

Abstracts of presentations:

MARITA MUUKKONEN

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Possibilities for Contemporary Art Institutions to Function as Political Arenas

In simple terms, art as well as society and politics should be moving away from a nostalgic yearning for a primordial community or a quest for the historical origins of community. In order to function as non-nationalistic, non-unitary and contradictory – in other words, political – arenas. Under conditions in which (competitive) nationalism is on the increase, what are the possibilities for mainly state-funded contemporary art institutions? How can they function in their position as public arenas committed to the constant redefinition of their role, and in communication with other actors? As Boris Buden has formulated it, by means of today's theoretical reflection we can radically deconstruct almost every possible identity and easily disclose its essentialism as being simply imagined, constructed. Politics proper, however, still works with these essentialist identities – take “the nation” as an example – as if we didn't know they are only our illusions. It seems the only possible way of a communication between a postmodern anti-essentialist theory and that of a parallel, old essentialist political practice is a kind of translation. To highlight this I shall use as an example the impact of recent developments in cultural and art policy on NIFCA, the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Arts (which was closed down 2006), and on FRAME, the Finnish Fund for Art Exchange, starting with their location in the apparent vicinity of the state.

How then, for example, should one deconstruct “Nordicness” or “Nationalism” in institutional practice without falling into the trap of a shallow multiculturalist, tolerant humanitarianism? This cannot be done simply by chanting the mantra “we must come to face ourselves”. Rather, we might ask what alternative forms of connection, communication and relations in institutional and art practice could be. These are not simply new ways of being innovative as a “culture” or a “nation”. Everything is culture and at its best, contemporary art opens spaces and thus the possibility of culture questioning itself.

ANDERS HÄRM

Oh my God, Oh my God! There is no Estonian in the show...

(The relationship between the notions of “local” and “global” in my curatorial praxis)

There are quite many different levels where one as a curator has to deal with the dichotomy of these notions – the place of the exhibition, local/global context, local art scene/international art world, local topics/global topics, local and global power relations etc. Independent from the geographical destinations, one as a curator cannot avoid facing these questions. And they are, of course, important. But there is a big difference on which intellectual level one has to deal with them. In Estonia, the ultimate province of Europe, the curator has to answer these questions as well. But in the context where misreading of discourses, simple ignorance and praised anti-intellectualism are dominating the scene, demands on

“locality” are turning constantly into absurd.

I try to analyse my own answers to these demands with the “help” of my own exhibitions that I have curated or co-curated in this century and respond to some critical remarks that these projects have received in the background of this axis. So there are two levels within the framework of this presentation, that I am trying to analyse – first my own answers to the demand of positioning one-self on the axis of local-global and criticism that the projects have received on the same axis.

KESTUTIS KUIZINAS *CAC Vilnius Outlook*

Kestutis Kuizinas is going to reflect on his experience as the director of the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (CAC), the largest venue for contemporary art in the Baltic countries. He is going to give an overview about planning, curating and international positioning of the recent editions of *Baltic Triennial: BMW – Black Market World* (2005), *Centre of Attraction* (2002), *Cool Places* (1998) and consider the chances and difficulties of an art institution situated „a bit off the main roads“ in relation to the contemporary art centres. He is also going to comment on the experience of developing and realizing a wide range of collaborative international projects which CAC has been involved in recently, including *POPULISM* (2005) in cooperation with NIFCA, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Oslo Museum of Contemporary Art and Architecture, the Stedelijk Amsterdam, and *On Mobility* (2005-2006) in cooperation with De Appel Amsterdam, Büro Friedrich Berlin, Trafó/St?dió Galéria/Mûcsarnok Budapest as well as ongoing project *Holiday In* (2007) in cooperation with Gasworks, London and Triangle, Marseille.

ANNIE FLETCHER *Notes on Collaborative Curatorial Work – Two Case Studies*

Annie Fletcher will discuss two long term projects which question the emancipatory political imagination and ask how certain questions regarding feminism (*If I Cant Dance...*) and cultural identity (*Be[com]ing Dutch*) can be challenged and re-imagined in and by visual art .

If I Cant Dance I Don't Want To Be Part of You Revolution departs from a spirit of open questioning and enquiry with artists. It looks specifically at the legacies and potentials of feminism in relation to art today. Beginning with the quote of Emma Goldman: ‘If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution’, the project explores the critical and celebratory implications of this statement.

If I Can't Dance... is not trying to sum up a contemporary feminist art or to collate an aesthetic for feminism, but rather to explore how feminist thinking on all levels (social, artistic, political, theoretical, ideological or structural) may be important in our cultural life. There is currently a rich artistic discourse, which taps into this legacy and manifests itself in the materiality and language of visual art, but also interrogates how artists choose to perform themselves and their work within the dominant visual economy.

Be[com]ing Dutch is a two-year project which will ask what happens when national identities are put at risk and transformed through cultural difference. Becoming, as

opposed to being, is about a fluid process of negotiating with everyday life and learning from the constant changes in our surroundings. It's usually hard but also more rewarding than fixing ourselves in one inherited culture. *Be[com]ing Dutch* seeks to put our ideas of cultural identity under pressure and examine the processes of inclusion and exclusion in the Netherlands today. As questions of cultural identity and normative „national“ values become ever more of an issue in political and cultural debate, *Be[com]ing Dutch* asks whether art might offer alternative examples of thinking about how we might live together today.