copyright © 2013 GRIN Verlag  
ISBN: 9783668138605

**This book at GRIN:**

<https://www.grin.com/document/314610>

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**Networks in performance art  
before the web / with the web**

Bachelor dissertation  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

submitted to the  
Philosophical Faculty  
of Heinrich - Heine - University Düsseldorf

by  
Liane Ditzer

*"Two men who pull the oars of a boat, do it by an agreement or convention, tho' they have never given promises to each other"*

David Hume (1711- 1776)

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## **Introduction**

This work focuses on performance art networks. The foundation and development of these virulent, globally active structures was not conditional on the Internet. It is a field that, despite its international presence and continuity lasting more than 20 years, has been documented in relatively few research projects.

I will be investigating three 'projects' that stand exemplarily for these networks within the scope of this work:

The Artists Village (TAV) in Singapore, PAErsche in Germany and Black Market International (BMI), which has no national localisation.

A major part of this work will deal with the actions of these three networks, of which TAV and BMI were founded back in the 1980ies, when the notion of networking had a very different linguistic connotation. However, the visions and ideas of networking were already inherent in TAV and BMI.

This work does not aim to carry out any basic research into the topic of networks, though it will investigate the factors that bring about and define the special performance art networks.

The starting point for my studies was a personal 'accompaniment' of the performance art scene over longer periods of time. This included visits to several festivals and similar performance art events as well as a partial assistance or participation. These in turn led to personal contacts and I was able to gain an insight into these network structures in a manner that can be compared with field research.

My research is based on a large number of different materials as well as documents that have not yet been wound up, archived or localised in an academic context. Those that display congruent or comparable statements on the basis of several different sources were ultimately used. Even when only one source is quoted in this work, it is always backed up by multiple confirmations of its content.

The most extensive materials were provided by the 'Die Schwarze Lade' (the black kid) archive of Boris Nieslony in Cologne. The archive also defines itself as a 'sculpture of public interest', meaning that this archive - one of the largest in Europe - was explicitly set up by Nieslony as an 'open source' for research into the field of performance art, performing art, action and intermedia art. The 'Die Schwarze Lade' includes not only completed projects and networks but also correspondence, traces, analogue and digital image documents etc. as well as projects which, although they were never realised, nevertheless had a seminal character. (s. Appendix p.1-2)

I also talked to a number of artists and protagonists involved. The digital media of Facebook and e-mail were used to communicate with the artists. I got to know some of the Asian artists quoted in this personally during my travels. We kept bumping into each other in numerous performance art events. Although the talks and interviews held varied with the personal mentality of the respective performer, they nevertheless allowed an objective discourse on account of the large number of comparable statements and the supplementary documents

I 'accompanied' the PAErsche network, which was founded in 2010 in Cologne, from its very beginnings and was a witness to an identification process and processes of group dynamics.

The goal of this work is to explain the network behaviour of performance art: how does it work, act and interact? Under which premises does this kind of artists' network work; how does it finance itself, communicate with other local and international networks? It will also look into the special quality of 'performance art networks' under the aspect of individual requirements. What mental attitude does an artist have to bring with them to be anchored in such a network.

Is the laconic statement on an artist's personality: 'Art is Ego' by Ben Vautier reconcilable with the idea of a network?

I will begin by discussing the use of the term 'network'. When did it enter linguistic terminology and how did its usage change?

Three network theories that are of significance for this work will also be presented. Georg Simmel with his question: "*How is society possible*", Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari with the concept of "*rhizomes*" and the postulation of a new mindset. The third theory that will be outlined is a new one developed in the 1990ies by Bruno Latour and others, the "*actor-network theory*". I will finally explain the way I have used the notion of networks in this work in chapter 1.4.

The aim of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter is to make it clear that 'networking' is by no means an invention of the modern age. It will provide an impression of the diversity of ways in which the avant-garde of visual artists tried to develop new and alternative structures of living and work towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to the industrial revolution and the resulting upheavals.

Chapter 3 will spotlight historical factors that favoured the emergence of performance art networks. This will outline the social, economic and political circumstances as well as the individual conditions and requirements that encouraged the emergency of these fragile networks.

In chapter 4 I will begin by describing the performance art scene before going on to present the three performance art networks named at the beginning by way of example.

The final chapter deals with structures and collaborations of the performance art networks. The historical development will once again be taken into account and the goals and content of the performance art events as well as the organisational structures and financing will be described. The conclusion deals with the topic of taboos, censorship and rules of performance art in general and of the networks in particular.

The expected perspectives resulting from the overall picture of these investigations will be summarised in a concluding résumé.

## **1. Network theories and definitions**

*"Looking back over our day an age – and the more so the later one does so – one will come across a semantic index fossil. People between 1990 and 2010 appeared to be absolutely obsessed by what they called the 'web' or the 'network'."*<sup>1</sup>

The starting point for networks are cooperations, because these mean the beginning of life and are the mainspring of evolution., "(...) *without them the earth would never have got beyond a primeval soup full of RNA molecules*".<sup>2</sup>

The Cro-Magnons that lived around 28.000 years ago on the Vézère in France already had complex systems of network-like connections. They communicated over greater distances by means of shell horns to warn each other of dangers, for example.<sup>3</sup> In the more recent history of Europe in the Middle Ages, Rosicrucians, orders of knights, and various guilds prove the broad range of social networks. They developed from family, social and strategic structures and interests. The nobility, merchants and artists in particular developed their very own connections across national and feudal boundaries. In his memoirs, the Italian comic playwright Carlo Goldoni, born in 1707, impressively tells us of his complex network, ranging from the French court through to Rousseau and Voltaire, that he was repeatedly able to fall back on during his travels throughout Europe.<sup>4</sup>

The first illustrations of networks appeared around 1500 in the form of tree diagrams. According to the artist and computer scientist Dirmoser, who has been scientifically involved in the visualisation of networks for many years, natural scientists in particular use 'tree graphs' – for example Charles Darwin for his theory of evolution.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term network was coined for technical systems that required an input and an output. It was initially used in market technology to show infrastructures, through also for rail and road traffic as well as for the water, electricity and telecommunications networks that had to be built.

Georg Simmel laid a cornerstone for social network theories with the notion of the '*interaction between people*'. (See chapter 1.1) Moreno came up with one of the first practical uses of the term word network for social analysis with sociometry. In 1916 he was responsible for hygiene in the barracks in Mitterndorf near Vienna. He was interested in the mutual sentiments and social tension between farmers and workers, administrative staff, camp inmates, men and women. He was able to identify affective group structures of persons in particular with sociometry<sup>6</sup>. The term network did not become widely accepted in sociological considerations until 1930 and after (see Schüttpelz, Erhard).

As of the 1970ies, numerous social media and communication scientists such as Radcliff Brown, the research group around Harrison White, Colin Cherry and Bruno

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<sup>1</sup> Schüttpelz, Erhard: Ein absoluter Begriff: Zur Genealogie und Karriere des Netzwerkkonzepts; In *Vernetzte Steuerung*, published by Kaufmann, Stefan: Zurich 2007, p. 15

<sup>2</sup> Aldrete, Gabriela: academic assistant at the Römisch German.Museum, Cologne in talks (May 2013)

<sup>3</sup> Aldrete, Gabriela: academic assistant at the Römisch German.Museum, Cologne in talks (May 2013)

<sup>4</sup> See Goldoni, Carlo: *Geschichte meines Lebens und meines Theaters*, Serie Piper, Munich 1968

<sup>5</sup> Dirmoser, G.: no title, no page, *Die Schwarze Lade*, Box: Kooperationen

<sup>6</sup> See Müller, A.& Neurath, W. no page. <http://www.univie.ac.at/oezg/OeZG121.html#Editorial> (14.04.2013)

Latour, extended and verified these theories.<sup>7</sup> The term networking became popular in contemporary art and culture in the 1980ies. A change took place from a technological concept to a communicative one. Network radio developed a 'different radio', in which listeners were able to participate.<sup>8</sup>

Any actions in today's civilised cultures appear almost unthinkable without 'networking'. It doesn't matter whether these are private, professional, economic or political networks, everything seems to be digitally 'linked' into one huge network. The term network has become all-embracing and dominates current linguistic usage. Since the middle of the 1990ies the term network has stood for the Internet and is connected to the technical developments this has brought about. Virtual platforms such as *Xing*, *LinkedIn*, *You Tube*, *Facebook* and *Twitter*, to name but a few, in the meantime lay claim to the absoluteness of the concept amongst young people. Parallel to the linguistic usage in electronics, the network concept is also used in an inflationary way to describe any kind of social structures and phenomena. This ranges from sports clubs, NGOs through to terror networks.

"The victory of the absolute term 'network' coincides with its increasing blindness, it means a severe defeat of all theoretical efforts that have led to this victory.(...) The point of all network research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that "everything" was never networked with "everything else", that it was all about relationships in the hierarchy and exclusivity, both in the infrastructure and in micro-sociology (...)"<sup>9</sup>

The extent to which this quotation is relevant for performance art networks has to be investigated in the further course of the paper. It is interesting, however, to note that two of the networks I investigated were founded before the appearance of the Internet and maintained an 'analogue' communication with each other and in other structures by air mail, telephone and facsimile up to the 1990ies.

### 1.1 Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel can be called the founding father of the network theory. Starting from the question "*How is society possible*", he laid the cornerstone of the exchange theory in 1908 with his concept of 'interaction'. Simmel regards "interaction as the basic element of sociology". He therefore in principle expresses the central idea of a definition of a network: exchange as an interaction between the protagonists and their mutual relationships. What is significant for Simmel is that social structures, though also individuals, always interact with other protagonists. Social structures are based on an exchange. No individual can live completely autarkic in his or her environment without interaction with other individuals.

According to Simmel, this leads to different opinions and points of view that are shaped by the relevant living conditions or local circumstances.<sup>10</sup> In the works "*About social differentiation*" (1890) and "*The metropolis and mental life*" (1903), Simmel traces the emergence and development of social relationships. They deal with how social networks change when they are transferred from the country to the city and encounter a much more complex structure of human relationships. Simmel thus believed that the city guaranteed the chance of more individuality.

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7 See chapter 2.3

8 See Moos, Ludwig: *Frequenzbesetzer, Arbeitsbuch für ein anderes Radio*, Rowohlt, Hamburg 1983

9 See Schüttpelz, Erhard: *Ein absoluter Begriff: Zur genealogie und Karriere des Netzwerkkonzepts*; in *Vernetzte Steuerung*, published by Kaufmann, Stefan Zurich 2007, p. 17

10 See Simmel, Georg: *Grundfragen der Soziologie: Individuum und Gesellschaft*, Berlin 1984

According to Simmel, self-fulfilment is much more difficult in the countryside than in the city on account of close social relationships, unlike in the city where one can act more freely. Simmel also broached the issue of the risk of alienation and isolation through individuality. Put differently: the bigger the social unit is, the less able the individual is to bond emotionally to this.<sup>11</sup>

What is important here is the question as to how large a network can be to still be able to function and act. This paper, however, will be dealing with relatively small, manageable networks in which the number of people is negligible. According to Simmel, we are imprisoned in networks from our birth, something that will also be discussed in the chapter 'historical outline of networks'. Networks are not a new invention. One particularly important aspect for this work are Simmel's remarks on the various factors that are crucial for the network: the number of protagonists / the space / the time / the level of knowledge about the others / the freedom of choice / the equality and the level of institutionalisation of a relationship.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari 'rhizome'

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari<sup>13</sup>, linguists and philosophers, use the term 'rhizome', taken from the field of biology, for their epistemological positions. In biology a rhizome is defined as a generally underground – in other words not necessarily visible – system of stems. Nodes can form at any point, internodes dissolve, develop further on their own and produce further independent plants through the division and separation of individual parts of this network of roots. Philosophy uses this concept as a metaphor and matrix. For example, the development of a book is described as a complex interaction of ideas, technologies and physical levels.

"A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds."<sup>14</sup>

The book published by Deleuze and Guattari in 1977 "Rhizome" (that was later used as an introduction to their work "*A thousand plateaus*") postulates a self-dependent, social mentality of the parties participating in such a rhizome. "*Yes take what you want. We don't intend founding a school, sects, cliques, churches, avant-gardes and arriere-gardes are trees that squash everything important that happens during their ridiculous fall.*"<sup>15</sup>

In their work, Deleuze and Guattari primarily aim at breaking through the strictly hierarchic principle of the language and letters of classic structuralists and therefore opened up a particular way of thinking. "*There is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals (...)*"<sup>16</sup>

Summing up, it becomes clear in "Rhizome" that Deleuze and Guattari actually postulate a new way of thinking with their wish for a rhizome-like language, an appeal that can be found on page 41: "*Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! (...) Don't bring out the General in you!*" This describes an essential part of an 'ideal

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11 See Hollstein, Betina p. 1- 12 <http://www.soz.uni-frankfurt.de/Netzwerktagung/hollstein.pdf> (17.04.2013)

12 Ibid. p. 1 - 12

13 Deleuze, Gilles (1925 – 1995), Guattari, Felix (1930-1992)

14 Deleuze, Gilles und Guattari, Felix: Rhizom, Merve Verlag Berlin, 1976, S. 6

15 Ebd. S. 41

16 Ebd. S. 12

network theory'. 'Ideal' should be understood as the rejection of a sovereign way of thinking and the lack of any hierarchy.

Deleuze and Guattari were probably the first western philosophers of modern times who manifested the main aspects for the ideal state of a network. In the 1990ies the term 'rhizome' became increasingly popular to describe Internet structures. An ostensibly logical definition, but the structure of the Internet by no means exists without hierarchies: web domains are sold according to the principle of the 'highest bidder' and search engines filter results according to the 'principle of attention'.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.3 Bruno Latour 'actor-network theory' (ANT)

The French sociologists Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, John Law and others have been developing the "*actor-network theory*" since the 1980ies. Unlike Simmel, Latour's "*Reassembling the Social: An introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (ANT)" that was published in 2005 does not describe a theory with which one can 'work'.

"It is a theory and a strong one actually, I believe, but a theory of how to examine things, or rather, how they should not be examined – or rather how the actors are left a little space to express themselves"<sup>18</sup>

It is a tool that I too will be using to understand the complexity and meaning of the actors in the performance art scene.

Bruno Latour drafted a theory for actors with his ANT, meaning that the actors 'must act themselves', including the development of their own theories and intentions. Consequently he places the emphasis on a description and not an explanation. (See B. Latour, "Eine neue Soziologie für eine neue Gesellschaft." p. 253)

He also developed the all-encompassing notion of the actants that covers everyone who is involved in or who influences events. These include not only human actors but also animals, spiritual beings (ghosts) and objects. The use of ANT as a theory to corroborate a study obsolete, as proven by the dialogue between a student planning to do just this and their professor:<sup>19</sup>

"S:(...) 'Can't ANT help me with this mass of data? I need a framework!' P: 'A kingdom for a framework! Very moving. I think I understand your despair. But no, ANT is of no use here. The main lesson of ANT is that the actors make everything themselves, including their own framework, their own theories' (...)"<sup>20</sup>

Latour's approaches call for a better, more precise description: "*I would say that if you description needs an explanation, it's not a good description (...)*".<sup>21</sup> He sees in the actors, irrespective of whether these are hybrid spirits, objects or humans, the possibility

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17 See Rötzer, Florian: Das Web wird zum Massenmedium: KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL Dec.1999 Jan. 2000, Volume 148, p. 58

18 Latour, Bruno: Eine neue Soziologie für eine neue Gesellschaft. Einführung in die Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.Main, first edition 2010, p. 245

19 Ibid. p. 244-271

20 Ibid. p. 253

21 Ibid. p. 254

of getting to the bottom of social structures, groups and situations by giving the actors space to develop on their own and not to think in categories from the outset.

"It's as if we were to say to the actors: We don't want to try to discipline you, to put you into categories; we will let you develop your own worlds and only later ask you to explain how you managed to consolidate these."<sup>22</sup>

Latour postulates social research that approaches the field under investigation impartially without a hypothesis that is to be verified. This means the necessity of an extensive acquisition and collection of data, particularly for the complexity of networks.

#### 1.4 Own definition of the network theory on which this work is based

Georg Simmel sees society as being based on reciprocal relationships between actors. The dynamic processes resulting from this can act as a catalyst for change in societies. If the actors are from different 'milieus' and come into contact with each other during their lifetime in particular, an exchange may take place between heterogeneous sociologies.

This concept includes an important basis of this work. The term sociologies, however, is verified with the aspect of cultures since the protagonists in the performance art networks I describe come from different 'cultural areas'.<sup>23</sup> All of the three are virulent structures that act globally across ethnic, cultural and social borders and in turn have numerous points of intersection with each other. The number of artists in these networks is relatively small and manageable at 9 (BMI), 15 (TAV) and approx. 30 (PAErsche) artists.<sup>24</sup>

Another key aspect on which this work is based is taken from the network theory of Deleuze and Guattari. Of central importance in their 'manifesto' *Rhizome* is the mindset with which protagonists 'are located mentally within a network' and with which they ultimately refuse to succumb to hierarchies. "(...) *the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton* (...)."<sup>25</sup>

The ability to play an equal part in the form of the 'gift' and reject hierarchies is one of the essential conditions for participating in performance art networks. These also include the mental readiness to act within a network and to be open to a global exchange of artistic ideas and visions.

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22 Latour, Bruno: Eine neue Soziologie für eine neue Gesellschaft. Einführung in die Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a. Main, first edition 2010, p. 44-45

23 TAV brings together artists from various ethnic groups: Malaya, Chinese, Indians etc./ BMI from various continents: Asia,

Europe, Central America etc. PAErsche from various nationalities such as: Mexico, Netherlands, Belgium. Austria etc.

24 As per May 2013

25 Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Félix: *Rhizom*, Berlin 1977

## **2. Historical outline of artists' structures**

*"In the context of art, collectives have repeatedly been formed. This usually took place under the concept of the avant-garde with the aim of developing an alternative model through a criticism of art and culture. (Dada, Fluxus, Warhol Factory, Performance Art etc."*

Marion Strunk<sup>26</sup>

Amongst the key prerequisites for cultural change are the economic, social and political conditions. Art movements articulate and reflect the relevant era with their observations, visions and fears. The industrial revolution in Europe meant just such a paradigmatic change. The consequences of inventions and discoveries developed their own tremendous dynamics. Factories were built, cities electrified, the first big department stores were built and huge movie theatres opened in which the visualisation of ideas, art and high culture were transported and multiplied. The spread of photography and film changed viewing habits.<sup>27</sup> This era also saw the big World Fairs. The first of these took place in 1851 in Crystal Palace in London. Paris was the host in 1855 in the 'Palais de l'Industrie'.<sup>28</sup> Something along the lines of a vague global understanding developed. Large sections of the general public were for the first time able to 'marvel' at the culture and knowledge of other countries. Even though the emphasis at the beginning of these World Fairs was on inventions, technical innovations and discoveries, ethnological exhibits, the exotic in general, arts and crafts, theatre productions<sup>29</sup> - through also malformed humans - were also on show. (See KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL, Volume 116, p. 102)

### **2.1 The first art groups and networks**

One of the early artists' groups from this era that is documented were the artists around Friedrich Overbeck and Franz Pfaff in Vienna who were called the *Nazarenes*. In 1810 they emigrated to Rome. On account of their philosophy, a harking back to the Renaissance, and their appearance, wearing hats and long hair, they were called the "Nazarenes". In 1830 the composer Bartholdy Mendelssohn describes them as 'dreadful creatures' who sit in the Cafe Greco.

"(...) wearing their wide-brimmed hats, huge bulldogs alongside them, (...) producing abominable smoke, saying uncouth things to each other; (...) drinking coffee and talking about Titian and Pordenone as if they were sitting alongside them and were wearing beards and helmets too! What's more, they produce such sick madonnas, feeble saints, milksops of heroes that one occasionally feels like laying about oneself"<sup>30</sup>

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26 Strunk, Marion: Performative Praxis und Kommunikation, DVD collected texts, archive, Die Schwarze Lade, Cologne 2013

27 See Garncarz, Joseph: Maßlose Unterhaltung. Zur Etablierung des Films in Deutschland 1896–1914, Frankfurt am Main and Basel, 2010, p.149,

28 No title, no page <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/de/kollektionen/courbet-dossier/kuenstlerischer-kontext.html> (09.05.2013)

29 In Paris, Max Reinhard and W. Meyerhold, amongst others, came into contact with the Japanese Kabuki theatre and were inspired by this. (Rudnitsky, Konstantin "Russian and Soviet Theatre" Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, USA, 2000)

30 Quoted from Metgen, Günter: "Die Nazarener" Frankfurt a. Main, 1997, p. 41



The Nazarenes initially alluded to the renunciation of academicism, later to the ideals of the mediaeval crafts and guilds. However, they were less interested in an exchange with other artists outside the group. Their structure and way of life served as a romantic opposite to the emergent industrialisation and the concomitant alienation of man from nature.<sup>31</sup> Even if this group was at times very dogmatic, "*the Nazarenes showed that such an artists' collective was viable and liveable.*"<sup>32</sup>

Projects in which artists joined together also appeared in conservative structures. The Düsseldorf school of painting (1819 to 1918) for example, developed international contacts and gained a worldwide reputation with a complex network – through classical genre painting combined with intelligent marketing.

"The outstanding reputation of the Academy and the free painters attracted hoards of artists from the throughout the world to Düsseldorf. At the height of international interests in Düsseldorf, in the years 1850-60, huge colonies of Scandinavian, American, Russian and Baltic artists appeared. Individual artists even journeyed to Düsseldorf from Argentine, Chile, Peru, Cappadocia, India, Java, Iran or New Zealand. Some stayed only a few months, others their entire life"<sup>33</sup>

These encounters led to a potentialisation of opportunities. Eventually, however, this school of painting split up because the hierarchically structured network increasingly lost touch with the zeitgeist.

## 2.2 Other currents (approx. 1830-1945)

Apart from economic and a lack of social acceptance, a similar artistic outlook and congeniality in particular played a major role in the formation of artists' groups and networks. Intellectuals and artists increasingly discussed and adopted new theories such as those of Sigmund Freud, Rudolf Steiner or Karl Marx. An idealism developed in the centre of which a return to nature was repeatedly defined alongside the humanist philosophy. "*In this search for inner and outer nature the artists find their way to simple, rural ways of life.*"<sup>34</sup>

Numerous artists' collectives arose such as Barbizon (1830), Auvers-sur-Oise (1860), Pont-Avent (1886) or Monte Veritàs (1900). The artists followed the 'call of nature' in Germany too, as evidenced by the artists' colonies Kronenberg (1858), Dachau (approx. 1875) or Worpswede (1889). These were by all means a kind of network because "*there was a brisk coming and going between these places, the artists' colonies were linked by an inter-local network that also overcame national borders.*"<sup>35</sup>

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31 The training consisted of copying the "old masters" and thus experiencing art, a very popular concept at art academies at the time. (according to the dictate of the classicist Anton Raphael Mengs:

"Art is superior to nature")

32 Thurn, Hans Peter: "Die Sozialität der Solitären, Gruppen und Netzwerke der bildenden Künste" in KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL, Volume 116, Nov. Dec. 1991, p. 103

33 The Düsseldorf school of painting is the predecessor of today's Art Academy, no title, no page: <http://www.duesseldorfer-malerschule.com/einfuehrung.html> (12.05.2013)

34 Ibid. Thurn, Hans Peter: "Die Sozialität der Solitären", p. 103

35 Ibid. p. 104

The development of Impressionism can also be seen in this historical context, even if its painters did not implicitly define themselves as a network. *"The history of Impressionism is first and foremost the history of a group of painters who in the years between 1874 and 1886 ventured to exhibit their works outside the official salons in Paris (...)."*<sup>36</sup>

Beyond this common fate, in intensive, intellectual exchange of opinions on modern painting also developed. More and more movements and programmatic artists' groups appeared. Examples that can be named include 'Der Blaue Reiter', 'Die Brücke' or 'Les Fauves'.

The large Sonderbund exhibition in 1912 in Cologne testifies to this diversity:

"(...) Around 650 works of art – 130 of these alone paintings by van Gogh, (...) 25 by Gauguin, 32 by Munch and 16 by Picasso – were on show in the purpose-built exhibition hall. The spectrum of exhibited art ranged from Post-Impressionism through to German Expressionism, the young painters from the Brücke and the Blauen Reiter“.<sup>37</sup>

At almost the same time, the Futurists were founded in Italy with Marinetti as their 'Chief ideologist' and Dada in Switzerland. Interdisciplinary contacts failed on account of the contrary opinions. The main accent of most of these groups was to explore new possibilities for collective working, living, thinking as well as the affinity to the big social utopias and an 'improvement' of societies. The numerous manifestos of this era bear witness to the dogmatism of individual groups. On account of this melange it is not surprising that conflicts quickly arose and the artists' collectives rarely lasted for more than a decade. *"Since the majority of artists' collectives are made up of strong-willed personalities wanting to express their own opinions, the latent tension between individuality and sociality makes them very susceptible to conflicts."*<sup>38</sup>

After the First World War, a new comprehension was adopted in European societies; synonyms such as honour and glory had lost their meaning. This led to the start of a search for new forms of articulation. In the 1920ies era there was a huge variety of art movements and groups that impressively reflect the commitment and creativity of this time.<sup>39</sup> *"International Fascism and the Second World War ultimately brought an involuntary end to this complicated development in artistic sociality."*<sup>40</sup>

### 2.3 The second big wave (after 1945)

The rubble heaps of the destroyed cities in Europe made way for new hopes after the Second World War. People began to live and enjoy life again. Starting with an everyday culture such as washing machines, telephones and TV right through to the prophecies of

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36 No title, no page: [www.kunstwissen.de/fach/f-kuns/b\\_neu/impress/00.htm](http://www.kunstwissen.de/fach/f-kuns/b_neu/impress/00.htm) (16.05.2013)

37 No title, no page: <http://www.wallraf.museum/index.php?id=337> (16.05.2013)

38 Thurn, Hans Peter: Die Sozialität der Solitären, Gruppen und Netzwerke der bildenden Künste, KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL, Volume 116 Nov/ Dec. 1991, p. 119

39 See Whillet, John: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period, The New society, 1917-1933, Pantheon books, New York, 1978, p. 17 (Diagram in Appendix p. 65) "art streams of the 20s", see. p. 8-18

40 Thurn, Hans Peter: Die Sozialität der Solitären, Gruppen und Netzwerke der bildenden Künste, KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL, Volume 116, Nov/ Dec. 1991, p. 107

nuclear energy and space travel, it seemed that anything was possible. The questions of guilt for the disasters of war were increasingly suppressed and intellectuals and artists in particular reacted against this. More radical artistic concepts and actions developed, mainly in Europe, the USA and Japan.

The international avant-garde movements of the 1950ies followed various ideals. They overlapped at points or operated in parallel. In France it was the Lettrists, from whom the Situationist International developed, in Austria the Vienna Group, in Japan Gutai and many more.

Targeted provocations become the repertoire of public appearances. Pianos in particular – as a symbol of bourgeois high culture – are maltreated and destroyed in performances in Vienna (Vienna Group), Berlin (Al Hansen), Tokyo or later Aachen (J. Beuys) and the public reacted insecurely. Worldwide student protests whose global understanding was also reflected in Vietnam demonstrations, bore witness to the atmosphere of change. Art had already acted through this premonition of freedom in the 1960ies with concepts and actions. A unique era of a love of experimentation emerged. *"The sixties were arguably the most lively and exciting of the last century: upheavals and advances everywhere, protests, intellectual rebellion, questions and new ways of thinking about everything, radical subsidence in the arts."*<sup>41</sup>

The bourgeois notion of art came under attack, the leap made from the work of art to the idea and the genre borders overcome.<sup>42</sup>

*"We unwittingly enabled terrorism"* said Mary Bauermeister pensively in an interview for the WDR during a big retrospective on Happenings and Fluxus. She later qualified this statement and spoke only of aesthetic terrorism.<sup>43</sup>

Gutai developed at the same time in Japan

## 2.4 Gutai

The movement was important for the Japanese Fluxus annexe 'Hi Red Center' and later Asian performance art networks as a role model for a separate identity.<sup>44</sup> Jiro Yoshihara founded the Gutai Group in 1954 in Osaka/ Japan. She dealt with material explorations (Murakami: penetration of paper panels, 1955) and performances ("Sky Festival" 1960). They became particularly well-known for their 'Action Painting'. Their central subject was the exposure of the material: *"to let the life of the material live"* (manifesto of Yoshihara, 1956). The group broke up in 1972 after Yoshihara's death.

The reciprocal interaction between Western and Japanese avant-garde is still subject to some big misunderstandings to this day and according to the art historian Alexandra Munroe, the examination of Japanese art history is in its infancy.<sup>45</sup> Her interview with Ming Tiampo in 2013 on the big Gutai retrospective in the New York Guggenheim Museum, appears to be proof: *"modernism was a closed system, located in the West and relentlessly disseminated to its territories with no reciprocal exchange."*<sup>46</sup> This can be

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41 Schneede, Uwe M.: Die Geschichte der Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert, Von den Avantgarden bis zur Gegenwart, C.H. Beck oHG, Munich, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2001 p.215

42 See ibid. Schneede: Die Geschichte der Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert, p. 215

43 Bauermeister, Mary: Oral History, Hoffnungsthal (approx. May 2008)

44 Nakajima, Hiroko: in talks, Cologne (May 2012)

45 See Munroe, Alexandra: Scream against the sky. Voice piece for Soprano, I.N: Kunst-Welten im Dialog. Von Gauguin zur globalen Gegenwart: (Published by Scheps, Marc; Dziewior, Yilmaz; Thiemann, Barbara M. Cologne 1999, p. 287

46 <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2013/02/28/arts/in-new-york-the-guggenheim-goes-gutai/#.UZSr3Eo>

refuted partly through numerous quotes from Japanese and Western artists who by all means maintained a dialogue (see footnote 48), not least through artists such as Takako Saito and Yoko Ono, who were part of the Fluxus movement.

## 2.5 Fluxus

Fluxus invokes Dada and can be called the first group of international artists who developed joint, international projects according to the network principle. "(...) *The nature of Fluxus always included intermedia. it was the first big international network. At that time it all went through air mail, but it worked. The broad basis was very important, (...)*"<sup>47</sup> said Ben Patterson. One of the important 'elements' in concentrating the international avant-garde in Europe was the 'Atelier Mary Bauermeister' in Cologne. It was a breeding ground on which John Cage, Nam June Paik, K.H. Stockhausen, Ben Patterson (who performed at PAC in Bangkok in 1997) and the majority of artists from the later Fluxus movement met at the end of the 1950ies and realised actions and performances.<sup>48</sup>

George Maciunas from Lithuania was the ideological founder of Fluxus. He drew up a manifesto and decided who was part of Fluxus and who wasn't. But the idea was much bigger and had already developed further than he would have admitted. "*Even if Maciunas was ideological and dogmatic, the potential of the open group lived from the free spirit of its protagonists. Maciunas actually already failed with his definition of who was part of the Fluxus movement and who wasn't.*"<sup>49</sup> Fluxus was a movement that one either felt part of or didn't. Fluxus – like Dada – was concept 'anti-art', in other words artists' movement against 'elitist high art'. Apart from action art, concepts for alternative ways of living together also played a role here. Maciunas had already visited an island with friends where they all wanted to live and Joe Jones was ordered to qualify for a pilot's license.<sup>50</sup> Fluxus was an international movement that revolved not least around the idea of a humane, intelligent, humorous and solidly united artistic articulation. For example, it was quite common for another artist in the group to create a performance, or to develop joint work. Nam June Paik performed the 'TV -Brah' together with Charlotte Moorman and Charlotte Moorman showed 'cut pieces' by Yoko Ono.<sup>51</sup> The Fluxus network can be called the pioneer of performance art networks.

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cPi0: (16.05.2013)

47 Patterson, Ben. in an interview with Fischer, Katinka: "Das war das erste große Internationale Netzwerk" in FAZ 28.02.2012 <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/im-gespraech-ben-patterson-fluxus-pionier-das-war-das-erste-grosse-internationale-netzwerk-11665973.html> (13.05.2013)

48 Herzogenrath Wulf: *Die 60er Jahre*, catalogue of the Kölner Kunstverein 1986, p. 14/15

49 Jones, Joe: Oral History (in a talk with R. Hinterecker and B. Patterson in Wiesbaden 1985)

50 Patterson, Ben: in talks, Wiesbaden 2005

51 Berger, Michael: in talks, Wiesbaden 2011

### 2.5.1 Ultimate Akademie:

Fluxus produced, amongst other things, the Ultimate Akademie<sup>52</sup>, which was founded in 1987 in Cologne by Al Hansen and Lisa Cieslik and cooperated with Fluxus artists such as Ben Patterson, Takako Saito, Carolee Schneemann and others in its own actions. *"Each artist is his own professor and each artist is the student."* The 'Ultimate' saw itself as an open network structure that accepted artists almost unconditionally and cooperated with other, generally regional networks, but also organised international collaborations.<sup>53</sup> The 'Ultimate' also serves as a testament to how important the 'mental willingness to act in a network' is in the long run. Some of its members contradicted the idea, as outsider occasionally remarked: *"I'd just come from New York and the group dynamics of a 'proletarian' artists' behaviour put 'outsiders' off, because this was usually how visitors were treated."*<sup>54</sup> The 'Ultimate', however, moderated as an interface to Fluxus and as a node to ASA European and the resulting Performance-Art-Conference. (See chapter 5.1)

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52 Catalogue: Kirsch, R.J; Pokoyski, D: Die Geschichte der Ultimate Akademie von 1987 – 1996 KRASH und Vilter Verlag, Cologne 1997

53 Around 70 artists from the associated networks of the 'Ultimate' as well as 70 artists from the art scene and structures (U. Khabat) in Thailand took part in the mail art project 'One Day of My Life in a Box' The object boxes of the 140 participants were exhibited in Bangkok / Cologne. (1996)

54 Ferro, Knopp: in talks, Munich (April 2006)

### **3. Prerequisite for the emergence of performance art networks**

"It is primarily a question of the quality of the performance art compared to the priority of the ego. Networks are cultural structures."<sup>55</sup>

With reference to chapter 2, it requires a certain mixture of social, socio-political and economic factors to favour or trigger developments. Consequently, the performance art networks did not develop accidentally in the 1980ies and 90ies. Exemplary aspects were: the progressive 'globalisation of cultures' – not least through the medium of TV – the increasing use of digital media, the expansion of mass tourism – with the resulting drop in costs of travel. Not forgetting a programmatic opening of Western cultural institutions such as the Institut Français or the Goethe Institut; they no longer exclusively exported their own culture to the relevant countries but also developed – depending upon the incumbent head of the institute – more or less ambitious projects that increasingly involved local artists.<sup>56</sup> The development of the Internet did not induce the performance art networks but it did provide them with an extremely important communication platform for organisational matters.

#### **3.1 Social and political prerequisites**

In order to take into account the various factors that led to the emergence of performance art networks, a differentiated consideration of the social and political circumstances in the respective cultural areas is necessary.

##### The Artists Village

was formed in 1988 in Singapore, which was still marked by the independence it had gained in 1963 and the resulting problems at the beginning of the 1980ies. The country was fraught by high unemployment and ethnic conflicts.<sup>57</sup> What's more, events were still determined by a latent search for identity and the resulting dissociation and differentiation to the neighbouring countries of Malaysia, Indonesia as well as China. There were no resources for an independent cultural policy and artists could only study at a traditional art school. Anyone who wanted to learn more about the contemporary avant-garde went abroad. "(...) *and there is no one to talk to, to discuss new ideas, or to brain storm. Artist here don't argue. You have difficulty trying to get someone to talk to you about Marcel Duchamp or Man Ray*"<sup>58</sup>

Artists who found their way to back to Singapore such as Tang Da Wu looked for their own niches far from the official cultural scene, and in turn acted as catalysts for other artists. "*Artists explore radical new ways and ideologies in making art that is in synch with the societal changes and state of affairs in the late 80ies.*"<sup>59</sup> Performances were banned and took place in the underground; they were punished by prison sentences and fines. (See also chapter 5.6 Censorship)

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55 Nieslony, Boris: no page: <http://www.asa.de/projects/netzwerk/ch2.htm> (15.05.2013)

56 Asavesna, Eva: in talks, Bangkok, Thailand ( July / Aug. 2007)

57 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore>, 76,8 % Chinese, 13,8 % Malay, 7,9 % Indians, etc. (16.05.2013)

58 Wen, Lee: "This Is My Room and Tree Life" 1984, documentation catalogue 'The Artists Village' Singapore 1988 - 1999, no page

59 Wu, Tang Da, short note, archive, Die Schwarze Lade in Box III

## Black Market International

was launched in 1985 from the European cultural context by Boris Nieslony. Following the polarising political concepts of enemies and their escalation in RAF terrorism, a new culture of discussion and interaction developed in the 1980ies in Germany.<sup>60</sup> But the idea of the Black Market International cannot be pinpointed to a certain time; rather it grew, and in this process is linked to the figure of Nieslony like no other. A stringent position developed in his biography independent of any zeitgeist. Above the impotence of growing up as a child in post-fascist Germany with its black pedagogy, stood the clamouring and an elementary question as to other ways in which people could communicate with each other.

## PAErsche

in Germany/Cologne, was also initiated by Boris Nieslony in 2009. Economic and socio-political aspects can be de facto ignored in this case. What was important, however, was the vacuum for artists' networks in Cologne at the time. The performance culture of this city had a virulent scene and corresponding forums up to the 1990ies. It began with the 'Atelier Mary Bauermeister' in the 50th, continued through Happening and Fluxus actions, the first performance art gallery in Germany ('Moltkerei'), the Fluxus gallery Christel Schüppenhauer and artists such as Jürgen Klauke, Ulrike Rosenbach, Michael Buthe, VALIE EXPORT, right through to the 'Ultimate Akademie' (1987-1998). The performance art scene died away at the end of the 1990ies. What remained were figures such as Angie Hiesl and, as the last network, Boris Nieslony's ASA European. He continued to organise important events with friends and changing co-organisers, such as 'Performance Art in NRW' and the 'SET UP' project in 1997, as well as founding the E.P.I.Zentrum in 2001.<sup>61</sup> But there were no adequate structures in Cologne that could maintain international contacts beyond ASA European. PAErsche thus came about from the need to give performance art a platform again.

## 3.2 Individual prerequisites

"To see or even install oneself as a node in a network is not an artistic project (specific cultural positing) and cannot be conceived of as a project that one begins at a certain point (...). Being in a network is an awareness of one's position in a society and how one wants to be integrated in this with all one's skills, faculties, interests and desires, not how one was or will be integrated. Looked at in this way, one can become a node in a network at the moment one realises these facts.(...)"<sup>62</sup>

If an actor acts in a network this initially implies, as Nieslony writes, teaming up with different people who share the same vision. In performance art, however, this 'sharing' and the choice of network participants largely takes place through personal contacts. A decisive criterion is one's own willingness to want to act within a network, to participate actively and equally; in other words, to conceive of oneself mentally as part of the whole. Using Deleuze and Guattari's words, a network should not have a hierarchic

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60 See in talks with Nieslony, Boris: Falk, Sabine and Puffert: Rahel <http://www.thing-hamburg.de/index.php?id=885> (12.05.2013)

61 E.P.I.Zentrum (European Performance Institute)

62 <http://www.asa.de/conferences/> PERFORMANCE ART NETZWERK SCHWEIZ working paper I + II, summarised, some select ideas

structure "*Don't bring out the General in you.*"<sup>63</sup> This means that it is not enough that one uses a network in the hope of achieving individual benefits.

Participation always entails the gift of a willingness to give oneself without expecting a direct reward. This idealistic claim cannot be reduced to the 'sharing principle' according to which Internet file-sharing networks work.

Nieslony describes the basic problem of such difficult interactions: "(...) One cannot enter into a direct exchange, it's only the input that counts, the prosperity of this exchange is a time-delayed one, what is paradoxical about networks is that it appears to be just giving, but if the networking works, there will be feedback from nodes that one hadn't even seen at first. Network behaviour, the things, nodes, persons, institutions may not be reciprocal (...)"<sup>64</sup>

These networks thus act socially both internally and externally, and a basic form of solidarity exists. Artists that use the network explicitly for personal sponsorship damage the network and this is rarely tolerated. Mavericks in performance art networks are rare. The majority of these require this structure for their appearances too. Artists who develop their individual career through art societies, galleries and comparable structures, for example Jonathan Meese or ORLAN whose work focuses on a very different content, are an exception here.

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63 Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix: in 'Rhizom', Merve Verlag 1976, p. 41

64 Nieslony, Boris: <http://www.asa.de/projects/netzwerk/ch2.htm> (13.05.2013)



#### **4. Performance-Art networks**

"Quanta leap out of the quantum lake, dolphins dance out of the water for seconds and disappear again into the deep. This is how artistic principles manifest themselves in reality and create time and permanence through recollection. For me the purest definition of performance"<sup>65</sup>

The performance art networks described in the following chapter have as yet left hardly any trace in the art history context of an academic examination. The reasons are many, among the most important are:

- a) A rejection of curator control by the networks themselves.
- b) A difficult marketing (there are no pictures, objects etc. that can be sold).
- c) Performance art is unpredictable; it therefore poses a risk for sponsors, cultural institutes, etc. (see also taboos / censorship).

The diversity of artistic approaches is one of performance art's biggest resources. The scene itself cannot be divided up into categories. The networks in themselves are not homogeneous since they include a wide diversity of kinds of performance such as body art, ritual, verbal, political, feminist and long lasting performance. But they also encompass interactive activities with the public. The diversity these represent constitutes a consensus in performance art as such<sup>66</sup>. What's more, the 'tools'<sup>67</sup> that are used can also differ; these rang from collected finds through to complex installations with sound or light systems.

A diagram developed by Dirmoser & Nieslony on types of performance actions gives us an impression of the complex diversity. (Appendix p. 66)

The common denominators of performance art networks are their self-organisation, interaction with other networks and the organisation of events. They generally operate parallel to 'curator art'. And even though there are interfaces to official cultural events and established festivals such as the Biennale Venezia (some artists participate in this), they nevertheless act autonomously, explains Elisa Andessner.<sup>68</sup>

The most virulent source to demonstrate the diversity and quality of the scene is the Internet with videos, image materials, treatises and texts, right down to event notes. The scene is well connected and communicates through Facebook and e-mail. (Supplementary image materials Appendix p.67, 68, 69)

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65 <http://www.asa.de/projects/blackmarket/angebot.htm> (14.05.2013)

66 Meiner, Karin: in talks, Cologne, April 2013

67 Name used for the materials needed for a performance

68 Andessner, Lisa: in talks (03.06.2012)

## 4.1 The Artists Village (TAV)

The emergence of The Artists Village from Singapore developed accidentally from the place where the artist Tang Da Wu was living. "*Oh, (The Artists Village) wasn't planned,*" Tang said candidly. "*I'd only wanted to set up a studio for myself, my wife and brother.*"<sup>69</sup>

Unlike during the foundation of most artists' collectives and movements there was no programmatic or conceptual approach.

Da Wu<sup>70</sup> initially returned to Singapore in 1979 after 20 years of studying and teaching in Great Britain and presented one of the very first performances ever there. After further study visits to the UK, which he completed with his doctorate at the School of Arts, he finally returned to Singapore for good. Together with his English wife Hazel McIntosh, their small son and his brother they rented an old chicken farm in Sembawang, the northern most region of the archipelagic state.

*"Getting there is the hardest part. Unless you drive or have someone driving you."*<sup>71</sup>

Together they converted the building into an atelier and dwelling. Da Wu has said that one of the main reasons for his escape from the city was the calm and 'isolation'.<sup>72</sup>

Friends who visited them were fascinated by the rural idyll that they found there. Joint projects were planned and the first networks were developed. The idea arose to rent out ateliers permanently to other artists and to exchange ideas.

Amongst the first protagonists who presented installations in Singapore and performed there were Ahmad Mashadi, Faizal Fadil, Amanda Heng, Ho Soon Yeen, Lim Poh Teck, Tang Mun Kit, Wong Shih Yaw, Julian Yasin and Zai Kuning. These were later joined by Lee Wen, Ng Josef and other – today internationally famous – artists. One particular concern was to offer young people a place where they could live out their creativity free from social constraints and the pressure of the state with its complex regulations. One focus from the very outset was to foster foreign contacts, particularly to Malaysia, that was experiencing political tension with Singapore.

An 'artist's colony' quickly developed outside the city, a place where at times up to 50 creative minds worked and, in some case, lived. Committed artists who no longer accepted the moral beliefs and the orthodox, state-controlled cultural scene, were attracted to the 'artist's colony'. The freedom they found there gave them the opportunity to experiment artistically and also to swap ideas. The story told by the artist Shih Yaw conveys the atmosphere of those times, when he had to endure a three-hour trip by bus, rail and a long walk just to paint freely – even if this was only for one hour.<sup>73</sup>

Several years later, the journalist T.K. Sabpathy<sup>74</sup> described the incredibly dynamic atmosphere and energy that could be felt there in an article commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the TAV.

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69 No title, no page : press copy: 'The Artist Village' Singapore 1988 – 1999 archive, Die Schwarze Lade from the box: Singapur II

70 He was originally called Thang Kian Hiong, during his time in England he changed his name to Tang Da Wu, which in Mandarin means something like 'big mist.

71 No title, no page : press copy: 'The Artist Village' Singapore 1988 – 1999 archive, Die Schwarze Lade from the box: Singapur II

72 Source: Die Schwarze Lade, *The Art Magazin* April – May 1989 from the box: Singapore The Artist Village

73 *The Art Magazin*, April – May 1989, Die Schwarze Lade from the box: Singapore The Artists Village

74 T.K. Sabapathy\* 1938, is one of Singapore's most important curators, critics & art historians

- "For them as well for many others, TAV was a magnet on account of its
- (a) open-ness
  - (b) promise as a locus for advancing individual practices and dispositions along collegial yet competitive registers
  - (c) provision of a milieu that was physically expansive and psychologically salubrious as it was set apart from the uniform, restrictive and reductive urbanization (...) in the late 70s and throughout the 80s and
  - (d) apparent unideological, non- dogmatic operatives – although methods for producing and thinking on art were steered along reflexive paths."<sup>75</sup>

A decisive prerequisite for the emergency of the network was Da Wu's ability to see himself as more of a medium than a formative individual. He encouraged young people to discuss and encounter every idea with an open mind.

"The Artists Village is not a school but merely provides the space and facility for artists to work. There is no prevalent style but it embraces a group of artists with a wide range of interests and concerns in their work."<sup>76</sup>

Since Singapore had de facto no platform for contemporary art, there inevitably arose a need for and the necessity of organising own exhibitions. This meant a completely new step for the majority of artists, not to exhibit in galleries or cultural institutes and not to repeatedly show what fell under the corresponding conventions.<sup>77</sup>

The first *Open studio show* was held in the year of its foundation (1989) and the Name The Artists Village (TAV) was born.<sup>78</sup> The aim was to organise an exhibition every 2 months where both installations and performances could be presented. Several young artists performed for the first time in May and June of the same year. In an article in the SAM catalogue, 'The Artist Village, 20 years on', Sabapathy writes that this exhibition and presentation *The second Open Studio* laid the foundation for performance art not only within this group but also for Singapore. In July and August of the same year it was invited to the opening of the *Nanyang Technological Institute* to present an exhibition it called *Happening* and in December it organised a 24-hour performance art festival.<sup>79</sup> In 1990 – only two years after its foundation –TAV had to vacate the property on account of the expansion plans of the town planning authorities. But TAV had already developed enough dynamics as a project that it was continued and reorganised in an old warehouse on the Naval Base. Vacant department stores, warehouses and many more venues served as a podium.

TAV began to become increasingly nomadic. What's more, the Substation, an offer from a friendly artist, became a permanent alternative venue.<sup>80</sup>

In 1992, TAV received sponsorship from the *National Museum Art Gallery* and the *National Art Council*. However, this support was officially stopped in 1994 after only 2 years because the artist Josef Ng had shaved off his pubic hair with his back to the audience during the performance art event *on New Years Eve* in protest against the state discrimination of homosexuality. The presence of a journalist led to unexpected publicity and the arrest of Josef Ng; he was later released on bail of \$ 3.000.<sup>81</sup> In the

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75 *Catalogue SAM* (Singapore Art Museum), 'The Artists Village 20 years on', 2009 by SAM, p.7

76 No title, no page: documentation booklet: 'The Artists Village' Singapore 1988-1999, Press release 1989

77 Catalogue: SAM, *ibid.* p.11 Seng Yu Jin "Re – visiting the Emergence of The Artists Village"

78 In 1992 The Artists Village was officially recognised as a 'Group' under the Societies Act

79 Singapore Art Museum,(publisher) SAM Singapore Art Museum, 2009 p.75

80 Quotes on the substation, Appendix p.70

81 Singapore Press Holdings, (publisher) The Straits Times, 8. Jan 1994, p.3

same year, TAV artists received an invitation to Adelaide (Australian) but were unable to accept on account of the cancelled support.<sup>82</sup>

The artistic freedom was greatly curtailed by the extremely restrictive policy of the archipelagic state of Singapore. More and more artists migrated abroad to present their performances in neighbouring countries. Artists from Singapore performed at festivals in Asia and Europe (even at the Biennale Venezia).<sup>83</sup>

The ban on performance art was only lifted in 2003 – not least through the, in the meantime, great reputation of all protagonists, such as the co-founders Amanda Heng and Lee Wen. TAV once again received public support from the *National Art Council*. The festival 'Future of Imagination', organised by Lee Wen, was their response.

"With the recent announcement that the national Art Council will now allow funding of performance art after ten years of not funding we would like to make an affirmative response by organising this event to celebrate acknowledge and welcome the pro cultural move by the National Art Council."<sup>84</sup>

### Aspects that determined the development of TAV as an open network

1. The artist Tang Da Wu, a true cosmopolitan, provided his young colleagues in Singapore with insights into the international art scene. He rejected hierarchies because the main focus of his interest was on encouraging the network, something that he consistently extended to internal collaborations from a very early stage.<sup>85</sup> (see also 4.1)
2. This aspect was complemented by other early TAV artists who had also studied art abroad and had international experience and contacts, as Amanda Heng said in an interview with Ng. Siew Kuan: "Let me begin by offering some of my reasons why I'm interested in collaboration. Collaborating is not new to me, because the kind of work that I have been doing mostly involves people, including the many activities with The Artists Village. But the issue of collaborating became more obvious when I was working in Australia and working with 'strangers', with people of different cultural backgrounds (...)."<sup>86</sup>
3. The nomadic nature of TAV, because none of the event or organisation centres was constant. This prevented hierarchies such as often can be found in comparable structures such as cultural centres.
4. A programmatic openness that constantly displayed an interest in other artists and generated contacts abroad. Since there were practically no restrictions on travel in Singapore despite the 'regulations', an interdisciplinary, procreative exchange arose (picture material Appendix p.71-74)

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82 No title, no page: press copy 'The Artist Village' Singapore 1988 – 1999 archive, Die Schwarze Lade from the box: 'Singapur II'

83 Meiner, Karin: in talks, Cologne (05.04.2013)

84 Wen, Lee O.S.; Die Schwarze Lade, Box: Singapur III

85 No title, no page: documentation booklet: 'The Artists Village' Singapore 1988-1999, Material: Village Art p.20 (12<sup>th</sup> page!)

86 Heng, Amanda: Catalogue New CRITERIA , published by The Substation 1995 p.26 "dialog on collaboration", Interview with Ng. Siew Kuan

## 4.2 Black Market International (BMI)<sup>87</sup>

The name Black Market International does not refer to a 'group' in the classical meaning but an association. BMI is an artistic idea that Boris Nieslony defines as an 'artistic Utopia', whereas Norbert Klassen, on the other hand, was more interested in the anarchic aspect. The great diversity of the performers, who came from Italy, Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Singapore and other countries, called for an un-dogmatic view of the concept of a performance. *"There's an unbelievable amount of tolerance in the performances. One can't judge and make one's own artistic horizon obligatory for others,"*<sup>88</sup> explained Norbert Klassen in talks with the 'Kulturagenda' Bern. Asked how he dealt with this, Klassen replied: *"Sometimes better, sometimes worse (laughs). But I have to keep asking myself: What have I got against it? Where does my view of the world end if there's not more room for this?"*<sup>89</sup>

The participants come together– as needs be – several times a year for international 'appearances' (these are more precisely encounters) or go on tour. Any contacts beyond this are very reduced; even though the artists know each other and their families personally, they lead completely different lives. (See interview with 'Kulturagenda' Bern)

The performers appear simultaneously in a room, a hall or on a property. The agreements about such a 'group performance' are marginal; there may be some agreement about who is to start, but the flow develops from the interaction. Nor do all of the artists in BMI have to be present. After an appearance they go their separate ways again and meet up for the next encounter.<sup>90</sup>

The development of Black Market International was a process that lasted several years, as Boris Nieslony told me in our talks in spring 2013. He had already developed the 'Communicating vessels archive' with colleagues in 1975, the core idea of which was to consider how information could be collected and exchanged so that everyone felt equally addressed and in turn passed on the information to everyone else. This was a network idea in the field of information.<sup>91</sup>

Another project that was relevant for the development of BMI was the 'Künstlerhaus Weidenallee' that was opened in 1977 in Hamburg by 24 artists. Nieslony founded the KLEINEN AUSSTELLUNGSRAUM (small exhibition room) with friends in the same house, which he managed from 1978-1983. Similar to TAV, its main intention was to offer a platform that allowed the artists to enter into discussions with each other.

In 1981 Nieslony organised the 'DAS KONZIL' with 40 different European artists who worked and lived together for one month and who addressed the question: *"How can we develop our position in art within the art system created by society?"*<sup>92</sup> Summing up, Nieslony quotes Georg Brecht from the 1969 book 'Leben und Lehren als Aufführungskunst': *"If you want to know something, spend time with someone who*

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87 At the time of its foundation, BMI was only called Black Market; 'International' was only added from the middle of the 1980ies

88 See, no title, no page: Kulturagenda: interview with Norbert Klassen /Switzerland [https://www.kulturagenda.be/rubrik/buhne/lgefuhle\\_hat\\_jederr/](https://www.kulturagenda.be/rubrik/buhne/lgefuhle_hat_jederr/) (20.05.2013)

89 See ibid.

90 List of some appearances in the Appendix p. 75-76

91 [www.fabrikanten.at](http://www.fabrikanten.at) (20.05.2013)

92 Interview in the book "METAMUZEUM, part one: Art in the street / interviews with performance artists", editor: Artur Tajber; published by PSP/Dept. of Intermedia Academy of Fine Arts, Krakow, Poland, 2011.

*knows something."* and he concludes: *"That sums up the most important thing about DAS KONZIL."*

A further trend of this era, so says Nieslony, was the foundation of numerous groups that were internationally entwined with each other, but rarely lasted longer than two years. He sought a path that was free from the questions of hierarchies. In a further attempt he organised 'KONZIL II' in 1982 „*We did a number of activities and we completed a very special project. It was a group performance. I remember today that at first it was absolutely great and the next day it was absolutely shit.*“<sup>93</sup>

According to Nieslony, this was the moment when he realised what he was looking for. He needed performers who could fit into a group, who see what is happening and can react/act on this. He wanted to start with 7 people:

„I wanted to start with seven people; they should be good artists and good persons, but I would also have to be interested in working together with them. That was the big question, and I found the first people: Warpechowski, Norbert Klassen... There was Jacques van Poppel, with whom I worked since 1979, we made a very good duo, did very good work together. Then I found Jurgen Fritz and then we went to Poland and I saw an open situation work with Zygmunt Piotrowski, Tomas Ruller, Fritz, and I liked it. At that moment I said, OK, we are seven. I visited Piotrowski in Warsaw and we had a strong discussion. He didn't like my work, he thought it was like a market, a kind of fair. I said, "Well, it's a black market." And that's how we found the name of the group - Black Market - by chance...“<sup>94</sup>

Only two years after the foundation of Black Market they appear at the Documenta 8 in Kassel with the "Brakteatenstück". This was followed by numerous further appearances, including international appearance. (For a list see Appendix p. 75, 76)

The '15 Principles of Black Market International' were developed over several years as the artistic idea for common work – BMI is, for example:

- on principle not 'owned', it is an open system of encounters
- an event/ occurrence; the situation in which a number of artists perform and present their performance in a certain room, at a certain time and in parallel
- an artistic idea, a cross-cultural elective affinity
- the parallelism of the performances and events etc.<sup>95</sup>

The principles that can be found in the Appendix are to a certain extent a paradox since such a precise definition in actual fact contradicts their artistic and poetic semantics.<sup>96</sup>

BMI can be compared to a three-dimensional model of the network theories described above that has become a reality, without merging them with one another. The individual personalities in the 'group' search for different strategies and artistic approaches when

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93 No page, ibid.

94 No page, ibid

95 No title, no page Die Schwarze Lade, box: BMI general, "The 15 principles of BMI"

96 All of the 15 Principles can be found in the Appendix, p.77 -79

they perform and work together. They create a very special aura that is all about 'encountering the in-between. The room in which they are performing, time as well as silence, tensions, temperature and the actions, everything that comes together in this moment – including the audience – determines what happens. An 'exchange of energies' takes place between the performers and the public.

The quality and freedom of every individual artist brings about an unforeseeable multitude of constantly changing, absurd, poetic but also comic moments that are retained in recollections. This also includes failure.

The wealth of cultural backgrounds and the artistic context out of which they work and in which they are located strengthens 'the gift' as language and is articulated in BMI like a Utopia.

Not all artists were able to (or wanted to) follow the specific claim of the BMI network. For example, Zygmunt Piotrowski from Warsaw left BMI of his own accord because he was looking for a stronger structure and more intensive group work. (See KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL Volume 116 p. 232)

This means a willingness to see oneself as a replaceable node. As soon as one of the 'actors' tries to individuate, the equilibrium and idea of the network becomes obsolete. *"We parted company with Thomas Ruller from Prague because his attempts at personal individuation through and in the group, which were by all means legitimate from his subjective point of view, eventually made any kind of cooperation impossible."*<sup>97</sup> In this sense, BMI could be called a 'closed network'. You can't simply join it and join in. 'The network concept is very much inherent in the act of performance itself.'

"It is interesting to be software, available to people for free - it's one of the most important points of working together. Now, when I work with Black Market, for example, I feel, I know that I have people around me and it's like playing a game of billiards. You hit one ball and it bounces off other balls and you get a lot from it - this is what I like about it: I get so much from other people. And when I work alone, I have to develop my knowledge. I get a lot from Black Market, and then I develop it alone to bring it back to Black Market."<sup>98</sup>

Just like TAV or PAErsche, BMI has no institution or a central location where the participants meet. Independent of their involvement in performance art projects, the participants always pursue their artistic work.

The members of BMI are (as per May 2013)

Norbert Klassen , Switzerland (deceased 2011, since then has been travelling and 'performing' symbolically with the group) Julie Andréé T., Canada / Alastair MacLennan, Northern Ireland / Jacques Van Poppel, Netherlands / Elvira Santamaria, Mexico / Myriam Laplante, Italy / Jürgen Fritz, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Marco Teubner, Germany / Roi Vaara, Finland / Lee Wen and Jason Lim, Singapore (Document and images in the Appendix p. 80-83)

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97 Nieslony, Boris in an interview with Raab, Jürgen: KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL; Volume 116, p.232

98 Interview in the book: METAMUZEUM, part one: Art in the street / interviews with performance artists, editor: Artur Tajber, published by PSP/Dept. of Intermedia, Academy of Fine Arts, Krakow, Poland, 2011.

### 4.3 PAErsche Aktionslabor

"PAErsche develops its own language from the 'joy of performing'"<sup>99</sup>

The PAErsche Aktionslabor <sup>100</sup> formed in 2009 in Cologne and is made up of around 30 artists. Its foundation was initiated by Boris Nieslony too. The aim was to revitalise the performance art scene in the art city of Cologne, where he lives and works, and to give this a platform, and to be able to return international invitations. PAErsche emerged at roughly the same time as Pan Vienna in Austria at the height of the popularity of and discussions about 'social networks' and a resulting interactive participation over the Internet. However, one could call both performance art networks analogue. They only use Internet networks as communication tools.

"The experiment PAErsche originated with a few, unspoken terms: it's all about a passion for performance, about the idea of the 'gift', and it's about the aim of inviting colleagues who are passing through Europe, to give them the chance to perform, and there's no money in it "<sup>101</sup>

The first activists included a large number of artists from the former Ultimate Akademie and its network. Petra Deus, Rolf Hinterecker, Rolf Kirsch, Karin Meiner and Carola Willbrand knew Boris from numerous performance art events from the 1990ies. Together with further artists such as Michael Dick, Elke Mark, Frank Homeyer etc., the group had 'mutual trust and the know-how of a network' as a prerequisite for the foundation of a performance art network.

The first meetings were held in pubs in Cologne, various seminar rooms of welfare services and of course in Nieslony's atelier in Boltenssternstraße. From the very beginning the group programmatically canvassed further interested performers. The early participation of the young Austrian artist Evamaria Schaller, who Nieslony and Hinterecker had got to know at a BMI performance in Cologne, provided some key stimuli and contacts to other young artists. These included Marita Bullmann, Beatrice Didier, Alice de Visscher, Lala Nomada and Malte Beisenherz. The network expanded and in the summer of 2011 the 'group' already had around 25 performers.<sup>102</sup> Similar to BMI and TAV, PAErsche does not have its own rooms.

Concept:

On its homepage, PAErsche says that it sees itself as an open, cultural platform for performance art and "As a network, PAErsche is not so much interested in seeing itself as a fixed group or ensemble. PAErsche formulates conditions in which the artists are well represented because they themselves are involved in and help shape this framework."<sup>103</sup> What is interesting about PAErsche is that it has participants from every generation. Young performers who are networked with the contemporary, virulent art

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99 Meiner, Karin: in talks: PAErsche meetings, Cologne (21.05.2013)

100 There is no verified source for an interpretation of the name PAErsche. Evamaria Schaller, who participated on its creation, says: "we wanted it to be a name that just sounds good, that you get caught on, over which you stumble. We had to make friends with it at first, and now it's a label and everyone pronounces it differently" Frank Homeyer on the other side: "it is a secret" In talks, Cologne (20.03.2013)

101 Willbrand, Carola: in talks, Cologne (09.05.2013)

102 Current list of artists (as per May 2013) see Appendix p.84

103 Not title, no page.:<http://www.paersche.org/content/01selfconcept.html> (1.04.2013)



scene are complemented by older artists whose friendships go back to the Fluxus era and who performed with Ben Patterson, Takako Saito and others, for example, explains Carola Willbrand in talks.<sup>104</sup> One important aspect of the 'PAErsche idea' from the very beginning was the explicit wish to invite colleagues from other towns or countries as well as those just passing through. This meant that there have been performances by guests from Israel (Raz Gomeh), England (Poppy Jackson) and two Iraqis living in Switzerland (Watiq Al Ameri and Ali Al Fatlawi).<sup>105</sup>

These invitations are normally extended by the members of PAErsche themselves or other artists are suggested by guest performers – according to the network principle.

A further programmatic concern is to reach and win over changing publics, and therefore to free performance art from the isolation of the 'white cube'.

- Consequently, PAErsche works with changing venues. -
- Official approvals are not obtained; no insurances are taken out.-

Performance art events are held primarily in Essen, Bonn, Cologne or in the urban public space. Collaborations also take place with 'art locations' within towns or cities. In Cologne these were the 'Orangerie Theater im Volksgarten', the artist-managed art locations: Opekta, Artclub, BOUTIQUE - Raum für temporäre Kunst, NEUES KUNSTFORUM amongst others.

Another format are 'performance migrations'. A rough route through public space is agreed for these and the artists perform along this 'roadmap'. In the *Austria-Colonia*, project, for example, the artist Sibylle Ettengruber – following an imaginary straight line – walked straight across a bed of flowers, crossed a six-lane main road before wading through a lake in the city park on the other side (she had to swim part of the way).<sup>106</sup>

But concepts and strategies from the performance scene are also taken up and modified as inspirations. The 'open source' performance, for example, is inspired by the work of BMI. With this format, several artists use a room or space to perform. This leads to the development of an unforeseeable dramaturgy of concentration and strength that can then fade away to almost complete exhaustion before developing from anew. There are no consultations or concepts. The artists sometimes use the 'tools' left in the action space from former performances and generate new moments and images with these. The complete 'open source' is a unique improvisation and additional performers may join in depending on the 'mood'.

"Individual actors open the 'space', until further actors gradually join in the events and follow their momentum. A structure or pattern appears – comparable to a mobile - in which the participants mover and interact. Elements of this interaction alternate with seemingly parallel sequences of actions."<sup>107</sup>

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104 Willbrand, Carola: in talks, Cologne. (15.06.2012)

105 Invitation card: from 2012/ 2013 and PAErsche [www.paersche.org](http://www.paersche.org) (20.05.2013)

106 Schaller E., Hinterecker R.: *Austria-Colonia*, (Copybuch , Cologne 2012, p. 5-6) Die Schwarze Lade

107 Mark, Elke: <http://www.paersche.org/content/02OpensourcePerf.html> (19.05.2013)

## Network behaviour in PAErsche

PAErsche sees itself as an open structure. Unlike the BMI, anyone who wants to join the network and satisfies the 'terms of the gift' can in principle take part. However, no explicit reference is made to these terms. 'One feels it', says Karin Meiner. The trying out of new formats, artistic strategies and approaches as well as the unprejudiced culture of encounters and the interest in experiments are comparable BMI and TAV. "(...) *This broad spectrum inseminates the artistic exchange and encourages a constant expansion of the fragile performance art network.*"<sup>108</sup>

Meetings are held at monthly intervals in a neutral location to discuss organisational concerns. (Development of projects, participations, applications for funds, settlement of accounts, etc.) "*An absolute transparency and altruism guarantee that there are no debates about envy within the group.*" says Evamaria Schaller.<sup>109</sup> This refers in particular to financial matters since grants and subsidies are distributed and one's own fees are often given back. Reflections on the course of performance art events are also exercises within the permanent culture of discussion in PAErsche. The artistic 'quality' of the individual, performative act itself, on the other hand, is not discussed in the plenum. 'Orga evenings' evolve that are followed by 'stand-up performances' in which unsaid images and moments develop and are tried out.<sup>110</sup> Conversely, the participation in the European Live-Art Project 'Exchange Radical Moments'<sup>111</sup> did not lead to the planned performance participation but to a conceptual discussion during which the texts for the "PAErsche self-concept" were developed over a period of approx. 6 hours.<sup>112</sup>

The perspectives for PAErsche are open. The network developed into a very stable structure in only three years. Even when individual 'member's moved away to other towns and cities, this opened up and extended PAErsche more than it weakened the group. Elke Mark, for example, moved to Flensburg in 2012, where she then organised the performance art festival 'Brise°1' in 2013. Frank Homeyer moved his second home to Berlin in spring 2013 and in turn invites artists from the Berlin platform 'Performance Stammtisch' to the Orangerie in Cologne. In an e-mail to the open mailing list of PAErsche artists, Homeyer wrote<sup>113</sup>

"Hello everyone, (...) The 'Stammtisch' has confirmed the Orangerie in November. This means that Anja Ibsch/Joy Harder/Florian Feigl and Jörn Burmester will be our guests in Cologne. I can put up and cater for at least 2 people (...) I hope you're all doing well. Big hugs for everyone – Frank"

The bifurcation of the network and the new projects that are constantly emerging through this reflect the 'rhizome-like' virulence of PAErsche. Since the foundation of PAErsche in 2011 I took advantage of many opportunities to attend the performance art evenings. The 'open source' in particular clearly illustrates how performance art networks communicate artistically. A mesh of moments full of diversity ensues in which it becomes visible just how exceptionally radically, sensitively, poetically, boldly and madly the individual artists handle each other. (Images p. 84-87)

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108 <http://www.paersche.org/content/01selfconcept.html> (19.05.2013)

109 Schaller, Evamaria: in talks: Cologne (11.05.2013)

110 Beisenherz, Malte: in talks (28.03.2013)

111 <http://11moments.org/>(20.05.2013) Invitation from DIE FABRIKANTEN from Linz / Austria,

112 Schaller, Evamaria in talks, Cologne (25.04.2013)

113 E-mail to PAErsche mailing list (07.05.2013 20:19)

## **5. Collaborations and structures in performance art networks**

There are many different way to illustrate how networks interact with others on the basis of the performance art networks and their self-organised events discussed in this paper. Festivals, symposia or conferences in particular are a realised/vital form of networks. Unlike other international projects such as Documenta or the Biennale Venezia, the performance art events are structures organised by the artists themselves. They do not serve as 'competitive exhibitions' but are used for encounters and exchanges. They are characterised by an informal atmosphere, explained Elisa Andessner from the 'Performance-Laboratorium Linz' in Austria.<sup>114</sup>

The purpose and significance of performance art festivals is not just the performance as an end in itself but 'communication in the flesh', the meeting of a wide variety of different artists. Such personal meetings usually lead to an extension of the networks. During the *East–West–Study–Project* in Düsseldorf and Darmstadt in 1995, for example, Boris Nieslony from BMI met Lee Wen from TAV in Singapore; this led to an invitation for Lee Wen to take part in Black Market International<sup>115</sup>.

### **5.1 Historical development**

The following chapter will restrict its further reflections to the Asian and European region.

The Austrian sculptor Karl Prantl was one of the first artists in contemporary art to send out invitations to a symposium, which he initiated in 1959. His 'Symposium of European Sculptors' in the roman quarry in St. Magarethen in Burgenland attracted worldwide attention because Prantl had developed a form in which the artists could mutually pass on and exchange their experiences without necessarily belonging to a group.<sup>116</sup> *"Our starting point at that time, to create an understanding between artists all over the world, was an idea that caught on from Prague to Tokyo, from New York to Berlin. The increasing importance of symposia all over the world is proof that our starting point at that time was the right one."*<sup>117</sup>

With his invitations to Austria, Prantl maintained constant contact with artists from Eastern Block countries, especially in the era of the 'Iron Curtain'.<sup>118</sup> In an article on the transfer of culture in performance art, Lee Wen from Singapore also refers to this festival.

He writes "The sculptor Karl Prantl was said to have organized the first, post-war manifestation of such symposiums, (...) the international performance art festivals of today began with the same motivation of building bridges between different cultures",<sup>119</sup> so that for Lee Wen, the international performance art festivals emerged from comparable ideas.

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114 Andessner, Elisa: in talks, Cologne (31.05.2012 and 20.05.2013 )

115 E mail from Nieslony, Boris (18.04.2013)

116 Schurian, Andrea: Der Standard print edition, 09./10.10.2010, *Seine Steine schlagen Wurzeln*, <http://derstandard.at/1285200386044/Karl-Prantl-1923-2010-Seine-Steine-schlagen-Wurzeln>

117 Not title, no page <http://www.katharinaprantl.at/bildhauersymposion/index.html> (17.05.2013)

118 See Murray, Peter: Karl Prantl Sculpture, Schloßpark Ambras, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.Edition . Stemmler, Switzerland, 1997

119 Wen, Lee: "How to change the world without really trying – reflection on performance art today". from

At the same time, the Fluxus movement developed other formats die that display numerous interfaces to the current performance art networks. International artists also came together at Fluxus festivals, they 'exchanged', developed a 'common spirit' and already had all of the features of the later performance art networks. However, they existed on their own because at the time there were no equivalent networks as cooperation partners because people were still thinking in the categories of the art movements.<sup>120</sup>

Right up to the 1980ies, western art appreciation mostly regarded collaborations with other cultural regions as a 'demonstration', something that reached its absurd highlight in the 'Bangkok Project' of the 'Minus Delta t' art group. As a performative action, the artists Mike Hentz, Karel Dudesek and Bernard Müller, amongst others, transported a piece of rock weighing 5.5 t from Europe to Asia. The overland trip passed through Turkey, Syria, Pakistan to India and ended for various reasons without the stone in Bangkok, where the artists 'performed' over a period of several weeks. "*Performance was still unknown. The Thais stared at us with a smile but in amazement.*"<sup>121</sup> recounted the later co-founder of the Ultimate Akademie, Lisa Cieslik, who participated in Bangkok in 1983.

The project 'ASA European', founded by Boris Nieslony in 1990, was a realised counter-project.<sup>122</sup> The idea of an 'artist's service' was a platform that explicitly maintained international contacts with performers. The 1<sup>st</sup> Performance Art Conference was organised in 1995 in Cologne in cooperation between ASA European, Ultimate Akademie and others. Two years later, the Ultimate Akademie and ASA European initiated the first big international performance art conference in Thailand. A larger collaboration and cooperation between Asian and Western performance art networks came about for the first time in cooperation with Concrete House, TAV, NIPAF and others.<sup>123</sup>

Asian artists<sup>124</sup> discovered performance art as an artistic medium at a relatively late point in time, but quickly developed international performance art events.<sup>125</sup> Examples that can be named here include NIPAF (Nippon International Performance-Art Festival; 1993 in Japan) and Life Art /AsiaTopia (Thailand, 1996). In Thailand, the group U-Kabat organised performance actions in 1995 as a forerunner to AsiaTopia which were attended by (now) internationally famous artists such as Paisan Plienbangchang, Vasan Sitthiket or Jittima Pholsaweke. The festival was based on an interaction with various Thai artists such as those from 'visual art', 'performing-art' or 'writer', as well as a networking with various 'NGOs'. "*The group consisted of multi-disciplinary members who are artist (...) in order to achieve our activities Co- operation with all other organisations that share our activities government and non government organisations (...).*"<sup>126</sup>

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Die Schwarze Lade, Box: Singopore II

120 Patterson, Ben in talks, April 2013 (by phone)

121 Cieslik, Lisa: in talks, Cologne April 2013

122 ASA European was founded in 1990 by Boris Nieslony, see Appendix p. 88

123 Supported by the Goethe Institute Munich and BKK 1997

124 Except Japan, through Guatai, Hi Red Center etc.

125 See also chapter 5.2

126 Flyer U- Kabat; see Appendix p.91

Asian performance art pioneers, except, for example, Seiji Shimoda from Japan,<sup>127</sup> generally studied visual arts in Western countries abroad and imported their knowledge into their own cultural area where it could be modified, transformed and developed further. These artists also included Chumpon Apisuk (Aisa Topia), Tang Da Wu, Amanda Heng and Lee Wen (TAV). From the 1990ies onwards, individual western artists also increasingly intensified and extended a multilateral transfer of culture with performance art and the network culture. In 1993, for example, the German artist Veronika Radulovic was awarded a long-term tenure in "Avant-Garde-Western Art" at the University of Fine Arts in Hanoi / Vietnam. She introduced performance art in her teaching. *"There was no word for contemporary art and she introduced Performance Art as one aspect of western/international art."*<sup>128</sup>

Ten years later, and still under the observation of the state, the first international performance art conference was held in Vietnam in 2006 with more than 30 participants. (Images, p. 89 -90 / List of some festivals, Appendix p. 92-93)

## 5.2 Contents and goals of performance art events

- The encounter
- Exchange of new artistic strategies and approaches
- Exchange of information
- Establish a personal understanding between artists and cultures
- Strengthen and extend the networks
- Encourage young artists
- Bring performance art out of the art context into society

Various formats have emerged since the 1990ies such as festivals, workshops, symposia, the performance art conference and others. The boundaries between conceptualities are fluent. Western-academic definitions and terminology are blurred in cooperation with other cultures, at least in the context of performance art. This is why the simple term 'event' will be used in the following.

The word 'festival' generally stands for any kind of event where collaborations occur in Asia. Following the 1<sup>st</sup> PAC in Bangkok, the networks increasingly expressed a wish for further aspects that went beyond a general curiosity about other artistic approaches and the bilateral 'exhibition' of performances. There are often very personal contacts with the invited artists, most of which develop during such events. Up to the end of the 1990ies the circle of performers consisted of a reasonable number of artists who saw themselves as a 'community' in the broadest sense of the word. There is a 'fundamental trust' and the awareness of belonging to an international, cosmopolitan yet 'clannish community'. This creates a special atmosphere for encounters in which the artists show their performances. One of the objectives is also to foster, strengthen and extend the 'performer's community'.<sup>129</sup>

The events very quickly developed different objectives, as the working paper on the PAC 2006 in Vietnam proves. The special interest in performance art networks becomes very clear here.

"Following Questions (...) for this meeting in Vietnam:

How is (...) performance- art a kind of networking in the different countries ?

With which aspects can networking be integrated in the concepts of performance art? Is networking a fertile/virile field in view of art projects at all?

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127 Shimoda, Seij: Founder of NIPAF (Nippon International Performance-Art Festival)

128 Catalogue: no page Future of Imagination 8, Singapore August 2012

129 Willbrand, Carola in talks April 2013

Are there specific modes of networking in performance art? How we have to form this – East / West / North / South  
Which experiences we can gain in networking?  
Which expectations have performance artists in view of networking projects?

The invited artists should explain:

How they create in their home-countries “networks” ?

How they organize meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops, congresses, etc

How they develop and how they frame the education by public, by themselves ?

How is the artificial combining from personal expression in art and the framing in networking ?<sup>130</sup>

The response to and results of most of the events are only available in fragments. They have rarely been documented or published up to now.

Numerous names and titles of the projects and performance art networks provide an indirect insight into the goals and visions of the protagonists: *Asia Topia* Thailand, *Beyond Pressure* Burma, *Future of Imagination* Singapore, *Exchange Radical Moments* Austria, *la vida en otro planeta* Mexico, *Undisclosed Territories* Indonesia, *fear no art* Denmark.

Such events offer a platform, as Chumpon Apisuk said, to make performance art visible in the first place, particularly in countries where performance art is under 'observation'. This is true above all in the South-East Asian region, where today's form of performance art was not used as a form of artistic expression until relatively late. "*Through performances and dialogue we hope to build greater understanding of performance art in the region and strengthen an on-going network with cooperation among artist groups and festivals.*"<sup>131</sup> The contents are only marginally different, depending on the type of event. Participation as a spectator is always possible, no entrance fee is usually charged.

#### Performance art festival

At festivals the emphasis is on the artistic work and the exchange of contacts and networks. Common meals around a large table are an important act of hospitality and are celebrated, especially in Asian countries. Festivals often have a title that implies a direction. For example "*Future of Imagination*" that was initiated in Dec. 2003 by Lee Wen and since then has been organised every year in Singapore by TAV.

"Ours is an age of intense globalisation and we as artists organizer sincerely believe that such an event will help increase international cultural exchange and understanding as well as being a continuity of developing of our artistic practice, research and growth. (...) "The future of imagination" is a proposition to create a vehicle to take us beyond the turbulent past that put us in the present crisis of contemporary culture into the inconclusive future with artistic imagination presented through live performance art."<sup>132</sup>

- Publicity and the public are welcome, no entrance fee is charged -

#### Performance art conference (PAC)

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130 Nieslony, Boris: The 14th Performance Art Conference / La Thu 14 Việt Nam <http://www.asa.de/conferences/conf14/vietnam.htm> (17.05.2013)

131 Apisuk, Chumpon: from the catalogue 7<sup>th</sup> AsiaTopia, 2005 and First S.E.Asia Performance Art Symposium text by Apisuk, Chumpon no page

132 Ibid. Apisuk, Chumpon: from the catalogue 7<sup>th</sup> AsiaTopia, 2005

Each event has a different topic. The goal is not to achieve a consensus or pass resolutions but to encourage and enable a theoretical exchange. The performances of the artists who are involved form the core of the events. PAC thus takes place on a kind of meta-level. Papers and theoretical articles are mostly presented in English.

The contents are redefined for each conference. One example is the PAC. In 1996 the topic was: *Network and network creation* (a simultaneous conference in Basel, Cologne and Nové Zámky – communication was via an 'online connection'). In 1998 the title was *Unplugged* (as a discussion about the increased use of technical equipment in performance art) or in 2002 *Performance art and Photography*. Conferences therefore consist not just of the artistic acts but in fact symbolise a network of actions that come together at the respective location thanks to the different protagonists.<sup>133</sup> Here again, hospitality plays a big role in the form of meals taken together. Publicity and an audience are also allowed, but do not take priority

### Performance art symposia

A symposium in the 'western' sense is a gathering of experts (in this case performers) who deal with a topic in theoretical lecture and discussions. This definition can only be used with some reservations for international performance art symposia. The idea of a primary, theoretical reflection handled flexibly, as was website on the *International Symposium on Public Engaged Art* 2002 in Singapore documents: "(...) *The main focus of the symposium is on practice and practical issues, while the supplementary focus is on the theoretical underpinnings of practice.*"<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, the important aspect of a common meal / hospitality is still retained in symposia.

All of the different performance art events deal with ideas and reflections about performance art. The opportunities offered by new media as performative, artistic work, such as the media performances by Robert Adrian Xs *multimedia Broadcast Performances* shown in 1984 at the Ars Electronica or the *Electronic Cafe* from Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, are practically ignored.<sup>135</sup> These experiments have not really been adopted in the performance art networks investigated in this context as yet, even though the field has repeatedly been broached as an issue, but not explicitly; such as at the PAC- 2006

„(...) not as a main fact should be reflected: New communication technologies change our perception and sensibility day by day. Especially artists should view careful on to this developments and shifting. Media and networking technologies, could be transform into art if artists perform such events which approach psychological and social change (...)” wrote Boris Nieslony.<sup>136</sup>

The new media serve as useful means of communication; but as yet there has been no artistic transformation or exploitation in this context. Performance art in these networks is 'analogue'.

### Benefit events

Some festivals have developed a tradition of postulating their event under a – in the broadest sense – social topic. The background is often local incidents that are rarely picked up artistically by the guest performers. The organisers of AsiaTopia called their 2004 festival *Mild Conflict*, for example, to commemorate a massacre that had take

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133 See <http://www.epizentrum.org/deutsch/texte/conf.htm>

134 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PUBLIC ENGAGED ART, The Substation, Singapore (March 1- 5.2002). [www ://biotechnics.org/internationalsymposiumon.html](http://www.biotechnics.org/internationalsymposiumon.html) (22.05.2013)

135 [http://90.146.8.18/de/archiv\\_files/19862/1986b\\_289.pdf](http://90.146.8.18/de/archiv_files/19862/1986b_289.pdf) (18.05.2013)

136 <http://www.asa.de/conferences/conf14/vietnam.htm> (12.05.2013)

place a few weeks previously in the south of Thailand. On the other hand, guest performer organised a benefit event after their return from AsiaTopia- some only just escaped the tsunami – to collect money for the Thai network. They were in contact with the affected artists and fishermen to whom the money was forwarded.<sup>137</sup>

### 5.3 Hosts and organisers

The distinctions between the terms organiser and hosts are fluent, since their tasks cannot really be differentiated. The term curator, on the other hand, is one that is rejected by many. Noah Holtwiesche from Pan Vienna addresses the problem:

"There is a perennial conflict amongst us as to whether what we do can be seen and called curating. On the one side we have artist from the academy of fine arts who have no problem with this term, and on the other performance performers such as Otmar Wagner and myself, who fundamentally reject the idea of curating for such network events because this makes the curators a kind of meta-artist - (...) whereas we want a meeting of various artists on the same level".

The terms host and organiser will be used in the following text.

Performance art events are normally organised or initiated by one or two performers who are located in a network structure. They generally work for no fee and with a minimum of funds. Depending on the size of the project, they are supported by colleagues and interns / volunteers. Economically speaking this is a case of 'self-exploitation' since even the private network (friends and community) can be involved.<sup>138</sup> We ostensibly appear to be dealing here with semi-professional organisational structures with a high level of private commitment. However, on closer examination it becomes clear that these work to an extremely high quality and very efficiently.

The hosts usually invite a few selected colleagues, who in turn are organisers themselves, to extend the network.<sup>139</sup> However, they are open to further recommendations if the chosen artist is personally indisposed. There are practically no contracts.

A different format is the 'open call': these are appeals to all performers in the network (by means of e-mail and Internet) to take part in a festival. This form is normally chosen to either achieve a very widespread dissemination of an artistic topic or to present a protest against politics, other networks or cultural organisations that promises to boost prestige. The participation of international artists enriches and enhances an event. Aye Ko, the director of the 'New Zero Art Space' in Burma, launched just such an 'open call' in 2011. The response was overwhelming – not least due to the political opening of the country at the time. Ultimately, Aye Ko and his team had to act as a jury and select a feasible number of participants from the 500 entries.<sup>140</sup>

Most of the organisational work takes place in the run-up in the form of applications for grants and canvassing sponsors, one reason why the lead time for a project is around 1 – 2 years.

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137 Schilling, Klara, Maly, Valerian: in talks, Bern 2005

138 Meiner, Karin: in talks, Cologne (11.05.2013)

139 Hinterecker, Rolf: in talks (05.05.2013)

140 Schaller, Evamaria: in talks (11.05.2013)



The complete spectrum of the organisational work is normally covered by the relevant hosts: they choose the artists / speakers, set the date for the events, book a 'location', generate local financing, organise the press work, organise and schedule accommodation (sometime private). They also organise the 'tools' technical equipment, etc. needed for the respective performance.

The airport transfer is just as much a part of the service for the guests – which is how the artist colleagues are treated – as the joint meal or parties. The program is generally complex and often spans 12-14 hours. The free time can be used for small 'sightseeing' tours if requested; however, the artists usually set out on a 'journey of discovery' on their own.<sup>141</sup>

#### 5.4 Financing

Performance art is generally seen to harbour a 'risk'. After all, it is not exactly a 'flagship' culture because political statements and a permanent examination of the transgression of limits are immanent in this art form, explains the artist Karin Meiner in talks. This is why canvassing sponsors is always difficult, even when the names of famous artists appear on the list of participants. Performance art events are financed from various resources and structures, which in turn can be combined with each other, depending on the country and projects. It is sometimes decided at short notice whether money will be available for an event. Private sponsors occasionally help out, but the artists often have to draw on their own meagre financial reserves.

In an ideal case, the inviting organisers will bear all of the costs. This can be ruled out with larger numbers of participants (up to 80). However, the hosts usually finance the airport transfer, the local transport, catering (food and drinks), accommodation and the material 'tools' that are needed for the performances.

The artists in turn bear their own travelling expenses. This means that they have to organise grants, apply to sponsors (companies etc.) or their relevant national cultural institute, foundations etc. and file applications. Most countries support individual artists to a certain extent, but it is to be expected that the increasing number of applications will soon exceed the culture budget of these facilities. Unfortunately there is a glaring disparity between the funds needed for a series of concerts given by a philharmonic orchestra, for example, and the amount that a corresponding number of performance art artists would cost. *"The artists are usually very humble and travel in the low-budget sector, even accepting accommodation that a musician wouldn't even enter."*<sup>142</sup>

Some hosts support their projects with substantial private funds, for example Aye Ko from Burma, who paid for all of the hotel costs, accommodation and catering himself for his festival in 2012. However, differing considerations lead to differences that are related to the financial backgrounds of the protagonists. In Western cultural spheres most of the artists come from the middle class, their income is often below the minimum subsistence level.<sup>143</sup> Numerous Asian artists and organisers, on the other

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141 Holtwiesche, Noah: in talks, Cologne (02.06.2012)

142 Asavesna, Eva: in talks, June 2006

143 The statistics for the artists' social insurance (source 1) show an average monthly income of approx €1,150, but anyone who earns less than €325 a month 'is chucked out'. This affects older artists in particular, an increasing number of whom have to live from income support. The number of artists living in a precarious situation in Berlin, for example, is around 70% ! Source 1: no title, no page: [http://www.kuenstlersozialkasse.de/wDeutsch/ksk\\_-](http://www.kuenstlersozialkasse.de/wDeutsch/ksk_-)

hand, come from the upper class or hold respectable posts in the university sector. This facilitates their access to sponsors.<sup>144</sup>

Fees for the artistic work have become the exception in performance art; even famous performers appear in the majority of events without a fee. Boris Nieslony repeatedly fought for a fair payment and preferred to invest his own funds rather than see the performers 'work for nothing', explained Rolf Hinterecker in talks about the 'permanent plight' of financing.<sup>145</sup> The performers *Katze und Krieg*, who cooperate with PAErsche, addressed this problem artistically in 2012 by developing a concept under the label "*überleben will ich*" (*I want to survive*). They employed numerous performative strategies in public spaces to organise money. These included mini-performances, the offering of services, right through to begging.

Summing up it can be said that all of the artists complain that financing is anything from difficult to hopeless and that they spend most of time during their artistic work writing concepts for applications, the content of which is also becoming increasingly complicated.<sup>146</sup>

## 5.5 Venues

*"I discovered that performance can take place anywhere, under a wide variety of circumstances, and in the service of an incredibly diverse panoply of objectives"*<sup>147</sup>

The strength of performance art lies in its flexibility. Unlike theatre productions, it seldom needs technology and thus there are no rehearsals, explains Karin Meiner in talks, "*Performers avoid the classical stage because all procedures and processes appear to be fixed in this.*"<sup>148</sup> Consequently, the locations where a performance takes place are very different. First of all, the cultural and political situation in the host country defines the circumstances under which the event can be held, either in public or in private (or even illegally). Rooms are usually used that are associated with cultural or university facilities. The approved grants may also play a role if particular venues are planned; the opposite is usually the case. With a 'renowned address' it is correspondingly easier to obtain sponsoring. Other venues and locations include: the public, generally urban space, old factories, shopping malls, the white cube (galleries), historical buildings, scenically attractive locations such as quarries, mountains, river banks etc.

Only a few networks can fall back on their own locations. Once exception is AsiaTopia with its 'Concrete House' in Nonthaburi / Bangkok. The building is shared with the Empower Foundation, and NGO that campaigns for the rights and further education of prostitutes. Since 2008, however, Asia Topia has been held in the famous BACC (Bangkok Art and Culture Center) in the city centre on Siam Square. The location as such is very important for the majority of performers because they have to and want to come to terms with these venues. "*A number of performers arrive before the actual*

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in\_zahlen/ statistik/durchschnittseinkommenversicherte.php (17.05.2013) Source 2: no title, no page:  
[http://www.unileipzig.de/~sozio/mitarbeiter/m15/content/eigene\\_site/kuenstler.pdf](http://www.unileipzig.de/~sozio/mitarbeiter/m15/content/eigene_site/kuenstler.pdf)

144 Asavesna, Eva: in talks, Bangkok (July/ August 2006 verified 2013)

145 Hinterecker, Rolf: in talks, Cologne (30.04.2013)

146 Holtwiesche, Noah: in talks, Cologne (03.06.2012)

147 Schechner, Richard: Performance Theory, Routledge, New York 2003, p. iX

148 Meiner, Karin: in talks, Burgbrohl (4.04.2013)

*performance so that they can acclimatize themselves and above all get a 'feeling' for the location".*<sup>149</sup>

## **5.6. Censorship, taboos, rules:**

Taboos and censorship rules have a long history as confining to creativity and artistic work. They naturally affect everyone involved in a creative process. Performance art with its unpredictability is particularly affected. But it has its finger on the pulse of time more than any other art form on account of its virulence, one reason for its great popularity amongst young artists in dictatorships or countries with problematic religious or political restrictions. The powers that be usually react by banning performance art per se or vilifying it as 'un-art' since it is almost impossible to control this art form. Censors rarely have a chance to assess or rate it in advance and even restrictive, authoritarian governments eschew international criticism of the freedom of art.

Although performance art is largely tolerated on an international level, taboos or perfidious rules that the performer have to observe still exist almost everywhere. *"In Australia, performance art has been practically banned through rules about insuring the actors"* explained the Australian performer Tony Schwensen at the PAC in Vietnam 2006.<sup>150</sup> In Austria it is the use of public space, which requires prior approval, explains the artist Gertrude Moser-Wagner.<sup>151</sup> A nationalistic, political climate is currently (2013) emerging in Hungary that is drawing up corresponding definitions of art: *"(...) But critical artists or those artists whom the Academy accuses of being not national enough, have no chance to become a member of the Academy, have to fear for their existence. These developments remind of practices during Soviet times."*<sup>152</sup>

It can be said that all societies – including democratic ones – have not only taboos but also rules and prohibitions that the performers have to respect - or consciously include in their artistic work.<sup>153</sup>

### Censorship in performance art events

Organisers and artists generally agree on the necessity of denouncing certain social wrongs, religious oppression etc. The trick is to find a balance between avoiding and duping the authorities, secret police etc, through subtle strategies. In Vietnam, for example, Naga from 'Blue Space Art Center'<sup>154</sup> chose the locations for the 13<sup>th</sup> Performance-Art-Conference cautiously as an authority on the local scene and political structures.

"We began in Dalat in a conference centre that was normally used by political bigwigs. This was a clever blow by our Vietnamese curator Naga, because 'there is calm in the eye of the storm'. The 2<sup>nd</sup> block took place in Saigon in a cultural centre. We had exactly 4 hours time for our program. This was the time it would take the secret service, police administration etc. to get wind of this event and take appropriate measures. We were done after 4 hours and suddenly

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149 Ferro, Knopp: in talks, Munich (01.03.2013)

150 Nieslony Boris: oral history, 2006 in Vietnam in talks with Schwensen, Tony Cologne (04.04.2013)

151 Moser-Wagner Gertrude: in talks, Cologne (11.10.2012)

152 <http://art-and-resistance.blogspot.de/p/right-wing-hungaria.html> (19.05.2013)

153 Willbrand, Carola: in talks, Cologne (30.05.2013)

154 'Blue Space Contemporary Arts Center' Curator: Tran Thi Nguyen Nga

some extremely inconspicuous cars drew up in front of the building. We artists raced away jeering<sup>155</sup>.

The Vietnamese artist Lai Dieu Ha presented the performance *fly away* in 2010 in Hanoi where she undressed, rubbed her naked body with oil and covered it with blue feathers. A bird cage was stood alongside her. This message was clear in communist Vietnam. Interestingly enough, she was not arrested but discredited in the media (newspapers and TV). Apparently there must have been some government officials in the audience. Her artist colleagues, on the other hand, celebrated her courage. To this day, the state does not approve any performance art events.<sup>156</sup> However, this does not mean that performances do not take place. (See also 5.6 Censorship)



Just how complicated and contradictory the topic of censorship is can be illustrated by situation in China. Following the Tian'anmen massacre in 1989 in Beijing, all artistic freedoms were promptly curtailed. Western contemporary art in particular came under the closest scrutiny. Nevertheless, the performance art networks managed to uphold their contacts. Chinese artists were welcomed internationally and some 'subversive' events were even organised in China.

"In August 2001, I participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Art Festival in Schuan China organised by Chen Jin, Shu Yang and Zhu Ming. (...) On arrival we were told that the venue would have to be changed from the Beijing suburbs to undisclosed venues in Chengdu, Sichuan, because the organisers feared that the police might have caught wind of the event and was preparing to shut it down. We took a 36 hours train journey to Chengdu and sought out a rustic brick factory near Pengshan, (...) <sup>157</sup>

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155 Andessner, Elisa: e-mail April 2013

156 See [www.focus.de/kultur/kunst/kultur-performance-kuenstler-in-vietnam-kaempfen-gegen-tabus\\_aid\\_719158.html](http://www.focus.de/kultur/kunst/kultur-performance-kuenstler-in-vietnam-kaempfen-gegen-tabus_aid_719158.html) (16.04.2013)

157 Wen, Lee: FOI 5 catalogue, p. 5

Lee Wen reports how the situation changed completely a few years later. This was aided not least by the international appreciation of contemporary Chinese artists – above all the 'flagship' of Western curators, the Documenta artist Ai Wei Wei-. The Chinese government realised that a lot of money and a great international reputation can be gained with art.<sup>158</sup>

Lee Wen also reported in 2012:

"The situation in China had changed tremendously over the years and by the time I returned again in 2004 (and later in 2006) performance festivals were becoming more openly held in Beijing. This October (2008) I participated in the UP-ON First International Live Art Festival in Chengdu (...)The event were reported in the local newspaper as well as on broadcast television. What a contrast from my first encounter in 2001 when we practically felt like fugitive artist on the run from the authorities and the law. At the same time, the audiences have grown to include not only artist and friends but also dedicated students and an enthusiastic public." <sup>159</sup>

In a talk about the Chinese performance art scene, Boris Nieslony noted laconically: "The fact that illegal performance art festivals were held in China, and that lavish, glossy catalogues were then published whose scope and quality no western organiser could have financed, shows just how absurd the situation in China is." <sup>160</sup> There are innumerable examples of performances that have been broken up by the police and the authorities. The penalties for the organisers and artists may be drastic, but these are generally very subtle forms of punishment such as a ban on leaving the country, the refusal of grants etc. .

### Taboos and rules in performance art networks

It initially appears astonishing that open, voluntary democratic networks should have taboos and restrictions. As far as this can be researched to date (Mai 2013), these do not exist as either manifestos or in any other written form. Internet search engines react with: Nothing found for "*Rules for performance art networks*", in either German, English or French. Nonetheless, they do exist according to numerous artists and they are of elementary importance if these open networks are to function. There is an unspoken consensus that commands tolerance, respect and trust. <sup>161</sup>

As described in chapter 5.3, the performance art events function through invitations and contacts according to the principle 'friend of a friend'. Performers often attend other festivals, take part in workshops or get personally involved in some other way so as to establish a binding contact.

But where are the rules that lead to an invitation? Astonishingly and relatively uncorrupted, they lie initially in the artistic quality. This does not mean that an artist who has presented a 'poor' performance or 'failed' is no longer passed on, but they come

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158 Köckritz, A.: Die ZEIT: <http://www.zeit.de/2012/43/Kunstmarkt-China-Hongkong-Peking> (14.05.2013)

159 Wen, Lee: FOI 5 catalogue p. 5

160 Nieslony, Boris: in talks, Cologne (28.03.2013)

161 Willbrand, Carola: in talks, Cologne (22.05.2013)

under closer observation.<sup>162</sup> "Good" performances are a guarantee for a deeper interactive quality – also between the audience and the artists - and are therefore an important aspect.

General, unspoken rules apply in performance art networks:

- Give / share the participation in other networks, contacts
- Give / share the logistics
- Give / share the small financial resources
- No intervention in the work of colleagues

Personal responsibility plays a big role. Masochistic self-inflicted injuries (Rudolf Schwarzkogler or Chris Burden, who had himself shot at)<sup>163</sup> through to actions during which members of the audience were more or less harmed or even injured, are inextricably linked to the history of happenings, action art and performances.

The most extreme documented action was that of the Canadian John Fare. In 1968, and with the help of the cybernetics engineer Golni Czervath, he developed a robot for amputations and auto-mutilation. In front of a selected audience he cut off his fingers, testicles and other extremities during several performances, before having himself 'repaired' with prostheses, concluding this suicide in instalments after more than 7 actions "*(...) until Fare's cutting his own head off put an end to such acts of barbarity.*"<sup>164</sup> (Update 15.04.2014)<sup>165</sup>

Unlike in the 1960ies and 70ies, when extremely provocative transgressions of limits were being sounded out, the offence of injuring the audience is nowadays a taboo. The network would not really tolerate some of Burden's actions from the 1970ies. "*(...) He put people at risk in another action where he shot burning matches at a naked woman, on whom he inflicted several burns.*"<sup>166</sup> Physical, self-inflicted injuries are by all means accepted, but people will normally intervene if there is any risk to life.

However, there is no guarantee of this, as the case of the Columbian student John Jairo Villamil proves. In 2011 he placed a plastic bag over his head as a political performance, hyperventilated and suffocated in front of an audience and with cameras running. The video can still be seen on the Internet<sup>167</sup>. Beyond such tragic accidents, there are performers who work per se with a high risk, but take this into account when

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162 Willbrand, Carola: in talks, Cologne (May 2013)

163 "At 7:45 p. m" 19. November 1971, F Space, Santa Ana, California, US: <http://www.feldmangallery.com>

164 See Schilling, Jürgen: Aktionskunst: Identität von Kunst und Leben ?Eine Dokumentation, Verlag Bucher, C.J., Lucerne and Frankfurt / M.1978, p. 160-161

165 John Fare (sometimes John Charles Fare or John Fahey or John Faré) is a fictional performance artist who allegedly used robotic surgery to remove parts of his body onstage as part of his act. His final performance was allegedly suicide by beheading. The story originated in 1968 and is generally considered an urban legend.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Fare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Fare)

166 Schilling, Jürgen: Aktionskunst: Identität von Kunst und Leben? (Hg): bucher report 2, 1978, p.160.,Sp.,Abs.1

167 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P915q44GR0I> (27.05.2013)

calculating their work. An 'imaginary competition' of the most spectacular performances cannot be fully ruled out.

The Chinese artist Zhu Yu 'posted' pictures of a performance in 2001, for example, showing him eating a foetus in protest against the state policy on abortion.<sup>168</sup> The pictures on the Internet led to countless prosecutions in western countries. Scotland Yard and the FBI investigated the Internet material and came to the conclusion that it must be a fake. No genuine act of cannibalism was to be seen on the photos.<sup>169</sup> This story caused some heated discussions within the performance art scene. Some artists testified that had been their live – the creation of myths is also a part of performance. It could have been true.<sup>170</sup>

One proof of the mutual trust is the fact that no contracts have been concluded or insurance policies taken out to date between artists and organisers. Only recently have more and more artists been asked to sign a declaration before the start of their performance in which they claim responsibility for their own actions. This is more of a counter-insurance against possible liability claims from third parties. The hosts are not informed of any details beforehand. (They could otherwise be liable to intervene)<sup>171</sup>

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168 <http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/entwarnung-die-legende-von-den-babyfressern-a-426201.html>

(27.05.2013)

169 See Spiegel online: Entwarnung: Die Legende von den Babyfressern von Patalong, Frank: (14.07.2006)

170 Hinterecker, Rolf: in talks, Cologne (February 2013)

171 Willbrand, Carola: in talks, Cologne (May 2013)

## **6. Summary and prospects for performance art networks**

Even the cultural scene cannot escape the grasp of capitalistic trends in an increasingly commercialised society. This dilemma become obvious when even an avant-garde performer such as Marina Abramovic is forbidden from performing in other museums and cultural facilities in an oppressive contract for the duration of her on-year 'Retrospective show' in the MoMA (NY).

The performance art networks are oases of social action. One of their strengths lies in the preservation of their self-organisation, which means their independence and freedom to perform whenever and wherever they want. Furthermore, they reflect a global yearning for democratic structures between people.

Since the first definitions of *Social Sculpture* by Joseph Beuys, who wanted to change society with art, a number of approaches have been developed to articulate artistic forms of grass-roots democracy. Civil societies in general have been strengthened and become more autonomous through the Internet as a communication medium. This is proven not least through global action groups and movements such as *Anonymous*, *Occupy* or the *Avaaz Network*, right through to actions such as *urban gardening* and *flash mobs*.

The three performance art networks described in this work, The Artists Village, Black Market International and PAErsche, are mental and vital networks and have many different interfaces to the worldwide performance art networks. The term 'community' used in chapter 5.2 describes a ritualised form of solidarity that affords a kind of primeval trust beyond Art is Ego. This may possibly lead to the granting of asylum, solidary support or to love, for example for the artist colleague Norbert Klassen who passed away in 2011 and since then has continued his journey symbolically with Black Market International and 'attends' every appearance.

The continuity of TAV and BMI, which have existed for more than 25 years, is unique. PAErsche, on the other hand, is a young network that cannot be compared with the other two in terms of its duration. But all three have important common features such as the factors of a nomadic existence and the rejection of hierarchic structures as mentioned in chapter 4. This also includes in particular the preservation of autonomous artistic work. The continuity of TAV was subject to very tough conditions on account of the political constructions, which continue indirectly to this day. The similarity between TAV and PAErsche is the vision of serving as an open platform for other performers.

BMI could be misconstrued as a 'closed system' because the network does not exist as a structure for other performers but is inherent in the performative act itself. At this level the BMI artists have the strongest claim to being 'rhizome-like'. They constantly challenge the network behaviour. BMI has repeatedly invigorated its existence by responding openly to other international networks and their protagonists.

An important aspect also developed from the origins of the performance art networks because the first encounters came about through a mixture of curiosity, wariness and uncertainty about the other culture.



The older generation of artists in the performance art networks described here were influenced by the movement in the 1960ies and 70ies when the visions of artists worldwide were made up of a diffuse mixture of leftist revolutionary romanticism and the "American way of life". A differentiation has to be drawn between those living in communist countries or other dictatorships and who longed for the freedom of capitalism and those living in these systems. As long as the Vietnam protest, US imperialism etc. provided the concepts of the enemy there was a certain consensus. In numerous talks with artists from this generation it became clear that discussions about the political content of performances are largely ignored in the network community, something that correlates with the research done for this paper too.

This is even more astonishing since it makes up a large part of performative acts – especially those of Asian and South American artists. They address oppression, violence and censorship, which they have sometimes had to suffer as victims, and articulate this in a poetic and powerful, artistic language. Of course, there are also some actions that work away at stereotyped concepts of the enemy such as the destruction of Mickey Mouse figures, the US flag, right through to hero-worshipping Arafat or Bin Laden. But it is less the message of the artistic work that is appraised here, rather the individual artistic language and intensity. Such discussions and discriminations about them message behind the performances would inevitably mean the end of the networks in their current form, because who is decide on the 'value'?

This meta-level creates trust and respects the heterogeneity of political positions and the cultural areas. But this does not mean that there is no scale of value. The abnegation of racism, violence – in particular against women, children and minorities – as well as numerous other positions is one of the clearly set rules that are not negotiable. This too creates a commitment.

A further aspect is that none of the networks that have been investigated here has experienced a genuine change of generations. Even PAErsche, that was only founded three years ago, does not represent a 'new generation' network. Although it had a sociology that spanned generations from the very outset, the 'code of conduct' of the 'seniors' was nevertheless in principle adopted for the performance art network and its events. What is interesting is the way in which, and this applies for all three pf the investigated 'groups', the younger generation will deal with the network concept. After all, they have grown up with a different, digital, understanding of networks. It is almost impossible for them to fade out the resulting transparency, complexity and dynamics of social and political processes. Under these auspices, future fields of conflict loom and have a bearing on general questions: to what extent can individual as well as collective aspirations and opinions that have not been obliterated by a global lifestyle express themselves?

A further factor that cold affect the future of the networks could be the steady rise in the number of festivals and other performance art events. The deliberations of the sociologist Simmel on the determinacy of the sum total of active persons to the network can also be transferred to the networks as structural phenomena. Even if the networks as such remain free from hierarchies, an increasing number of network structures could lead to hierarchies between these and their festivals

Or will these aspects remain, if anything, secondary and will forms be modified and new forms developed with the increase of young artists in performance art that still have at their centre the idea of "The gift as the art of encounters"?

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Talks to :

Andessner, Elisa: Artist / Performerin (Organisatory, Performance-Laboratorium, Linz); lives and works in Linz, Austria

Apisuk, Chumpon: Artist / Performer (Organisatory, AsiaTopia, 'Concrete House') lives and works in Bangkok, Thailand

Asavesna, Eva: Former employee of the Goethe Institute Thailand: lives in Bangkok, Thailand

Bauermeister, Mary: Fluxus Artist lives and works in Hoffnungsthal 2008

Berger, Michael: Mäzen and Fluxus collector, lives in Wiesbaden 2011

Ferro, Knopp: Artist: lives and works in Munich /Germany

Hinterecker, Rolf: Artist / Performer ("Global- affairs", Organiser of projects (Orgateam at PAErsche) lives and works in Bergisch Gladbach / Cologne )

Holtwiesche Noah: Künstler/ Performer (Organiser of projects , u.a. Pan Vienna); lives and works in Wien.

Meiner, Karin: Artist / Performerin (Organisatorin von Projects, Orgateam at PAErsche) lives and works in Burgbrohl

Nieslony, Boris: Artist (Organiser of Projects und festivals, Founder of: BMI, ASA European , E.P.I Zentrum, PAErsche etc.) lives and works in Cologne

Willbrand, Carola: Artist (PAErsche); lives and works in Cologne

Schaller, Evamaria: Artist/ Performerin / media artist (Orgateam bei PAErsche) lives and works in Cologne

Aldrete, Gabriela: Artist / Performerin (PAErsche) u. research assistant in the Römisch German. Museum Cologne, lives and works in Cologne/ Berlin

Beisenherz, Malte: Künstler / Performer (PAErsche): lives and works in Cologne/Berlin

Ueareeworakul, Nitaya, artist /Performerin: lives and works in Vietnam

Nakajima,Hiroko, Artist: lives and works in Bergisch Gladbach, Cologne und France

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### **Explanation of the image index / documents:**

The exploitation of the rights to one's own images– and their marketing (such as in the projects by Jeanne-Claude and Christo, for example) is not common in the performance art networks investigated in this paper.

The picture / video documentation of the performances are used by the artists for free publication and duplication to 'post', in other words publicise, their works.

The performances at the majority of festivals are documented by:

- the participating artists taking photos themselves
- guest artists and the audience taking photos.
- professional photographers who document the performances.
- the press who document (usually the most spectacular) parts of an event.

The artists share these pictures with each other. They exchange DVDs or upload them to a 'dropbox' or similar Internet platforms (high-resolution data/images in particular are placed at the disposal of invited users in this way) and they publish them on Facebook or in their web blogs.

Most of the photographers also place their photos at the disposal of the artists.

There is a general unwritten law for all recipients that the pictures should only be used for personal purposes – such as one's own website, catalogues etc.

However, this notion is very broadly defined. Such photos are often edited (clippings), for example, or used for further press work, event booklets, invitations etc. The increasing flood of pictures if nothing else – as a consequence of digital photography - and the associated forums in which these can be published, make it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the copyright holder / photographer after only a few years.

Only the press photos are subject to the classic copyright.

The sources from which the pictures / documents were chosen will be named in the following. The photographers are not necessarily the authors who publish the photos.

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- abbreviations: The archive; Die Schwarze Lade: DSL  
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- No.16 Suryodarmo, Melati/ Indonesien: “Solitaire” 10.04. – 27.04.2008  
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Picture No. 1 / 2



Nr 3

1981 trafen sich auf Einladung von **Boris Nieslony** und **Carola Riess** und dem **Künstlerhaus Stuttgart** (Uli Bernhard, H.v.Wedel) ca. 70 Künstler aus Europa und der BRD. Dieses Treffen hatte den Projekttitle **Das Konzil**. Kennzeichnend für dieses Projekt waren grundlegende Entwicklungen in den Bereichen der interaktiven Kommunikation. Zur Rede, zur Darstellung kamen künstlerisch-gesellschaftsbildende Positionen und wissenschaftliche Betrachtungen sowie ihre Auswirkungen auf Performance, Installation, Malerei, Video, etc. Alle Beteiligten waren sich einig, keinen Katalog oder eine artverwandte Publikation zur Dokumentation zu wählen. Es entstand die Idee zu einem transportablen Behälter, einer Lade, die von Ereignis zu Ereignis, von Treffen zu Treffen mitgenommen werden sollte. Ein stetig wachsender, kommunikativer Behälter für interdisziplinäre und interaktive Bestrebungen. Es entstand die Idee und die Urform der **Schwarze Lade** als Gedankengenerator, als Archiv, als Batterie, als **Skulptur des öffentlichen Interesses**.

**Gründe (fonds) nennt die französische Historikerin Arlette Farge Archive, „die in ihrer schwierigen Materialität doch jedes mal einen Anfang zum Erscheinen bringen. Sie sind die Orte eines jeweils neuen Beginns.“**

So war diese **Skulptur des öffentlichen Interesses** auch zuerst eine kommunikative Plattform für die Netzwerkbildung und Werkzeuge des Anfangs. So enthielt die **Schwarze Lade** die Dokumentationen einiger der wichtigsten Projekte mit kommunikativen Strukturen im Performance Bereich seit 1975.

Nerv der Zeit war die Installation der Geschwindigkeit qualitativer Information, deren Tausch und Wertetransfer sowie die Einrichtung der Orte, die den Adressaten definieren, die Verfügbarkeit von Informationen, die per se kein Eigentum sind. Die stetige Veränderung stand im krassen Widerspruch zu der Unveränderbarkeit des eingelagerten Materials eines Archivs.

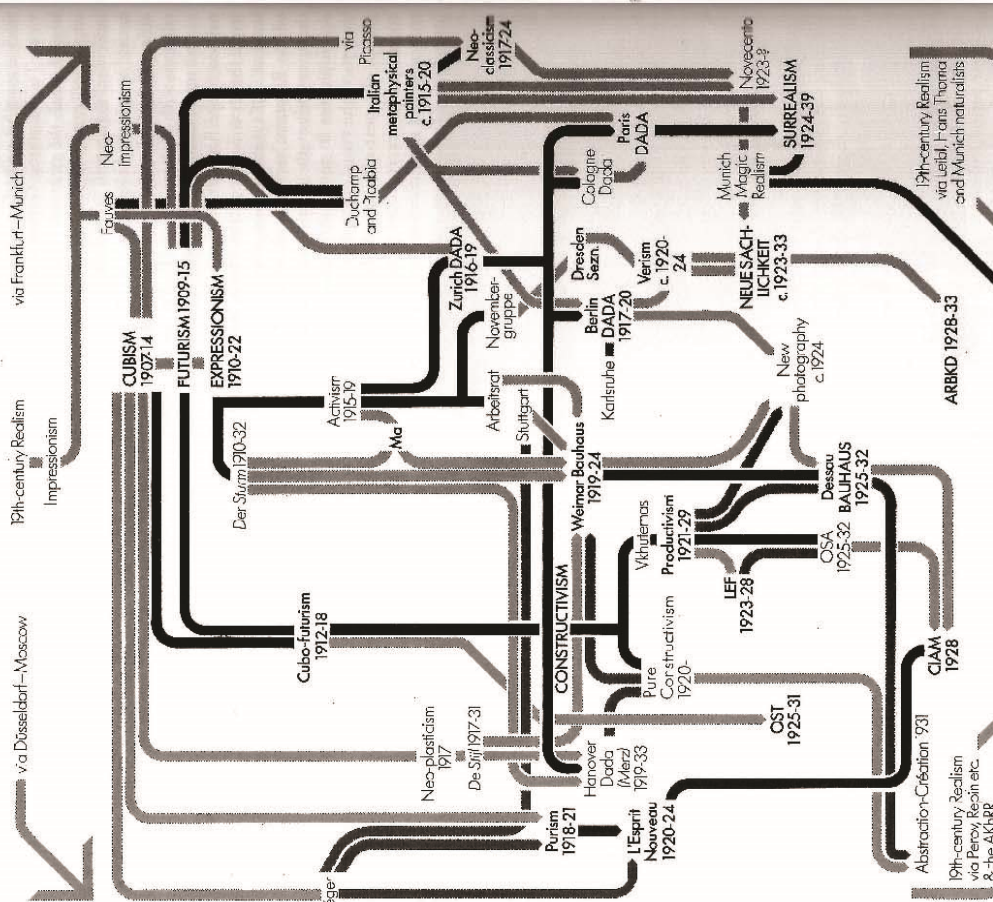
Unmerklich kippte die fließende Lagerung von Dokumenten in einen festen Ort und wurde Archiv. Die **Schwarze Lade** konstituierte sich. Sie behielt zwar den Namen, aber ihre Funktion änderte sich und thematisierte auch die strategischen Funktionen von Archiven wie sie durch die „Skulptur des öffentlichen Interesses“ ausgewiesen war. Der ungeschriebene Anspruch: Das Archiv sollte heiß bleiben.

Das Archiv die **Schwarze Lade** sammelte und strukturierte – nun seit mehr als 30 Jahren – die Dokumente nicht nur von realisierten Projekten, sondern auch von nicht verwirklichten Projekten, wenn sie richtungsweisenden Charakter aufwiesen; das Archiv lagert wesentliche Dokumente und bringt ebenso deren Fehlen zur Erscheinung.

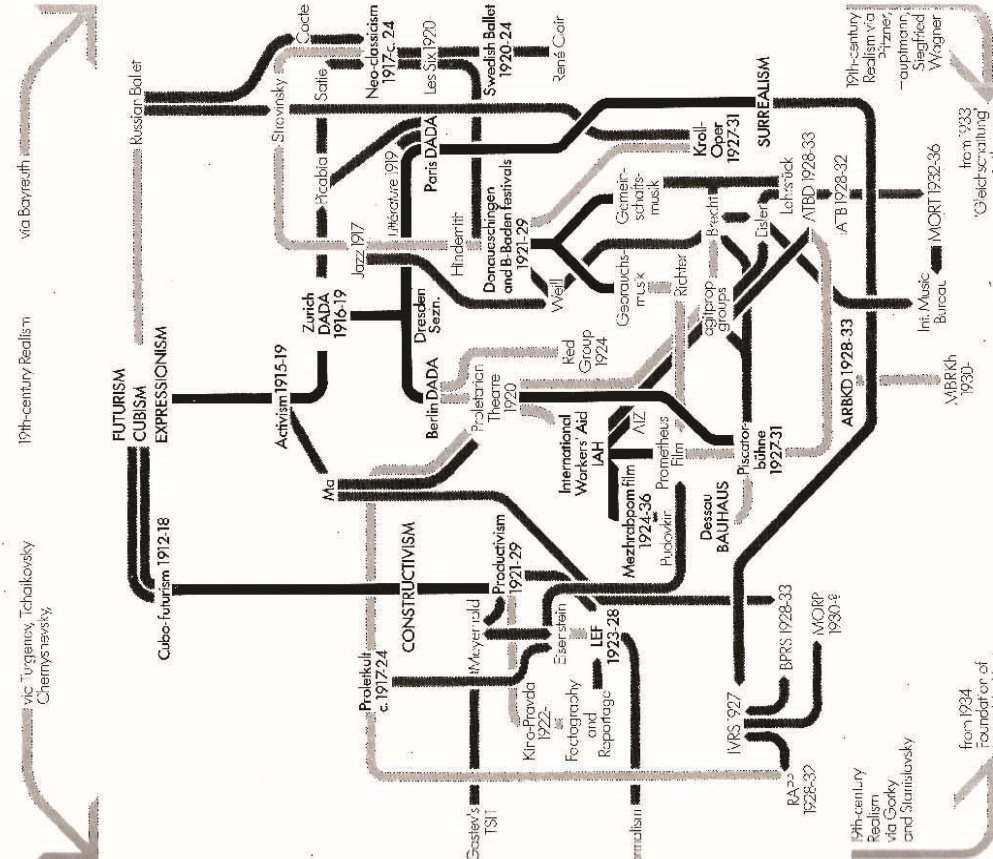
Das Archiv zeigt sich als eine organisch ständig wachsende Ideenbank. Sie archiviert die Informationen von Organisationen, Assoziationen, Artist-Run-Spaces und künstlerischen Projekten. Nicht ausgeschlossen sind auch Entwürfe von Projekten, die temporär auftraten, kurzfristig lebten oder nie realisiert wurden. Das Archiv generiert Techniken des Archivierens. In dem Archiv sind eingesammelt die Bausteine einer Wirklichkeit, die mit dem Archiv nach Außen verlegt werden. Eine zukünftige verdoppelte Öffentlichkeit aus historischem Material und schöpferischen Bedingungen.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Archiv SL, Nieslony Boris: Prospekt; „Die Schwarze Lade The Black Kit“, EPI, ASA-European, S.4

**Art streams of the 20s:** | The main movements



**Art streams of the 20s:** | 2 Organizations and political links



Whillet, John: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period, The New society, 1917-1933, Pantheon books, New York, 1978, P.17

"art streams of the 20s",

Dirmoser, Gerhard and Nieslony, Boris: "performance art context" diagram.  
For reasons of data set from the Internet to load. (Last accessed 01/19/2014)

[http://monoskop.org/images/5/5d/Performance-Art\\_Kontext\\_A0.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/5/5d/Performance-Art_Kontext_A0.pdf)

**Image section (in original 4 parts all in all 1x 1 meter)**



PAC 1997 KunststudenTinnen der Chulalongkorn University BKK



Lee Wen ,chewing gum' PAC Bangkok



Iwan (Indonesien) AisaTopia 2004 Siamsquare BKK



Hong o Bong (Kora) 1997 PAC Thailand

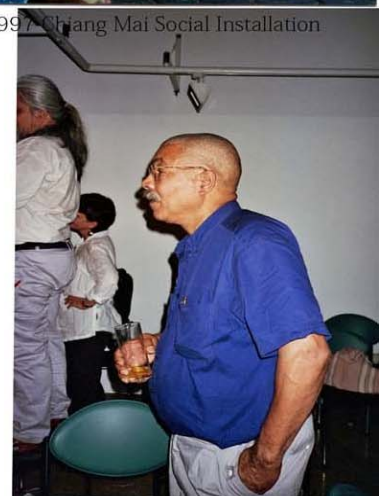


Paisan Plienbangchang Saigon 2006



Carola Willbrand Chiang Mai 1997 Chiang Mai Social Installation

Ben Patterson BKK PAC 1997



Pictures v. left to right: No. 4 - No. 10 (Ben Patterson)



No. 11



No. 12



No. 13



No.14

Performance-Art-Conference 15, in Vietnam 2006 Dalat / Saigon (HCMC)





Pictures from left to right:

- No.15 Nieslony, Boris. No.16 Suryodarmo, Melati.  
 No.17 Chin-ichi, ARAI. No.18 Sitthiket, Vasan, No.19  
 Orimoto, Tatsumi.  
 No.20 Manrique Mendoza Yamile. No. 21 Ettengruber,  
 Sibylle,  
 No.22 unknown Indonesia (Foto: Gerber Almut) No. 23  
 Siu Lan, Ko  
 The Substaion/ Singapur

### **Audrey Wong, Artistic Co-director of The Substation 2000 – 2009**

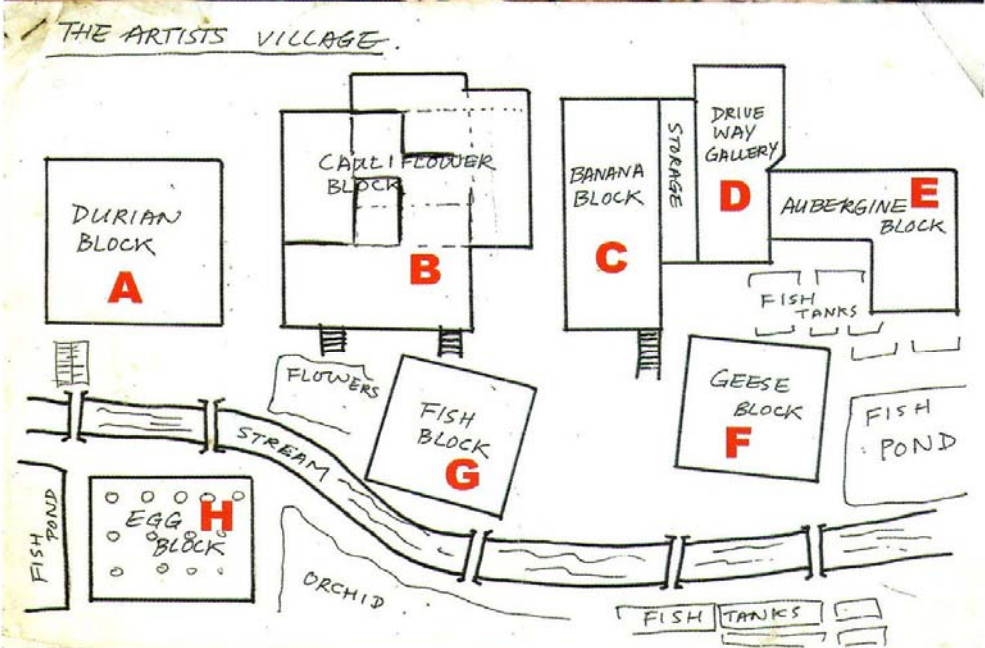
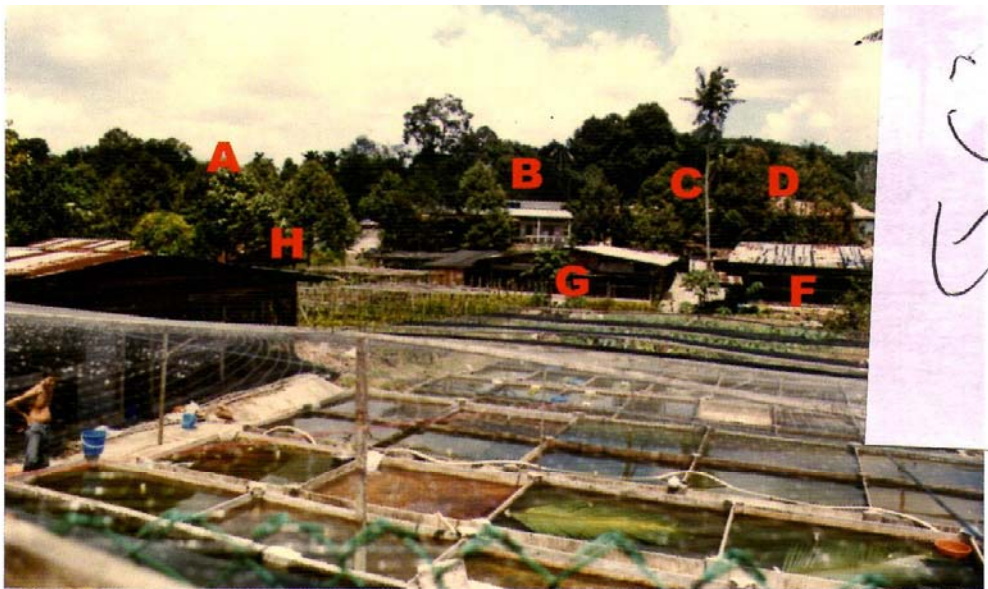
“Pao Kun once said that ‘ideally, The Substation should be anything anyone wants it to be: open and flexible enough to do things his or her own way’. This is an alarming statement that seems to invite chaos! But it also represents an image of The Substation as a civic space, and recognizes that civic spaces can be messy. In rule-driven, results-oriented Singapore, The Substation reminds us that we have more than just material needs. The ideal of The Substation — as a public, open space as well as an experimental, contemporary arts centre — is the energy that drives this place. Above all, The Substation is about an ideal of freedom and civic expression, it is egalitarian but also insists on the intrinsic value of the artistic spirit and individualism...”

### **Lee Weng Choy, Artistic Co-director, The Substation (2000 – 2009)**

“Like Audrey, I joined as Artistic Co-Director in 2000. But ever since 1992, when I moved back to live in this part of the world, I’ve been a regular here. One might think that I would have gotten a strong sense of ownership of the place by now. But as it happens every so often, I’ll be leaving the office in the evening, and there’ll be a whole bunch of people I don’t know in the foyer or in the garden, gathered to watch a play or attend a reception for an exhibition opening, and I’ll feel like it’s me who’s the gate-crasher at the party, that I’m the stranger in someone else’s backyard. Or I’ll go into the Theatre to watch a performance by, say Daniel Kok, one of our Associate Artists, and I’ll feel more like an old-timer audience member than a guy who runs the space along with Audrey. In my three very hectic years here, I still haven’t gotten to the point where I really feel at home. Make no mistake, I am very comfortable here — most of the time. But I don’t imagine being more comfortable than the artists we work with, who come and frequent the place. For me, this is a good thing. The people who use our space, they take possession of it. And for a while, it’s theirs. So much so that it’s me who’s like the welcomed guest, and not the other way around.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Comments taken from captions in the exhibition: “The Home that Pao Kun Built”, created by The Substation for Sept Festival 2003 / <http://www.substation.org/about-us/history/> (01.06.2012)



Pictures. No. 25, No. 26, No. 27



Lowee sits at a table from a cup into which he had earlier urinated. He is wearing a white shirt.

# Artist urinates on stage, then drinks urine to make 'statement'

By John Lal

AN OVERTHEAT act event to follow in the new year took a surprise turn when an artist went on stage, urinated into a cup and drank the urine to protest against the arts council. Performance artist Vincent Lowe, 29, who surprised all some of his shoulder-length hair during his 15-minute act. As he slipped the cup of urine before society would take notice. Some people were shocked, others found it funny. The act was featured in The Straits Times about 10 days, which said it was outrageous. Lowe's act was part of a 100 on New Year's Eve event at the 5th Passage art gallery in Parkway Parade. The event featured artists such as Gopal Pragasam and Philip Jayaram, who read their works. Mr. Shannon Tham, one of



the organisers, found Mr. Lowe's performance "shocking" but also was still taken by surprise when it happened. The act was about 15 minutes when Mr. Lowe went on stage, poured away from the audience and urinated into the coffee cup. "He then sat down to face the audience. He talked about the state of the arts here and took a dip from the cup. Later, he gulped down the rest," she said. "Shocking but really well done," commented backstage

**'It's like slamming a table with your fist. People listen after you do that... It made people think. I feel good about it.'**

— Performance artist Vincent Lowe on his urinate-and-drink act.

organiser Ng Joo Sun, 30. "It was a powerful statement about how the little sacrifices we make can make a big change. The audience was engaged and respectful. That after that, we didn't know whether to console him or congratulate him," he said. Mr. Lowe, who has a master's degree in fine arts from the United States and a diploma from the National College of the Arts, told The Straits Times he drove the urine party to force his audience to pay attention. "It's like slamming a table with your fist. People listen after you do that," he said, adding that he had also considered vomiting on stage. He then challenged people's actions of "what art should be. In a show last year, he decided to let his audience's rules to read his own poem on the night of evil. Chow a start over the audience and blamed him. He who handed out business cards and thanked them with his hat. He did not think the new

year act was offensive. "I could have faced the audience. But I turned my back to them. It seemed more tasteful," he said. Mr. Lowe said he drank the urine to show that the arts council and that "what comes from you will eventually come back to you". He did not think the act would harm him. "My grandmother once told me that people used to drink it to cure stress (fluorine)." He was pleased with his performance, which he knew set people in the audience talking for days. "It made people think. I feel good about it," he said. But all this the same way. Elizabeth Lowee, 29, who was there with her mother, said: "It was pretty disgusting. He gulped down the urine." "I still don't understand what he was trying to prove. He looked like he was going to vomit."

# Artist who performed 'vulgar act' arrested

THE artist who snipped his public hair at a public performance at Parkway Parade has been arrested.

Police said that Josef Ng, 22, was arrested on Thursday at about 3 pm, and has been released on \$3,000 bail, pending further investigations.

Ng had turned his back to an audience of 100 on New Year's Eve, pulled down his briefs and snipped off his public hair in protest against media coverage of an anti-gay operation in 1992.

Police said he was charged with an indecent act under the Penal Code.

Under Section 294, any person who does any obscene act in any public place to the annoyance of others can be charged.

The penalty is jail up to three months, or a fine, or both.

It is understood that police investigations have been going on since newspaper reports with pictures on the acts appeared this week.

Ng, who works in the SAF, was not available for comment when The Straits Times rang his home yesterday evening.

In his performance on New Year's Eve, he revealed his buttocks when he pulled down his briefs for the act of protest.

Another 5th Passage artist, Mr Shannon Tham, 20, a graphic artist, forced himself to vomit after swallowing ashes of a burnt copy of the New Paper.

The National Arts Council (NAC) has condemned both acts.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the council called the acts "vulgar and completely disgraceful".

It also said that they deserved public condemnation.

The controversial acts took place during a 12-hour New Year's Eve event at Parkway Parade that included poetry readings, musical acts and the performance art segment.

It was organised by art groups, 5th Passage and Artists Village, as part of a week-long series of art performances which began on Christmas Day.

# But is this really art?

CAN drinking one's urine be taken as an act of art? That is the question asked by the National Arts Council's director of arts programmes. After the Sunday Times' New Year performance by Mr. Ng, the council said: "It's not in good taste. It's a crude and repulsive. What is the world coming to?"

**'I don't think it's very artistic. Art creates something that's pleasant and new.'**

— Mrs Mary Tang, junior secretary and mother.

There are artists who can make the most statement in a more acceptable way. He said the council did not want to discourage artists, but it had to be sure those it supported "would not get arrested for doing anything which may be obscene."

Art historian and critic T. S. Subasinghe said that the paperman, used to art being beautiful and passive, might find performance art bewildering.

Utterance and defecation have often been used as symbols in modern art, he said. Mr. Subasinghe said that performance artists aimed at shocking their audience with messages that were "raw and direct".

In the United States and Europe, some artists urinate their bodies during performances. "They will urinate themselves or cut parts off their bodies," he said.

Performance artists, he said, intend being shocked because of the outrageous things



Ms Lowe's act is an offence under the Penal Code, she said.

"They thrust their ideas up the nose of the audience and the audience does not like that," Mr. Subasinghe said.

There are about 20 performance artists here, but most of them also paint, sculpt, act or play music, said Mrs. Tang. She said she was probably the best known of them.

During an Arts Festival Festival event in 1989, he took off his shirt on the street outside the Arts Centre, and began shouting in four different directions.

Mr. Tang, 41, who also performed at the New Year's Eve event, said of Mr. Lowe's act: "It was funny, I thought," he said. "I don't think it was offensive because

his back was turned when he urinated." The two parents who did not see the performance were shocked that it had taken place in a public place.

Mrs. Mary Tang, 35, junior secretary and mother of two girls, said: "I don't think it's very artistic. Art creates something that's pleasant and new."

Head general manager Mr. Subasinghe said:

**'It was a powerful statement about how the little sacrifices we make can make a big change.'**

— Mr Ng Joo Sun, backstage architect.

Lad Yew Choo, 41, a father of two, said: "I am more than shocked. I'm disgusted. There are other ways of getting attention."

Mr. Tang, 35, administrator of the theatre company The Theatre, did not see Mr. Lowe's act. But Mr. Tang said he thought that urinating while could be artistic if there was a point to be made.

"It is a waste of effort. I don't think I would have liked it. But he must have had good reasons for doing it. It's the matter thing to do," he said.

Mr. Subasinghe said that Mr. Lowe's act was not art. "It was just a stunt. When I came back, my friends told me: 'Oh my God, you just missed something,'" he recalled.

But he was relieved that his group had performed before, not after, Mr. Lowe.

Why? "Let's put it this way," his wife said, "I think it was offensive because



Lee Wen 'Yellow Man'



Tang Da Wu, *Dancing UV* (1989) – Courtesy of Koh Nguang How



Lee Wen 'Yellow Man'



Amanda Heng with her mother

Pictures from left to right No. 28, No.29, No. 30, No. 31



No. 32

Tang Da Wu, Singapore



No.33

Lee Wen 'Yellow Man' Singapore

## **Performances by Black Market International (selection)**

November 2010: Lublin, Warsaw, Koln, Ilsede

December 2010: Bone Festival, Schlachthaus Theater, Bern, Switzerland

**2010** PALA Project, Padepokan Lemah Putih Solo, Indonesia

Undisclosed territory #4, Solo, Indonesia

Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara. Jason LimFuture of Imagination, Sculpture Square, Singapore

Jürgen Fritz, Amanda Heng, Norbert Klassen, Kai Lam, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Jason Lim, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Melati Suryodarmo, Roi Vaara.

**2007** National Review of Live Art 2007, Glasgow, Scotland

Bian Connolly, Alexander del Re, Esther Ferrer, Jürgen Fritz, Monica Klingler, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Jamie McMurry, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

**2006** TROUBLE #2, Halles de Schaerbeek, Brussels, Belgium

Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

**2005** National Review of Live Art, Glasgow, Scotland

Jürgen Fritz, Monica Klingler, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Jamie McMurry, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

2005 Zweiten Ilseder PerformanceAbend, Gebläsehalle in Ilsede, Germany

Jekaterina Anzupowa, Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Boris Nieslony, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

2005 13th Performance Art Conference - "The Art of Action 111", Podewils'schen Palais, Berlin,

Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

2005 Bone 8, Schlachthaus Theater, Bern, Switzerland

Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

2005 Le Theatre de L'Usine (place des Volontaires), Geneve, Switzerland

Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Myriam Laplante, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Helge Meyer, Jacques van Poppel, Julie-Andrée T., Marco Teubner, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara,

**2003** Acciones en Ruta, Mexico City and Encuentro Intl de Performance Yucatan, Merida, Mexico

Jürgen Fritz, Norbert Klassen, Wen Lee, Alastair MacLennan, Victor Munoz, Boris Nieslony, Zygmunt Piotrowski / Mex, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Roi Vaara

**2002** 4th Asiatopia, Bangkok Thailand

N. Klassen, W. Lee, A. MacLennan, B. Nieslony, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Julie-Andrée T., R. Vaara

Recontre Int'l d'art performance de Québec 2002, Le Lieu, Quebec, Canada

N. Klassen, W. Lee, A. MacLennan, H. Meyer, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Julie-Andrée T., R. Vaara

Black Market International, Espace Clark, Montréal N. Klassen, M. Laplante, W. Lee, A.

MacLennan, H. Meyer, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Julie-Andrée T., R.

Vaara...

**2001** Museo Nazionale delle Tradizioni Popolari, Roma

J. Fritz, N. Klassen, M. Laplante, A. MacLennan, H. Meyer, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, M. Teubner, R. Vaara

**2000** Expo 2000, Performance with Black Market International, Hanover, Germany

TransEuropa -Theatre Festival 2000, Hildesheim, Germany J. Fritz, M. Jakisch, N. Klassen, W. Lee, A. MacLennan, H. Meyer, B. Nieslony, Elvira Santamaria Torres, M. Teubner, R. Vaara  
2000 Black Market International at festival “ Bone III” , Bern / CH

J. Fritz, N. Klassen, A. MacLennan, H. Meyer, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, M. Teubner, R. Vaara

**1999** Red on Green Gallery , Dublin / Ireland Networking 99, the 8th Performance Art

Conference, IGI Farben, Frankfurt; J. Fritz, N. Klassen, A. MacLennan, B. Nieslony, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Morgan O'Hara, Ulrich Philipp, Jürgen Waldmann

**1998** Black Market International at Sandomierz, Poland

J. Fritz, N. Klassen, A. MacLennan, B. Nieslony, Z. Piotrowski, J. v. Poppel, R. Vaara, Z.

Warpechowski YAMAOKA, Sakiko, TAKAHASHI. Fumiko 1999 Offenes Kulturhaus, Linz, Austria

J. Fritz, N. Klassen, A. MacLennan, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara Kees Mol, Wolfgang Preisinger, Stephan Us, Wolter Wierbos, students of the workshop

**1997** Liquide Visionen, Luzern, Switzerland BLACK MARKET International arrival, Bern,

Switzerland J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski Performance Art In NRW - 1997, Carl Stipendium Essen, Kunstraum

Düsseldorf, Trinitatis-Kirche Köln J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski

**1995** Art is Life enough, Life is Art enough, Enough is enough, Dampfzentrale Bern / CH

11. June, J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski.

12. June, BLACK MARKET INTERNATIONAL J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel,

A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski NEUE Horizonte: M. Bruppacher, Ph. Micol, U.-P. Schneider, Marion Schneider

STOP.P.T.: M. Trapp, J. Haufler, M. Rindlisbacher

**1993** Das Große Fest 2, Hellerau Dresden, Germany J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v.

Poppel, A. MacLennan, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski. 1993 Relikte & Sedimente, Offenes Kulturhaus Linz, Austria J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N.

**1992** The project E M P E D O K L E S, Documenta, Kassel J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J

v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski . NEUE HORIZONTE : M. Bruppacher, E. Grimm, S. Huber, Ph. Micol, E. Radermacher, U-P. Schneider, P. Streiff THE

OTHER´s: J. Haufler, E. Hobijn, R. Signer, B.K.H. Gutmann, R. Samens, F. Klossner

1992 Kunstverein St-Gallen, Switzerland B.W.A. Poland Galeria Laboratorium Warsaw, Poland J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z.

Warpechowski .

**1991** KONZEPTE - PERFORMANCES - EXPERIMENTE Ein Kleines Festival,

Neue Galerie Götzenal Luzern, Switzerland ; Centre d´Art Contemporain Fribourg,

Switzerland; Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, NEUE HORIZONTE - E. Grimm, S. Huber, E.

Radermacher, M. Bruppacher, Ph. Micol, R. Moser, U.P. Schneider, P. Streiff, H-J. Waeldele

1991 Franklin Furnace´s ASYLUM at the ANCHORAGE New York

J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, N. Rolfe, A. MacLennan, R. Vaara, Z.

Warpechowski

1991 Festival: Helsingör-Festival Suomenlinna, Helsinki, Finland



J. Fritz, N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, A. MacLennan, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara, Z. Warpechowski

**1990** Ressource Art Project, Budapest, Hungary

Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Germany

Festival ' Edge ' New Castle U.T. and Glasgow, GB

N. Klassen , A. MacLennan , B. Nieslony , J. v. Poppel, N. Rolfe , T. Ruller , R. Vaara , Z.

Warpechowski. B. Nieslony , J. v. Poppel

Expanded Theater Festival, Teatre Maya, Posnan, Poland

Galeria Krzystofory Crakow, Poland

Festival Visiual-Art Galeria Stodola. Warshaw, Poland

Artist-Congress, Sandomierz, Poland

Galeria Dziekanka Warshaw, Poland

Galeria Wschodnia, Lodz, Poland

Artist-Meeting with Theatre MANDALA Crakow, Poland

J. Fritz , N. Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, Z. PioTrowski , Z. Warpechowski, N. Rolfe, R. Vaara

**1987** Project Brakteatenstück in Documenta 8 Kassel,

Flech Bizzel, Dortmund, Germany

Molkerei Werkstatt, Köln. Germany

J. Fritz , N. Klassen , B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel , Z. PioTrowski

**1986** Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf, Germany

IGNIS, Köln, Germany ,Neue Galerie, Kassel, Germany

Belluard Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland ,Projekt Menschen, Bern, Switzerland

Künstlerhaus, Stuttgart, Germany; J. Fitz, N.Klassen, B. Nieslony, J. v. Poppel, Z. PioTrowski ,

T. Ruller , Z. Warpechowski, J.Haufler, Verena Schwab

Sound : T. Sikorski . <sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Archiv: Die Schwarze Lade, Box: BMI

## 15 principles of Black Market International

By Michael LaChance

The performances of BMI are exercises in derision and concentration, sacralisation and effacement. The performers try to take life seriously yet demonstrating that is worth very little, that it is held by a gesture, that is played in a moment. It is hard to describe that gesture, to say what it should look like, yet we recognize it as soon as we see it. We are familiar with metaphysics more that we want to admit and that is why we can recognize the fundamental moments of existence without even knowing what it's about - in an epoch where the acceptance of performance as an artistic practice is not yet in the dictionaries. That is the work of BMI: create fundamental moments. And it is our job to find out why and how. In this article, we will tell you about the solo BMI performances through 15 basic principles.

**The 1st** principle of BMI is the privilege of encounter. The art of encounter becomes a politic of *comunitas*. The members don't have a common theme; they work in open cooperation, even if it's not often that they are produced collectively. The title *Black Market* (1985) is not a group but ideas at work. Each performance must set up a singular space-time complex, exhuming the structure of encounter, which is genealogically the origin of what we call "space". The body is sublimates in space. There is also an experience of human relation that has been deposited in what seems today like an empty frame: the abstract notion of time-space. A BMI performance seeks an encounter so that we may reappropriate space and draw the invisible links that make it up.

Lee Wen makes visual contact with the public, and then does a ritual in which he takes small stones and bounces them on his head. Then he eats a handful of red peppers, leaving the audience in awe. We are attracted to him and the tears in his eyes make the silence more enveloping... Wen shows his capacity of being detached himself, yet maintaining self-control. He seems to be saying: all our identities are false.

**The 2nd** principle is the diversity of initial impulses. Each member can bring his own impulse. A BMI event can host guests that will bring their own impulse, but the initial autonomy must hold its course; the performer is a vehicle for experimentation. Elvira S. wants to get on a bus without paying, negotiating the fare with a small duck, asking the driver to be her accomplice. It is the idea of the singularity of gratuity ("only this time"). The impulse is accentuated by the resistance that is provoked, and by the possibilities of eventual negotiations.

The 3rd principle is the parallelism of performances. We can imagine many actors on the same stage, each one reciting his own play. The happening-condition reminds us of the human condition, each one being absorbed by his own existence, each one unraveling the thread of his own existence. There is nothing in common between Alastair M. nailing fish on the wall and Roi V. writing a spiral of words on the ground. One thing is sure and it is that we must not link the interventions because it would reduce them to "episodes" The performances enable us to see forms of life that would otherwise go unnoticed - they are "language games" (Wittgenstein)

**The 4th** principle of BMI is that it is only an artistic idea, a creative hypothesis that could not be founded on certainties that must be verified in upcoming projects that need links that are not based on our cultural backgrounds. We must then choose links (structural, affective...) beyond our cultural limits. Another way of saying that our familiar world is made of a tight web of conventional links, and all things are connected to each other in the consolidation of the evidence of the world (I didn't understand this part!!! I skip it!) With this 4th principle, BMI is conceived as a federative idea (European inspired): a mutual political and economic union that respects the cultural specificity of each member. Within this union, the cultural differences are marked but they do not risk to be menaced by concerted actions. The political dimension must be assumed: the performer must reflect on the type of relationship he wants to have with his public. Each action questions the responsibilities of the artist and of the public which, in a given situation, has a drawing force and manifests an adhesion

to the event in all its ethical and political implications. In Helge M.'s relationship with his public, a unstated contract is passed: "All the clothing I wear are the result of an exchange (in a past festival in the Philippines) I must exchange them all with you today!" When it came to the last item, feminine underwear, and the public had to decide collectively about this symbolic process of nudity of the artist, whether or not to permit the complete success of the exchange protocol. The systematic character of the unraveling of the action and the quality of the interpersonal relationship in which the exchange is done contributes to the degree of response of the public. So Meyer's mechanism is a link in an international transmission chain: the group from Le Lieu became solidary with the Philippines group. And more, each piece of clothing having a history, each spectator discovers how much his clothing is related to his own cultural universe. All this pushed an audacious spectator to come and give up his underwear in front of everybody in exchange for a black lace string that Helge M. had succeeded in putting on. Thanks to this last audacious act, all the process was ratified, and the public confirmed its ability to conclude the "procedural" contract and overcome idiosyncratic prudery. The spectators are not only people who are asked to be there, they participate in an action and become performers. Helge M. can go to his next festival with a bunch of Québécois clothing. Let's hope he will find someone who will accept to take them.

**The 5th BMI principle** is that the artist must adjust his presence in the way he feels the space, and in the way he creates a duration in time through his actions. This is an existential statement that deals with the quality of the presence and the specificity of the staging of the present. Ideally, the event that assembles performer and public should have no content or reason other than this "typical presence" that characterizes the artist, signalling an ontic event really taking place.

Roi Vaara, elegant in his evening suit, starts his performance putting an alarm clock on the floor. Then he writes a series of words on the floor in a spiral. Once it is done, he swirls around and falls. He lights a cigarette and gets up, goes along the spiral in the other direction cancelling the words and replacing them by others. This performance magisterially illustrates the construction of space (the spiral) and time (the double movement centripede and centrifuge, systole and diastole), a space-time constructed hic and nunc. This vertiginous spiral of our time makes Roi V. lose his equilibrium. SO he has the good idea of changing the terms: fate (choice) etc.....

**The 6th BMI principle** is that the whole process must not end in a synthesis (a demonstration, a moral...), the event's indetermination must be maintained. A direct consequence of this indetermination is that hope remains in circuit because the virtuality of the presence is not completely actualized. BMI is an event without terms, produced within events that leave us waiting for something to follow, waking up the sense of community in the hope of a future world: recognizing in ourselves a thirst for the absolute (vodka hahaha), : recognizing in ourselves the hidden hope for a better world... Performance must give the most tangible manifestation of hope, must make hope gush like and energy flowing out of immateriality. Boris N., almost nude, rolls on the gravel holding a stone to his breast. Rolling stone gathers no moss? He underlines his nakedness in a poetical action that is close to the definition that Cage gave to poetry: "celebration of the fact that we own nothing". It is like acts of meditation and telluric incantation, when the stone becomes the nexus of a mental concentration, a meditative exercise that transforms the gravel of any parking lot into something as precious as the Ryoanji Zen garden in Kyoto. A car with the headlights on follows him... How can the spectator abandon himself before the "unraveling" of this performance? He can evaluate the distance covered, the speed of the movement and thus the time. He can forget himself in this temporality by projecting himself in the performer's body (when one thinks that it must be more painful in the elbows than in the shoulders), by projecting himself into the enigmatic gravel that gives a theological aura to the event. The viewer moves along to follow the action, he is attracted by the stone that accumulates presence, when Nieslony shows that the effective daily being-alive of man, despite all the mediation of our "spectacularized" society, can be re-centered in a harder core.

**The 7th BMI principle** is that time is not dissociable from the elementary presence of the artist with the public, when both negotiate each other's presence. Since Fluxus, MACINAS was looking for "mono structural qualities...of a natural simple event". It's a rule of unity. This is why it is important to set a specific duration: the time of the basic event, from which we take conscience of others, element in which we get closer to each other but also in which we practice exclusion. The presence is overthrown by the passage of time because the situation is precarious and participants are mortal. In the flux of time, objects and living people are all temporal actors, inert objects can become useful actors, and in fact they can become performers of equal value as the live ones. Cage had already discovered that all objects can "become Duchamp". All stones, as long as they are willing to roll along with us on the gravel, would be Nieslony. With Norbert K., the flux of pedestrians walking on the sidewalk across the street from Le Lieu and that we can see through the window to his left and to his right, give the rhythm of time. The street life becomes a discreet actor in the performance. The performer throws flowers – symbol of the corruptible character of all things in time, he blows a white balloon – using breath as a component of the duration of the operation. Covered in a black veil, he passes a red thread from left to right, identifying himself with the three Parcae. There is no duration to this piece; the piece is nothing but this duration that unwinds in different ways.

**The 8th principle of BMI** is the exploration of ethnic and cultural dimensions that are lost in the usual tracking we do by using the most current ethno cultural markings. These aspects do not appear on the map on which we would like to frame the diversity of our times. A better knowledge of cultural territories enables us to trace the borders and to play with overlapping of cultures, Hybridization and crossbreeding. We find a widening of the intermedia project that Dick Higgins is keen on, towards "interstitial" productions, intercultural poetics. Alastair M.'s performances deals with objects whose connotation is specific to certain regions: in Northern Ireland, an individual with a nylon stocking on his head that nails mackerels to the wall, doesn't give the same impression as in, let's say Italy. M. proposes an installation: on the wall (three small plastic ducks, three mackerels) and all the material on the floor, need an interpretation, just like the door through which he finally disappears.

**The 9th BMI principle** is that performance is an investigation of forms of attention, from the reflective or meditative attention to a purely instinctive attention. This instinct enables us to recognize instantly "what must be", what corresponds to the right unwinding of the event, to the natural travelling of time. But we are not familiar with the logic of the event, we cannot narrate its course – it stems from an inner knowledge that is like the analogon of the structural unity of the world. Or it stems from the world that knows itself through us.

**The 10th BMI principle** is that all must occur in life. Here, we find Robert Filiou's exhortation: "Art is where you live". Art must be founded in life and merge with life so that in return life can take hold on art: aesthetics must open the road of ethics. So the art of performance knows no limits, so life surfaces in its reinvented project, offering through its decisive actions, the impression of truth. Nieslony tries to create daily koan on life's synopsis (Daily Life Plots Koan)

**The 11th BMI principle** stipulates that it is in the heart of total solitude that we can find the greatest concentration that we can reach the utmost and accomplished being-entity. We think of Lee Wen's solitude holding on to his stool to absorb the shock of his peppers, Nieslony's solitude in which he realizes that the stone is his ally.

**The 12th BMI principle** aims at maintaining performance in an ontological paradox: the ambivalence of being and non-being, of visible and invisible – trying to give form to a third element, that of a differed existence, of a constantly imminent emergence. A lot of our experiences and perceptions are not stored because they don't seem to contribute positively to our dichotomous and positivistic perception of the world. However we must find these experiences again, recognize them as sketches of another world, or of a multiplicity of worlds: as

dreams dreaming themselves. Performance enables us to seize these experiences and perceptions, and to organize them according to what Daniel Charles calls “insular or compartmental structurations, rather than informative oequential”.

**The 13th BMI principle is performativity.** Performance, as seen by BMI, is not the search for a greater technical or utilitarian efficacy; it is neither the development of a narrative knowledge that may challenge the great tales of modernity, as in Lyotard’s proposed alternative. It is the performativity of a direct transmission, where saying is doing and doing is saying. In direct performativity – as in “direct provocation” – the discourse and the action merge: a thought or a word surfaces from the action, and it is a thought or a word that must become action. When accomplished, the word no longer has to be said, it becomes a virtuality of silence. Another aspect of performativity: when the literal and the figurative combine, the performative encounter will be positive and through manipulation, symbols will be either desecrated or sacralized. It is like this when Jacques V.P. makes believe he is regimenting his public, buries his flag, distributes fetishist objects, all with the help of a translator called Nathalie, in an action interspersed with the reading of chapters of Tao te King. And in the finale, a well-known Gilbert Bécaud song about a pretty guide in Moscow is played. As if we could hear this song only through the present situation we are living.

**The 14th BMI principle is that we must stay away from common language; we must practice a game of non-communicative provocations that create in the end a deficit of interpretation, a hearing hindrance, and a spiritual embarrassment.** Pro-vocation: provocare, “call (vocare) out”, place the voice outside, towards the outside. It is rather an ante-vocation, a call from inside. Auto-exhortation. The BMI performance, which has only a few vocal effects from the verbal sphere, suggest the passage from a verbal communication to a communication from self to self, self-oriented through vital energy. This concerns first of all the performer, who is carrying out a scenic activity disjointed from the reactions and participation of the public. Moments of energy that concern only him: Boris N. did not only carry a heavy stone, he made a crowd disappear, allowing it to become something else. On the gravel, under the highway, Nieslony is holding onto a piece of absoluteness. In fact, he is an admirer of Martin Buber, who said: “The words of he who wants to speak with human beings without speaking with God will not be accomplished; but the words of he who wants to speak with God without speaking with man will be lost”.

**The 15th BMI principle is that all is possible.** The simple fact of reminding this during a performance means inciting shock. It is putting on us the weight of the immensity of reality. Then, the room seems small, the action seems trifling, and our knowledge seems useless. The only thing we must know is that the real form of a work of art is its approaching the other, and its true color, its attraction, its impact etc., all this has no place except in the people. When Roi V., sweating and panting, comes back from his vertigo, he tries to light a cigarette, but his lighter doesn’t work. Someone from the public comes up with another lighter, but Vaara crossly throws it out. We don’t leave a chance to possibilities because we determine from moment to moment what it should be!<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Nieslony, Boris, Teubner, Marco: “The Principle of Black Market International 1985-2005” produced by E.P.I.Zentrum; DSL, Box: BMI, Magazine, eigene

A NEMETORSZÁGI SZÖVETSÉGI  
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Performance Gruppe "Black Market"  
Herrn Boris Nieslony  
Richard Wagner Straße 5  
5000 Köln 1

Budapest, 04.04.1990  
we/ver

Sehr geehrter Herr Nieslony,

als Mitveranstalter das Performance-Programms, das im Rahmen  
der Ausstellung Ressource Kunst (vom 10.Mai bis zum 17.Juni 1990)  
in der Műcsarnok in Budapest durchgeführt wird, möchten wir  
Sie mit der Gruppe "Black Market" für eine Performance am  
11.Mai einladen.

Die Einladung gilt für folgende Gruppenmitglieder:

Jürgen Fritz - Norbert Klassen - Alistair MacLennan - Boris  
Nieslony - Jacques van Poppel - Nigel Rolfe - Tomas Ruller -  
Roi Vaara - Zbigniew Warpechowski.

Die Veranstalter sind: Műcsarnok (Budapest), Moltkerei e.V.  
(Köln), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin) und das Goethe-Institut  
Budapest. Die Veranstalter übernehmen für alle Künstler die  
Reise und Aufenthaltskosten.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

*Egon Graf Westerholt*  
(Dr. Egon Graf Westerholt)  
- Institutsleiter -



# Black Market International

Gast: Jason Lim



**Performance:**

**24.11.2010, 19.00 Uhr bis 23.00 Uhr**  
Orangerie – Theater im Volksgarten, Köln

Eintritt: 15,- Euro, ermäßigt 9,- Euro

Info E.P.I. Zentrum: 00 49 (0)221 76 34 28

Info Orangerie – Theater im Volksgarten:  
0049 (0)221 952 27 09

**Performance:**

**27.11.2010, 19.00 Uhr**  
Umformerstation  
Hüttengelände Groß Ilsede

Eintritt: 10,- Euro; ermäßigt 8,- Euro

Weitere Informationen unter:

[www.ideenstiftung.org](http://www.ideenstiftung.org)

oder unter Tel. 0 51 72-41 21 22

Foto: Martin Hindrichs

Dank an:



Bone Festival, Bern, Schweiz



Gefördert durch





BMI Bone Festival (Bild oben)

No. 37, No. 38





From left to right: No. 39 MacLennan, Alastair. No. 40 Nieslony, Boris, Wen, Lee. No. 41  
André, Julie, T

No. 42 Fritz, Jürgen. No. 43 André, Julie,T, Teubner, Helge. No. 44  
Teubner, Helge

## PAErsche / Cologne



No. 45

### PAErsche Mai 2013 **Artists are at present:**

Malte Beisenherz, Marita Bullmann, Waltraud Caspari-Philips, Petra Deus, Michael Dick, Béatrice Didier, Philine Herrlein, Rolf Hinterecker, Bea & Frank Homeyer, Siglinde Kallnbach, R.J.Kirsch, Elke Mark, Karin Meiner, Mark Met, Boris Nieslony, Lala Nomada, Jürgen Raap, Laura Ries, Evamaria Schaller, Alice de Vischer, Carola Willbrand , assoziiert:

Bartholomäus, Katze und Krieg (Julia Dick und Katharina Lima) Frauke Gerhard, Surya Tüchler | Susanne Helmes | Christian Schmidt-Chemnitzer | Vera Drebusch | Enric Fort Melati Suryodarmo | Olliver Blomeier | Parzifal | Gerda Nettesheim | Pietro Pellini | Richard Martell André Jolles | Sascha Brosamer | Nyan Lin Htet | Beate Ronig | Tine Wille | Yingmei Duan | Lan Hungh | Valentine Verhaeghe | Eva Wal | Marcio Carvalho | Roddy Hunter Shaun Caton | Anja Ibsch | Jeke Trinks | Pia Müller | Poppy Jackson | Tim Tiedemann | Raz Gomeh | Peter Baren | Victoria Grey | Nathan Walker | Watiq Al Ameri & Ali Al Fatlawi | Gwendolin Robin



No. 46



Pictures From left to right: No. 47, No. 48, No. 49, 2.Reihe: No. 50, No. 51, 3. Reihe: No. 52, No. 53,



No. 54 Cologne / Hohenzollernbrücke, PAErsche Wanderung, No. 55 Cologne /Orangerie Köln, open source



No. 56 Cologne/ Orangerie 'open source', No. 57 Cologne/ Orangerie 'open source'

## **ASA (ART SERVICE ASSOCIATION) Ungehinderte Informationsimplosion**

**A**uf dem Festival "D'Art Room" (Bologna 1987) legte Boris Nieslony den Grundsatztext "Das Netzwerk - die Botschaft, die Trainingsfelder" vor. In den Koordinaten "zwischen entwendeter Öffentlichkeit und politischer Kultur" solle "keine begriffliche Vereinzelung (entsprechend individueller Vereinzelung)" stattfinden, hieß es dort: Vielmehr solle innerhalb eines Denkens in Systemen und Sozietäten "Erkenntnis und Methode, Kontemplation und Aktion zu einer Wirklichkeit zusammenfallen". Gegenüber der kooperierenden Funktion gängiger Netzwerk-Modelle, z. B. in den "neuen sozialen Bewegungen", wird eine deutliche Abgrenzung gezogen: "Zusammenarbeit ist ein Zeichen, ein Ausdruck von Unwissenheit, von Unsicherheit oder zeitgebundener Schwäche. Die interaktiven Modelle in Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft, Technik und Kultur sind Bilder einer bestimmten Krisis des Denkens, der Krise der Selbstproduktion". Folgerichtig mahnt Nieslony, "Personen im mentalen Netzwerk" (s. Interview) könnten keine Gruppe oder eine Art von Gesellschaft bilden. Das Projekt ASA ist denn auch als "Association" definiert im Sinne einer "dimensionierten Gesellschaft im Tausch der geistigen und materiellen Werte".

ASA als "militanter Medienverbund" von Künstlern aus verschiedenen Disziplinen rekurriert auf die Tatsache, daß ab 1992 mit dem Wegfall der Handelsschranken innerhalb der EG auch die Kommunikation "über alle Grenzen hinweg" einen neuen Stellenwert bekommen wird. Unter anderem will ASA innerhalb eines "philosophischen Terminals" Informationskonzentrationen installieren und miteinander vernetzen. Das so gespeicherte Material kann reproduziert, vermittelt, getauscht oder implodiert werden. "Die aktivierte Zeit wird gegen Entgelt gehandelt." Äußere Rahmen können auch Symposien oder Kongresse sein, jedoch soll innerhalb der Handlungsräume "informationsloser Durchfluß (Besucherstrom) ausgeschlossen bleiben.

Die Veranstaltungsorte haben somit eine doppelte Struktur: Zum einen handelt es sich um einmalige Ereignisse, zum anderen strukturieren sie sich auch durch die Knotenpunkte des "mentalen Networks" als permanente Orte und "permanente Ereignisse" im Sinne des Verbundes zwischen verschiedenen Städten.

Neben den genannten Raumkategorien wie "Veranstaltungen", "philosophischer Terminal" u. a. werden Angebote ("Einbringungen der Teilnehmer, Repräsentanten und Gäste") und Nachfragen in einer "Börse" gebündelt. Schalter, Messestände, Büroräume, Sitzgruppen in Hotelfoyers etc. wären hierbei als Installation "mögliche Darstellungsformen" zur Organisation und Vermittlung von Gesprächen, Vorträgen und anderen Veranstaltungen. Damit findet innerhalb der ASA keine Kunstproduktion im klassischen Sinne statt und auch keine Inszenierung performanceähnlicher Kunstereignisse. Im Folgenden werden Auszüge aus einem Text von "Art d'Ameublement" (Raoul Marek, Norbert Klassen und Boris Nieslony) dokumentiert:

- Service ist das Medium.
- Service macht ASA sichtbar. ASA benötigt Service nicht.
- ASA ist keine Vereinigung von freien Einzelpersonen oder Institutionen. ASA ist ein Netz sich schnell verändernder Skizzen von Gesellschaft.
- ASA ist eine Organisationsform ohne Organisation mit dem vorrangigen Ziel, die Organisationsform überflüssig werden zu lassen.
- Jede Leistung kann von jedem, der in ASA ist, allein und selbstverantwortlich ausgefüllt werden.
- ASA ist die Präsenz von Stuhl-Tisch-Schreibmaschine-Papier-Finger-Hand-Kopf Idee-Realisation-Leser-Interpretation-Papierkorb.
- ASA ist keine Vermittlung, sie ist interaktive Kunst. Jeder Stuhl und jeder Tisch ist ein Klimatechniker.
- Association ist die dimensionierte Gesellschaft im interaktiven Service.
- Association ist die gleichwertige Präsenz verschiedener Menschen, die öffentlich sind. Sie sind ASA.
- Association ermöglicht die Veränderung des Wertbegriffs von linearer, egoistischer Mehrwert-speicherung zu Wertgewinn durch Kapitalvernichtung...

Jürgen Raap



Noi and Chumpon Apisuk and different artists of AsiaTopia 2004 “Mild Conflict“

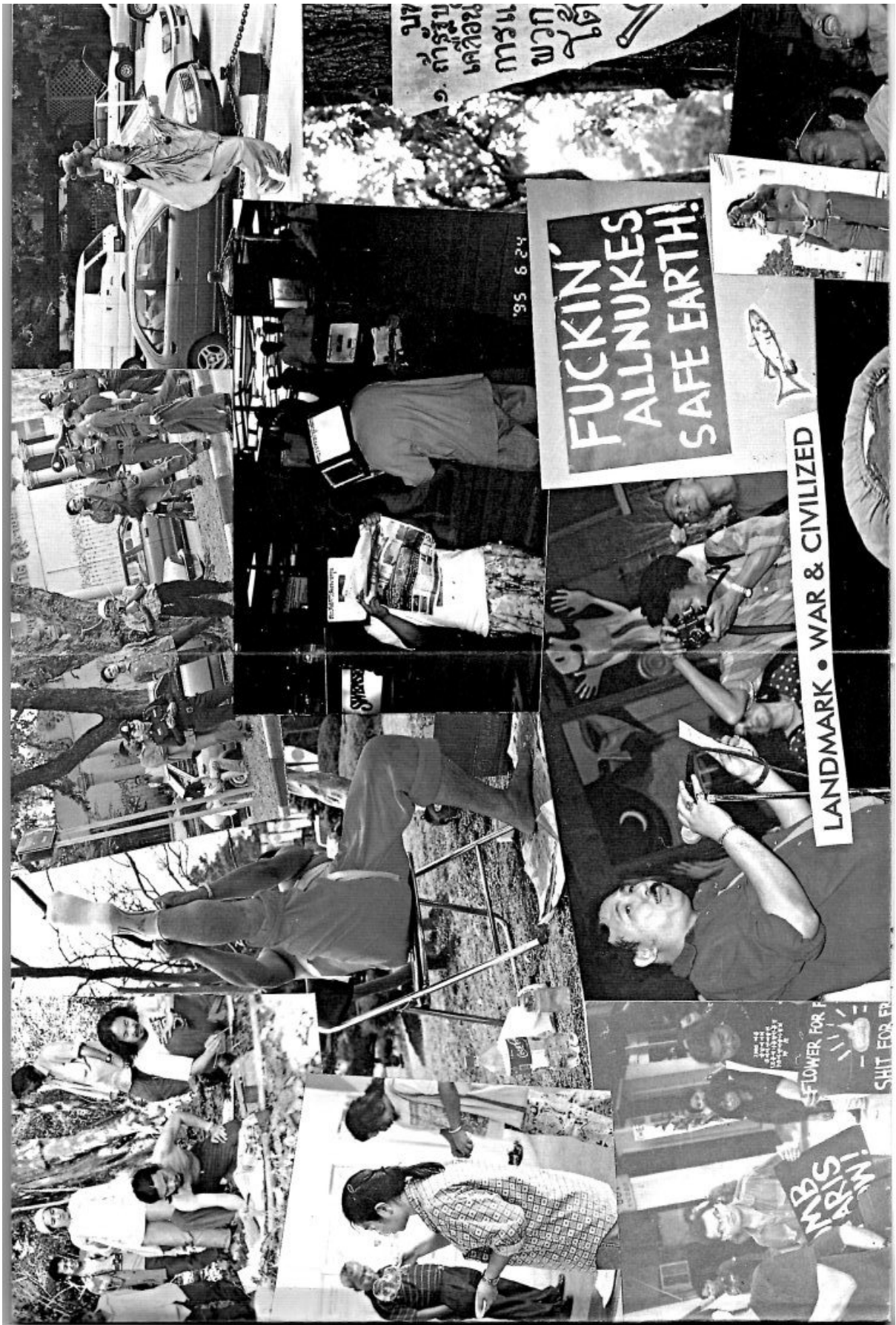
Pictures From left to right: 1. line No.59, No.60; 2. line: No.61, No.62; 3. line: No.63, No.64





IMMAF Performance Art Festival, Yangon / Burma 2012

Pictures from left to right: 1<sup>st</sup> line: No. 65; 2<sup>nd</sup> line: No. 66, No.67; 3<sup>rd</sup> line: No.68, No.69



No. 70 Flyer U-Kabat, Bangkok / Thailand

Performance art events, festivals etc. (examples)

**Beyond Pressure, Burma** <http://www.beyondpressure.org/>

**IMMAF , Burma** (International Multi Media Art Festival)  
<http://culture360.org/opportunity/myanmar-international-multimedia-art-festival-open-call/>

**Performance Site Myanmar 05, Burma** [www.araiart.jp/myanmar05.html](http://www.araiart.jp/myanmar05.html)

**Future of Imagination, Singapore** <http://www.foi.sg/>

**AsiaTopia, Thailand** <http://asiatopia.blogspot.de/>

**In:Act, Vietnam** <http://www.nhasanstudio.org/web/index.php?id=111>

**Ugnayan PIPAF, Philipinen-** Philippine Performance Art Festival, [ugnayan.motime.com](http://ugnayan.motime.com)

**NIPAF, Japan** ( International Performance Art Festival)l [www.avis.ne.jp/~nipaf](http://www.avis.ne.jp/~nipaf)

**TIPALive - Taiwan** (International Performance Art Festival) [www.tipaf.org.tw](http://www.tipaf.org.tw)

**BIPAF, Bucheon,Süd Korea,** (International Perofrmance Art festival )

**DaDao Live Art Festival , China Beijing** [www.araiart.jp/dadao3.html](http://www.araiart.jp/dadao3.html)

**DIAF, China -** (Dashanzi International Art Festival) , [www.diaf.org](http://www.diaf.org)

**Open Art Festival, Changchun , China** [www.asahi-net.or.jp/~ee1s-ari/chun.html](http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~ee1s-ari/chun.html)

**Hong Kong Performance Art On the Move Project , Hong Kong China**  
[www.hongkongperformanceart.com](http://www.hongkongperformanceart.com)

Satu Kali, Kuala Lumpur Malaysien

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/performance\\_art\\_network/message/2060](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/performance_art_network/message/2060)

**La vida en otro planeta Performance Festival, Mexico City, Mexico**  
[www.cuarto.org/espacios/portxter.html](http://www.cuarto.org/espacios/portxter.html)

**Live Action, Schweden** <http://www.liveaction.se/>

**Cyprus International Performance Art Festival, Zypern**  
<http://www.goethe.de/ins/cy/nic/ver/de10709415v.htm>

**FEAR NO ART Kopenhagen** [http://boek861.com/proyectos\\_rec/pry/0%20FEAR.pdf](http://boek861.com/proyectos_rec/pry/0%20FEAR.pdf)

**International art Festival,Jerusalem, Israel**  
[http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/yotzer/2012/home\\_eng.asp](http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/yotzer/2012/home_eng.asp)

**Blurr - 4th Biennial of Performance Art, Tel Aviv Israel** [www.cca.org.il/blur4](http://www.cca.org.il/blur4)

**Zaz Festival - Performance Art in Motion, Israel** [www.miklat209.org.il](http://www.miklat209.org.il)

**Huesca art festival, Barcelona, Spanien** [http://www.huesca-filmfestival.com/index\\_E.html](http://www.huesca-filmfestival.com/index_E.html)

**Castle of Imagination International Performance Art Festival , Polen,**  
[www.performance.art.pl](http://www.performance.art.pl)

**Eurokaz, Zagreb, Kroatien** [www.eurokaz.hr](http://www.eurokaz.hr)

**Perforacije - week of live art , Kroatien** [www.perforacije.org](http://www.perforacije.org)

**Four Days Festival, Prag** [www.ctyridny.cz](http://www.ctyridny.cz)

**Amorph - International Performance Art Festival, Finland** [www.muu.fi/amorph](http://www.muu.fi/amorph)

**Fringe Festival, Adelaide Australien** [www.adelaidefringe.com.au](http://www.adelaidefringe.com.au)

**Navinki International Performance Festival , Weißrussland** [www.navinkifestival.org](http://www.navinkifestival.org)

**Verbo Festival , Brasilien** [www.agenciaverbo.com](http://www.agenciaverbo.com)

**High Performance Rodeo, Kanada** [www.oyr.org](http://www.oyr.org)

**7a\*11d International Festival of Performance Art , Kanada Toronto** [www.7a-11d.ca](http://www.7a-11d.ca)

**LIVE Performance Art Biennale , Vancouver Kanada** [www.livebiennale.ca](http://www.livebiennale.ca)

**Movement to Performance Festival , Finland** [www.platform.fi](http://www.platform.fi)

**Infr'Action International Performance Festival, Frankreich** [www.infraction.info](http://www.infraction.info)

**Bandung Performance Art Festival, Indonesien** [www.araiart.jp/bandung.html](http://www.araiart.jp/bandung.html)

**Undisclosed Territory , Indonesien** [http://www.lemahputih.com/undisclosed/p03-undisc10\\_01.html](http://www.lemahputih.com/undisclosed/p03-undisc10_01.html)

**Art Action Festival, Monza Italien** [www.hartaperformingmonza.it](http://www.hartaperformingmonza.it)

**Bone Performance Art Festival , Schweiz** [www.bone-performance.com](http://www.bone-performance.com)

**Cleveland Performance Art Festival, USA**

<http://www.Performance-art.org>

and many others



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Boris Nieslony

My biggest thanks are due to Boris Nieslony and the trust that was placed in me. Carola Willbrand and Karin Meiner, who always had time for lengthy discussions, and all of the artists from:

The Artists Village, Black Market International, PAErsche as well as Noah Holtwiesche from Pan Vienna for answering my questions.

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