

Why not the Academy?

by Marika Krasina & Anton Kryvulia (Rabota)

In this research, we are seeking the room to institutionalize autonomous, and unproductive art practices; to legalize the artist's invisible work outside of flat social functions: thus, looking out for a transient space for defending the place of art for the future.

genre: Meditation

tags: Academic Domain, Art, Artist, Art and Labour, Politics of Autonomy, Media-Asceticism, Whatever, Worldliness, Art-in-Itself

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To be with Art is all we ask.
Gilbert & George

Intent

Let us not pretend that at least some topic has remained relevant to us (artists in general), except the survival of art in conditions of the state of emergency, institutional commitments, and artist's insecurity.

Thanks to fate and our origin, we have long been living in the situation of alienation, deprivation, and uncertainty that many have faced now. During seven years of collaborative work, we had enough time to think, develop our own crisis strategy and formulate what we lack.

We are going to mark this utopia by employing our own practice, thus expanding the space of thinking on the mentioned issue.

Our practice

Free time

Art is not a public activity addressed to the market and the entertainment industry; not so much objects and stories for experiencing but the daily and invisible work of recreating, recollecting, and reinventing the world and the artist himself. This work is impossible without free time, and leisure, which the ancient Greeks called σχολή. Being the most fragile state of a human, it currently occurs as a victim of anxiety, poverty, and despair, leisure must be specially maintained. Even though such an unproductive understanding of the artist's work was already relevant for Plato, we have to introduce it as such again.

Our work is indistinguishable from our daily life. Our way of action means the refusal of production. We assume artistic work as a daily, constant will for creatively recollecting and re-creating the world and ourselves, such as daily unproductive work similar to the job of a taxi driver or window washer. If society captures the space of politics, turning art into an object of consumption, we, in response to this, enter the territory of labor and make an invisible, existing-in-itself artistic act the subject of social relation.¹

Witness

Johannes Cladders, the curator, noticed once: "I have always believed that it is the artist who creates a work, but a society that turns it into a work of art".

To turn such an unproductive practice into a condition of art and make the artist with his work-in-itself visible a witness is needed. It requires the observer's appearance, carrying out the practice of materialization, in which a hidden and aimless process renders into the matter. As a result of such materialization, the artist's

¹ "This destructive, devouring aspect of the laboring activity, to be sure, is visible only from the standpoint of the world..." Hannah Arendt. Human Condition. §13.

unproductive practice acquires material qualities, which at a specific moment can be installed, stored, and transmitted.

Like the [Labridae fish](#), which can change sex in extreme circumstances, we had set up such outer observers from ourselves. This alien, curatorial mode of action allows combining synthetically unproductive practices with materialization, communication, and presentation. The material achieved resulted from the fixation of such unproductive artwork: documentary video and photography, audio recordings, notebooks, index of things, maps, and the things themselves act as a source for materialization and re-materialization of artwork without direct production.

Artistic practice, engaged in the constant recollection of its origins, and curatorial practice following the unproductive artistic process and materializing it, together constitute our work.

Output

A brief path of migration and significant topics of interest:

2014	Venice, It / Nepal	Field recordings, developing the main concept, Himalayan drift
2015	Karnataka, In / Lviv, Ua / Montenegro / Serbia / Dresden, De / Paris, Fr / Catalonia / Minsk, By / Moscow, Ru	Common things as a medium, field studies
2016	Armenia / Georgia / Istanbul, Tu / Budapest, Hu / Crimea, Ua / Moscow, Ru / Milano, It / Vienna, At	Caucasus drift, phenomenological studies, White Mold painting theory, meta-collage
2017	Sri Lanka / Karlsruhe, De / Catalonia / France / Karlsruhe, De	Bubble book, Media Ecology theory, Media studies
2018	Porto, Pt / Andorra / Karlsruhe, De / Turkey / Greece / Mannheim, De / Novgorod, Ru / Rome, Napoli, Cicily, It / Vietnam / Laos	Interventions in ZKM museum, Media Theory, Nonknowledge drift, path to Mannheim, Ancient Russian architectural studies, Roman studies, Indochina drift
2019	Thailand / South Korea / Moscow, Ru / Helsinki, Fi / Kuban, Ru / Thessaloniki, Gr / Toscana, Venice, It	Aesthetics of Nonknowledge, art theory, Politics of Nonknowledge
2020	Mänttä, Fi / Durykino, Ru / Novy Svit, Ua	Managing our archive, scanning notepads, transcripts from dictaphone, Art and Labour theory, Corona and biopolitics
2021	Moscow, Ru / Cesis, Lv / Děčín, Cz	MUSEUM, struggle, Academy research

Work examples



[Annual Report](#)

Magazine, 2014-now

Since 2014 Rabota has been publishing the annual report with verbatim and photo documentation of our nomadic artistic practice.



[Common Body](#)

Index installation, 2015

A scroll of our private possessions was compiled on June 21, 2015, in the Dresden office where we used to live at that time. The list was exhibited in Moscow in February 2016.



[Apocalypse Surfers](#)

Generative Video, 2014-now

In common life, all people on earth eat, drink, sleep, produce carbon dioxide and shoot short videos. We do the same. We drop such short videos, shot by us on a smartphone, to the archive. From that array, we render an endless random video stream. This stream can never be repeated, each time it presents a new version of the picture of our life.

Lack

Common

Contemporary art necessarily implies a principle of globality, in a sense the *Mondialite* by Édouard Glissant. In the current circumstances, this principle is fatally vulnerable, it seems, due to its ephemerality. Are the institutional systems of contemporary art global? Are artistic practices and strategies of artists global? Intentionally yes, but actually — not.

The significance of the current crisis is that this ephemerality has become a painful signal for change, even though each institution individually can return to its original state and work as before. *Globality as a condition of contemporary art requires more reliable institutional procuring.*

Space and Time

The lockdown and the distancing, as expected, ignited the theme of “digital art” and “art in the digital space” as an obvious and convenient way out of the crisis. The temptations to rush with all artistic practice, to transfer formal and instrumental efforts into this sphere can only be overcome by an attentive phenomenological analysis of the digital world as a medium. Without this media grasp, artistic action is in doubt. This analysis pretty quickly gives us a conclusion.

Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky, a Russian art theorist, noticed that art requires the unity of both time and space for the artwork and the spectator. The digital world cannot be a substitute for this common, it is not Space and not Time, it is only a means of communication, it is not a “world” at all.

Utopia

This is a manifestation of need, in the form of a topology of this shortage. The topology is drawn up by phantom pain. It indicates an

object of lack — *Institution as the social framework providing artist's autonomous practice by its structure and instruments, employing digital networks, innovative communication means, and contemporary curatorial practices coordinated and replicated in the global field in real-time and real space.*

Consideration of post-crisis changes and possible actions in the new conditions requires multilateral expertise and broad explication. Such work is probably being carried out everywhere, but it is far from complete. Now we can use only the results of our observations and build on them our utopia with risk without which there is neither future nor art².

² "In the work of art man risks losing not simply a piece of cultural wealth, however precious, and not even the privileged expression of his creative energy: it is the very space of his world, in which and only in which he can find himself as man and as being capable of action and knowledge." Giorgio Agamben. THE MAN WITHOUT CONTENT

Academy

The Academy turns out to be one of the few institutions capable of resisting bad weather, wind changes, icing, and warming. If the policy of any museum can sooner or later be declared irrelevant, or questioned, then the Academy, due to the fluidity of its content (after all, it is always just an empty frame) remains invulnerable even during an incredibly severe drought. The Academy is a network institution with a sustained history of more than two thousand years. To look into its emptiness means almost stopping time.

Precisely because the object of this empty frame could be whatever, the academy can be a condition for autonomous artistic practice, independent neither from collectors of things nor from funds of political parties. In addition, being a place, the academy gives people the unique opportunity to attend to the living work of the artist³. The Academy is not so much a pedagogical institution but a place where the artist meets society.

If we consider the Academy from the perspective of our institutional utopia its mission would be in defending the autonomy of artistic practices and procuring such a social function as a place to witness the emergence of art.

World, real (not virtual), network institution that provides the social framework for artist's autonomous practice by its structure and instruments: **why not the Academy?**

³ There was an attempt to implement this function in the Art-residency format, but it is definitely far from being able to replace the academy.

Rabota
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