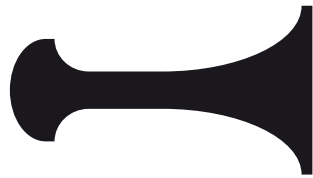
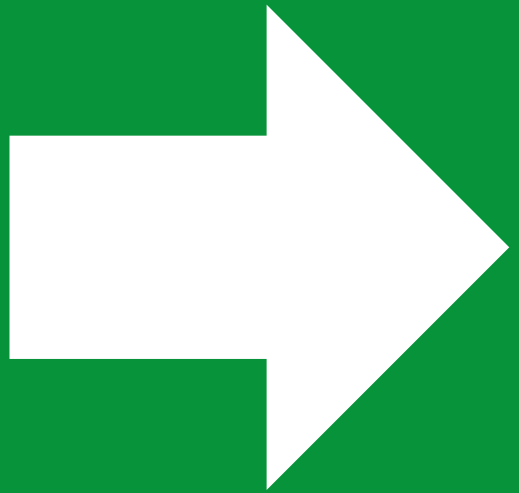
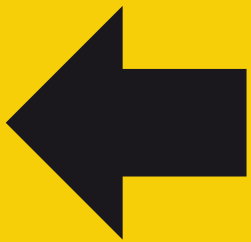


# KLAXON 1





**(when art lives in town)**

URBAN EXPRESSWAY

## Society City

Antoine Pickels & Benoit Vreux

MAIN STREET

## City-life, Culture and Social Cohesion

Eric Corijn

REMARKABLE EVENT

## ANTI A very large Idea of the Place

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UNDER CONSTRUCTION

## Galerie Royale Centrale rewriting history

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NEIGHBOURHOOD

## Urban Bodies, Human Space To what extent can we relate?

Miriam Rohde

URBAN EXPRESSWAY

## Society City

Antoine Pickels and Benoit Vreux

Whether a capital of culture on a regional or European level, be it the urban arts, the artists' circuits, *nuits blanches*, block parties, site-specific installations and performances, street theatre festivals, local heritage days.... the modern city itself has become an object of desire for every cultural taste. The arts have come to play a crucial role in city life, comparable to that of tourism, economic development and social cohesion. The arts sector is charged with redeveloping networks of local shops, promoting inter-urban transport policies, and revitalising neglected neighbourhoods. Over several years the city has been transformed into an immense playground, a nexus for experimentation and reflection for a vibrant arts scene: theatre, dance, performance, activism, socio-artistic practices...

These issues constitute the core of Cifas's activities [bit.ly/1jowgWp](https://bit.ly/1jowgWp) which through a series of public workshops with artists from around the globe who come to practice their arts in public spaces in Brussels, and moreover to share – at our extremely cosmopolitan summer school – their respective experiences based on a wide diversity of urban realities. The exceptional quality of communication, works presented, suggestions and reflections produced in these contexts have inspired us to disseminate them on a wider level through written, visual and audio media, while enlarging this editorial realm to embrace related practices.

The focus of *Klaxon's* first edition is the city's societal dimensions: following a schema you will re-discover in our subsequent editions, we will expose a central thoroughfare, embracing outside lines of thought in the midst of the art-world: In his contribution *City Life, Culture and Social Cohesion* the

Brussels based sociologist Eric Corijn retraces recent urban development and its corresponding sociologic mode of reflection and demonstrates how contemporary stratagems are not attuned to the on-going transformations in urban life. Corijn calls for an artistic presence and a culture which are not “shared” but rather assert themselves as engines for difference, taking their lead from a desire to reach out and know the other. This thoroughfare opens up the way for several other itineraries: two *remarkable events* are well worth visiting: the ANTI festival in Finland which over the last decade has hosted site-specific creations, often based on some form of social exchange between the artists and visitors, and the Belluard Bollwerk Festival in Switzerland which under the leadership of Sally De Kunst has laid special emphasis on projects involving Fribourg’s various communities for the last six years. At once proactive and successful, they encompass the artistic relationship with public spaces while not relinquishing their adventurous flair. You are also free to take a more complex *route* through the city, as did the British artist Rajni Shah whose approach is keenly analysed by Diana Damian. Her appraisal doesn’t overlook the artistic and critical aspects of a work that neither opens or closes with a “performance” but nonetheless flourishes through unexpected encounters that either precede or arise from it, or from the public discussion it provokes. Or, perhaps you might prefer a brief *stroll* through the city in the company of the American transgender artist Kris Grey on a summer’s afternoon as witnessed in this very simple action which nonetheless was to provoke surprise and even consternation. Or, then again to observe subtle cross contaminations at the building works *under construction* in Claudia Bosse’s *Galerie Royale Centrale* which revives memories of the colonial era in an African – and yet European – shopping mall. Alternatively, you could take a foray into a *neighbourhood* close to Cifas, into the artistic discourse (but to what degree?) and multiple strategies of the German artist Heike Langsdorf as set out by the German architect, Miriam Rohde.

Irrespective of your journey in words, sounds, images (and possibly enhanced, if online, thanks to the numerous surfing

possibilities at your disposal) rest assured that at the end of your visit you will neither have exhausted everything that is to be experienced or discovered in the city, nor partook in every new social and sociable art form in which many artists actively participate nowadays. We will, however, be back shortly with our up-coming edition of *Klaxon*, with more itineraries to suggest for you to enjoy and explore...

Please sign up: it requires nothing more than a click and is free [bit.ly/1mKQ34S](https://bit.ly/1mKQ34S)

And as you embark upon this guided tour, courtesy of *Klaxon*, we wish you all a memorable time...

Cifas.be

MAIN STREET

## City-life, Culture and Social Cohesion

Eric Corijn

Listen to Eric Corijn here (in French): [bit.ly/1NNqhrP](https://bit.ly/1NNqhrP)

I would like to offer some reflections about the relationships between city-life and society, so as to then attempt situate the roles played by art and culture. We really need to radically restructure our thinking on the place of culture in our communities and in society at large.

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*A city does not function as a nation state.*

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Emerging in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, our thinking patterns have been institutionalised and put into practice over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And these ideas, in turn, have become the foundation for numerous cultural policies, particularly in a country like Belgium, in which culture was a community-based affair. These ideas, however, have been compromised over the last two or three decades, particularly given that we have started increasingly living in cities, and that a city does not function as a nation state. Let me attempt to shed some light on this point.

## A radical transition: the world is becoming increasingly urban

Let's begin with an empirical observation: the world is becoming increasingly urban. Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the majority of the world's population lives in cities. On the more developed continents, it even reaches 75-80% of the population. In the early twentieth century, a mere 10% of the global population lived in cities, that is to say, some two hundred million people.

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We went from being a species living mainly in rural or sub-urban areas to city-dwellers.

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At present the figure is greater than 50%, or more than five billion. Within the space of a hundred years, we went from being a species living mainly in rural or sub-urban areas to city-dwellers. I don't think we are fully aware of what this shift entails, and that we have yet to learn to adapt to this new environment.

Not only do the majority of the planet's population live in cities, but they are also becoming larger. In 1950, only London and New York could boast of a population exceeding eight million. Nowadays over thirty-five cities can claim populations of over ten million people, while nearly five hundred cities have a million inhabitants. This is a phenomenon that particularly characterizes Third World nations, where the population is concentrated in large metropolises. In the course of ten years more than three hundred million Chinese have left their villages and moved into cities. In Beijing, the street map requires updating every three months, as new neighbourhoods emerge.



Every three years, the city's population increases by one million. These are very profound changes. The situation is especially precarious for those who leave their native villages, as they may not have access to the rights accorded to city resident, because they don't want to deprive their families the right to own land in the villages. The newcomers settle in favelas, "neighbourhoods for the influx of new arrivals" where millions of disenfranchised self-organize, and do not necessarily fit into an existing system.

While Brussels has no slums or ghettos, it does have many such "neighbourhoods" where the numbers of arrivals is greater than its "absorptive" capacity, and where the integration systems cannot assimilate newcomers. In former times, industrial societies were essentially suburban. After World War II, Belgium – particularly the northern region – was re-industrialised with industrial estates being established in the middle of nowhere. Social policy was such that workers could continue to live in their villages and commute to the newly built plants by bus, by train, and at a later stage by car via the motorways. We became a nation of commuters and suburban existence our way of living. And in this context, immigration was primarily organized labour; immigration and integration came about through work and the organization of labour.

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The real cultural issue is how to develop urban life.

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In such a suburban environment, unlike big cities, one doesn't learn to live with differences. Whereas the big city was meant for shopping; a place to work or go to school, "home" was much a simpler place than the city. In northern and southern Belgium, this suburban mentality still predominates. I am currently working with several cultural centres in the Walloon Brabant province on the outskirts of Brussels, for the purpose of analysing the situation in the region. The first question that arises when one mentions the metropolis of Brussels is:

“how can we defend our rural quality of life in Wallonia?” People are very pro-active in protecting this rural way of life, which in reality is nothing more than a “rurbanity”. For me, however, the real cultural issue is how to develop urban life.

The world is becoming increasingly urban, but we are not well prepared for this transformation.

## The City

My second consideration is to comprehend what constitutes a city. Not only the city as a locality, but also as a form of society. In my view, it's quite simple: a city is determined by a density of mixed populations. A city is a large population in a restricted area, who do not all have identical occupations and do not share the same reference systems.

A city's population is diverse and multi-functional. The city has been built because some of its functions require proximity. This vision of urban reality is the opposite of the modern approach. The first response to the complexity resulting from modernity was to separate, to zone. After the Second World War, society evolved into a more complex structure: we don't necessarily live and work in the same place, we enjoy leisure activities yet elsewhere, with a concomitant rise of intensive mobility between these areas. This separation of activities is a conventional modern approach. But this traditional separation — zoning — cannot resolve all the tensions arising from modern urban life. We are constrained to stay together; problems are not resolved if we remain apart. We need to deal with them on the spot, through sharing the collective space...

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The global market operates in a constantly transforming space, whose towns and cities are but hubs.

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Globalization implies another form of spatiality. The global market operates in a constantly transforming space, whose towns and cities are but hubs. Nowadays the real problem in these cities, and this shift in the world, is that economic growth has not benefited everyone. While cities are becoming even more important economically, social polarization remains deep. Let's study the situation in Brussels: Composed of nineteen districts with a registered population of 1.1 million inhabitants to which can be added at least one hundred thousand non-registered residents (clandestine immigrants, students, Polish "tourists" living there for more than thirty years and so forth.) For the city's population, there are more than seven hundred ten thousand jobs. Brussels is Europe's second wealthiest region in Europe and boasts the most educated workforce with 91 % employed in service industries. If one can go on these statistics, Brussels is flourishing. However, the majority of these jobs (three hundred and sixty thousand) are held by non-residents, by commuters who live outside the city. Some one hundred and ten thousand persons are looking for work. 30% are living on or below the poverty line. More than a third of young people live in families with no income from work. A large section of society is excluded from this cosmopolitan international dynamic, and the wealth redistribution systems are not compatible with facts on the ground.

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The idea of social diversity, and of a representation of all cultures everywhere is an illusion.

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This social polarization has a geography. The idea of social diversity, and of a representation of all cultures everywhere

is an illusion. Every city is structured in a particular fashion. Unlike Paris, the poor inhabit Brussels's city centre districts. Our elites are anti-urban, because for them the "good life" is to be had in the leafier outskirts. One positive effect of this phenomenon is that more is invested relatively in Brussels's poorer neighbourhoods than in the Parisian suburbs, where, instead of investing in schools and cultural centres, the French authorities send in riot control forces to maintain order. Whereas the Place Vendôme in central Paris is inhabited by the elite – and not the poor – within 50 meters of the Grand Place of Brussels one finds the ever growing numbers of the city's poor, with the unemployment rate at 50%, and 60% of young people are without work.

**A city is not a country: how to live together  
on the basis of our respective differences.**

Each region has its respective social and cultural geography. Public space is not an abstract entity, it exists somewhere. One constantly needs to take into consideration one's bearings. The issue is how to live together in cities? How to live together on the basis of our respective differences?

It is essential to distinguish between a city and a country. In the case of Brussels, it makes even more sense. We shouldn't overlook the fact that the political structure of the Belgian federal state defines Brussels and its nineteen districts as a distinct "region" (next to Flanders and Wallonia). This city-region has jurisdiction solely over local affairs. Jurisdiction over the region's cultural, educational or related to society's well being is dependent upon the "monolingual" French or Flemish "communities". On the one hand Brussels' institutional representation is that of a bi-communal city, while on the other, its social and cultural reality reveals a city with numerous and moreover

very hybrid communities. The gap between the state's vision and the urban reality is significant.

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Before, social cohesion was the exclusive concern of philosophers and priests.

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Let us look back for a moment at the situation in the middle of the nineteenth century at the outset of the industrial revolution. The social sciences came to the fore at that time just as thousands moved from the countryside to work in factories. Before this period, social cohesion was the exclusive concern of philosophers and priests. Zoology had researched the animal kingdom but seeing that humans had a moral component, they had to be studied in another way. Addressing social cohesion and society as facts, which were not merely givens but could be organized, structured and institutionalized, is an issue that arose in the mid-nineteenth century. The matter was not only pinned down by scientists, but also by writers the ilk of Dickens or Zola, who were first to introduce social issues into their literary output. It was only afterward that scientists began to take an interest in the field.

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We continue to think of social bonds as based on two concepts: "community" and "society."

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In 1887, the German philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies wrote *Community and Society*, a book that attempted to address this issue. Nowadays we continue to think of social bonds as based on the two concepts: "community" and "society." Durkheim, the most influential founding father of sociology, remarked that people living in traditional and rural societies led nearly identical lives: a methodical existence,

cyclical like the seasons, the times of day, and a little by religion, with moments where one had to stop working so as to take care of life's spiritual needs, as on feast and holy days. Everyone participated in these common practices. With this collective experience, there was a spontaneous collective consciousness, a shared vision of the world – an offshoot of this common practice.

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The problem with modern industrial society is that people no longer share similar experiences.

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The problem with modern industrial society is that people no longer have identical work or life patterns; they do not all work together, and consequently no longer share similar experiences. In traditional societies, there is what Durkheim refers to as “mechanical solidarity”. Like the wheels of a locomotive interconnected by a horizontal bar, when the wheel rotates the other wheels also rotate in a similar manner. Mechanical solidarity involves everyone doing the same thing. In modern society, this has transformed into “organic solidarity”, and is much more functional in nature, like the human body. Our feet and hands do not carry out identical tasks, but must be coordinated. And this social body, in Durkheim's view, must be held together by shared values and standards. Where do these standards and rules arise? Durkheim believes they are found in the traditional norms and values. Durkheim's modernity should be organized in a continuity between industrial society and the pre-modern tradition, notably thanks to institutions—church, schools, media and culture... In this context, the task of culture and artists is to nurture and maintain the inventory of standards and values.

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The prevalent political imagination blots out the diversity of our everyday reality in urban areas.

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Moreover this notion embraces the concept of a nation-state. Social cohesion is not some abstract idea; it is the people who should unite. National culture – or community-based as in Belgium – is a derived form. The idea of social cohesion is based on sharing a common history. This *shared history* founded on *tradition* that forges the people's *cultural* and national identity. The idea of democracy, namely enabling power to be legitimized by the people (and not perforce by God and his representatives on earth – the Pope or Monarchs) was contained in the concept of nation-state. Within this “cultural repertoire” system of references, we assume we can represent people in two ways: on one side through the inherent differences inherent between social groups—with all possible variations of history, political parties, different ideologies – and at the same time the people's representatives bear the duty to maintain existing institutions, to safeguard the constitution and ensure continuity. Within this concept of national democracy, one cannot invalidate the role of the people. Neither their language nor structures can be changed. The idea of representation, namely, to elect delegates who speak on behalf of the electorate between election dates is contained in the notion that a common repository, in which they can discuss possible changes, is in place. And all that just occurs within a given *territory* for we are told that everything changes beyond the borders. On the map of Europe one observes that each country is symbolised by a national flag, symbolizing its citizens: behind the French flag come the French; behind the German flag come the Germans and so forth but without taking into account the thousands of Turks living within these territories, too! With the result that the prevalent political imagination blots out the diversity of our everyday reality, particularly that in urban areas.

Because a city is not a country. Were we to try to explain social cohesion in Brussels as based on a common history; we're off to a poor start. The majority of the population have no Belgo-Belgian references. How then are we to integrate them given there are two sets of institutions? Two forms of theatres, two languages, two cultures, two reference systems?

We have a choice. It is impossible to create social cohesion with a culture that is institutionalized to such an extent, which upholds the idea of community in a multi-communal and multicultural society with different financial sources and executive powers. And even in cities with a single politico-cultural system, the sociological diversity is inadequately represented by the dominant culture.

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In cities, social cohesion cannot be derived from a common past; rather, it is to be found in a shared destiny.

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What then is the social bond, how do we live together? In cities, social cohesion cannot be derived from a common past; rather, it is to be found in a shared destiny. It pertains to the future and not the past. It arises from aspirations of an encounter that has yet to occur, but which should take place in the “living in the city together”. This fate lacks a clear identity; it is *hybrid*, mixed, permanently under construction. Cultural not inter-cultural. Culturally speaking, Brussels consists exclusively of minorities. No hegemony: no culture can claim to embody others. If we are to live together, hybridity, in the sense of inter-culture, should be our starting point. Only a participatory and a *co-productive* approach will ensure results.

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This is not cultural “purity”, but the participatory and network-like nature characteristic of urban-life.

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This is why the crisis of representative democracy is predominantly urban. To engage in democracy in a city, the process needs to be participatory. Electing a mayor or a burgomaster won't suffice, as they subsequently retain complete control given the nature of democratic representation. We



need to constantly work together, consult with each other and mobilize the population. And all this does not occur solely in a particular region; this is achieved through networks and connectivity. This is a very open system, which is not easy to manage. If a country, a national or communal culture is to be defined by the sequence “history, tradition, representation, repertory, territory”, then the city is the opposite: “destiny, future, project, hybridity, diversity, impurity, *zinneke*<sup>01</sup>”. This is not cultural “purity”, but the participatory and network-like nature characteristic of urban-life.

**01.** *Zinneke* means bastard in the Brussels patois, particularly applied to dogs of mixed breeds.

## Art and culture with a broad diversity: urban culture

To summarise, I would like to question the role of art and culture in this context. What is urban art? Firstly, there is the problem of the imagination in this common destiny. What exactly is this intermediate zone where destiny and imagination converge? It does not come about easily through inter-cultural *dialogue*, nor does it happen immediately.

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To create the concept for a common destiny is at once a permanent re- and de-construction site.

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I am deeply sceptical concerning cultural diplomacy: the numerous inter-religious meetings, for example, have never rise to a new religion. Many multi-cultural projects have not produced a combination that replaces the original culture. They perhaps enable one to get to know each other a little more, before everyone then goes home and take comfort in his own identity. A meeting of minds has yet to take place.

To create the concept for a common destiny involves developing a process for the vision of a shared city, while at the same time deconstructing the community with mono-cultural aims. It is at once a permanent re- and de-construction site. Brussels is again a case in point: a project or vision for urban education is lacking. Education has been divided in terms of language communities. Looking at Flemish education, the majority of students do not speak Flemish at home, but are socialized according to a model developed in the Flemish community. In addition, most teachers do not live in the urban area. They are suburbanites commuting to teach the urban youth. For these teachers, this multi-cultural city is not their living environment, but merely presents an opportunity to meet on occasion. For their students, however, it is their living environment, which isn't a daily multi-cultural celebration! Their problem is how to live together. Who is going to try to steal their mobile phone? Are the streets safe? How can one share the space and services? That is their inter-culturality.

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**The critical rapport to the cultural policy of creation is an area in need of development.**

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Subsidized culture plays far too an important role in the extension of the state's executive. The nation-state, which in the Belgian case is designed by linguistic communities, has a cultural mission to integrate the people into the nation. Subsidized culture needs to be positioned in relation to this grand project. And that, while the greater part of current cultural production occurs in the private sphere, in the culture of consumption and trade. The critical rapport to the cultural policy of creation is an area in need of development. On the one hand the state policies; on the other market forces. Art and culture need to address this issue, as the city has not been given adequate consideration within this dichotomy.

While being highly institutionalized, the various cultural agencies claim that they are experts in many spheres. If a cultural

centre organizes a dance festival, the outcome is considered positive culturally, if tickets are sold and the budget balanced. But to really position oneself as an actor in urban social networks, one has to be able to read the facts on the ground, and position artistic creation within the dynamics of a vision and inter-cultural imagination. Current practice is failing in this regard. And, then one has to position this urban existence with respect to the wider world.

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If we began to think that social and political life could be achieved without recourse to cultural and historical traditions?

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I would like to sum up with two general observations. It took a century, namely that of the Enlightenment, to work out the feasibility of living together without having to share religious beliefs. Even if the majority of people seem not as yet convinced, many currently believe that the separation between state and religion is one of the significant achievements of modern times, and in need of safeguarding, as it seems to be under threat. While religion now has joined the ranks of civil society, the state has taken charge. State religion was thus abolished. In the nineteenth century, however, it was replaced by culture. State culture: a language, a people, a repertoire, and a cultural territory to sustain. Particularly in Europe, where tradition remains deeply embedded. This also gave rise to a twentieth century full of nationalist wars and ethnic cleansing. As I mentioned earlier, the world has changed dramatically. The twenty-first century could become a new Enlightenment: how to live together without sharing culture? What would emerge if we were also to separate from state culture? What if we were to imagine a multi-faith society alongside a multi-cultural society? If we began to think that social and political life could be achieved without recourse to cultural and historical traditions? We must deliberate over this question. We are at the cusp of this new Enlightenment,

so let us see what will happen in the course of the coming century. This is not a philosophical matter, but rather a question of cultural practices. What cultural differences can society accommodate? What should be “universal” and “shared”, and what could be multiplied without harming society?

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If what we share in common were the basis for the relationship, then it would be better for many of us to separate.

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And then I come back to the prevalent notion that we are together on the basis of what we have in common. Community was the bedrock of society. I often ask my students why they live as a couple, why they are together. They reply spontaneously that they like doing the same things that joint activities are a uniting force, and the relationship is based on identity. We think we're together because of what we have in common. Were we to make a list of things that we don't share in common, it would be often much longer than the one of what we share. If what we share in common were the basis for the relationship, then it would be better for many of us to separate. Except that it is precisely this list of differences that produces the relationship. Is this not there where desire and love arise? Let's try to go beyond our differences, to integrate them into what we share. Even if it doesn't work in reality, this illusion of power places together radically different things; perhaps that is the dynamic link. Is it not this type of relationship that could be the basis for urban networks? The search for something impossible, but that nonetheless energises, activates, implements the desire to experiment, or to work this impossibility. If it is not a good program to create social cohesion, it is at least one to foster art and culture in the city.

## BIOGRAPHY

## Eric Corijn



Cultural philosopher and social scientist, Eric Corijn is Em. Professor of Social and Cultural Geography at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) as well as former head of the department of Geography at VUB. He is the founder of the Centre for Urban Research at VUB: COSMOPOLIS–City, Culture & Society, and coordinator of the Urban Studies Network, a platform of Brussels urban studies and vice-chair of the Brussels Studies Institute. He holds degrees in Zoology, Philosophy and Science Dynamics from the universities of Ghent and Brussels (Belgium), he did postgraduate studies in Futures Research (Utrecht and Amsterdam - The Netherlands) and Psychoanalysis (Ghent-Belgium), he holds a diploma in Sculpture and Monumental Arts from the RHoK (Brussels - Belgium) and he holds a PhD in Social Sciences from Tilburg University (The Netherlands).

He is the author of over 250 publications on a wide range of subjects. Amongst others: with W. De Lannoy (ed.) (2000): *Crossing Brussels. La qualité de la différence. De kwaliteit van het verschil*, Brussels, VUB-Press: 333 p.; with L. Boudry; P. Cabus; F. De Rynck; C. Kesteloot en A. Loeckx (2005): *The Century of the City. City republics and grid cities. White paper*, Project Stedenbeleid, Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Brussels; with E. Vloeberghs (2009): *Brussels!*, Brussels, VUB-Press: 312 p.; with

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Photo : © DR.

REMARKABLE EVENT

## ANTI

A very large Idea of the Place  
Johanna Tuukkanen and Gregg Whelan

For twelve years, the international festival of contemporary art ANTI takes place in various places in the small city of Kuopio, in central Finland. Its artistic directors tell us about the philosophy of the festival and the way it works.

**When you describe ANTI in a few words, which words do you use?**

**Gregg Whelan** Site-specific festival presenting live art, context-based works...

**Johanna Tuukkanen** I usually use the word “ANTI” which means “gift”. ANTI is a free festival that happens in everyday places where people live or spend their time.

**GW** The word is important because in Finnish, it’s associated with gift, but in English it means “against”. The festival is international; everything is in English, so there is a play between two languages. We frame it all as a gift, but sometimes, it might be an unwanted gift...

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“You can’t charge somebody to walk down the street and potentially encounter something or not.”

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## **Is every work you present free of charge? You never have to buy a ticket?**

**GW** There were two exceptions, a seminar which was ticketed, and people had to pay a small price for the boat trip to an island, but 99.9 %, across the years, was free.

**JT** It's essential. It describes in some ways how we think about what site-specific is. For example in Holland, there is a site-specific festival but there are fences around the area, for which you have to buy tickets to get inside. We want to highlight the everyday encounter, which contradicts with the traditional activity of buying a ticket for an aesthetic experience, whether it is in a museum or a theatre. We were recently working with our board on a new strategy, we discussed this issue again, and it was agreed that this is a value that we want to stick to.

**GW** Pragmatically, you can't charge somebody to walk down the street and potentially encounter something or not. A lot of our audience live in the city or in the suburbs and encounter the artists once or twice, decide to stay or not...

**JT** It would change the nature of programming if we were to charge tickets. Another important value behind this strategic decision is that we want to attract people and audiences who might not otherwise actively engage with art, and to get them interested in art. If they have a positive experience, they might go more often in the future in museums, galleries or theatres.





Around the streets of Kuopio, drivers get flagged to the final round of a non-existent car race.

*Traguardo*  
Werther Germondari

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2008

© Pekka Mäkinen



The artists created a map that playfully rewrites the city around us. Starting from an elevator, the audience realized the work by exploring the surroundings with the map.

*Kansas*  
Georgie Meagher and Malcolm Whittakeri

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2010

© Pekka Mäkinen



The piece, consisting of autumn-coloured leaves, was a poetic depiction of nature's ability to regenerate and reform. A passer-by can dive inside the work and experience it through all sensory modalities.

*The Autumn-coloured Leaves*  
Hans-Christian Berg and Mika Ihanus

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2002

© Pekka Mäkinen



This 12 hours 14 minutes performance consisting of 51 individual performances was developed on the terms of domestic space and performed at a private apartment in Kuopio. This procedural performance was open to the audience for its entire duration. **51 performances** was recorded on video and presented as an installation in the home afterwards.

*51 Performances*  
xxx group

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2008

© Pekka Mäkinen



We all need a helping hand sometimes, a little lift, something to help our mood, something to help us on our way. Audience was assisted, carried from one side of the street to the other. This service was free of charge and available throughout the festival.

*Assisted Street Crossing in Kuopio*  
Tryst

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2011

© Pekka Mäkinen



The world's first text-generating, 10 km road race. People signed up for the race and registered a short line of text. Each runner's unique line of text was then stored in a chip, which was tied onto their running shoe. When runners finished the race, their line of text was placed in the growing 'results text' according to their position in the race.

*The ANTI 10 K - Run Write Run!*

Regin Igloria

ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2010

© Pekka Mäkinen



As the artist runs on a treadmill for the first 90 minutes of every 2 hours, for a total of 12 hours, she reads aloud continuously from a list of thousands of apologies written by the audience members.

*Weigh Me Down*  
Getinthebackofthevan

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2010

© Pekka Mäkinen

**Can you give a few examples of the different spaces that have been used so far in the city, particularly for live actions?**

**GW** Over the years we used everywhere. In 2010, Johanna Hellsten worked with two opera singers who opened and closed, welcomed and said goodbye of a context day. The variety of places were such as train stations – the opera singer would be singing at 5 am when the first train came in, and back at 11.30 pm for the last train – a blood donation centre, so the first blood donor would be greeted with a song, a swimming pool, a library, a market hall for the first and last transaction of the day... So that project would move across quite different spaces.

We've had projects which took place in city's banks, hospitals, we've had a year where we had a mini program happening in private homes; we worked with 4 or 5 families who would host the artists for some time, then for the festival, the audience would turn up in those venues which actually were somebody's houses.

Artists are also invited to investigate with different methodologies, producing huge rays of outcome. Some of those pieces are dialogueic, like a residency model, where artists would arrive and work for a long time, for example with patients of a hospital, and other ones are much quicker interventions, where it's more about a guerrilla intervention or quick explosion.

**When you prepare the festival, what comes first, the site or the artwork?**

**JT** In the beginning of the festival, we preselected sites that we described and photographed, and then we published the call-out to which artists would propose their projects accordingly. We were thinking more in details about the structure of a city, how people at different ages inhabit, move and use the city; where you are born, where you go to school... Looking at structures in the city, entry points (train stations, airport, bus station)... But sometimes it's a forgotten or abandoned



site that we want to activate through artworks. And sometimes, it's the people who use the site that we want to engage with art directly. Sometimes we contact an artist we're interested in, then we start a dialogue to see where that leads, and what kind of sites would work. Sometimes we know an artist who works with a specific theme or object, such as Kris Grey, for whom we found a specific community to work with.

**GW** We've had a few years with an overarching theme, such as this year: "warmth". We started to think about artists and spaces around that idea... Sometimes we purposefully revisit sites and it's happened that we ask artists to go back there, years later, to revisit their work or to create something new there.

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Something which is problematic, or challenging public space.

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**You were highlighting the "non-art audience", but ANTI has a local and non-local audience, people who expect what to find in the festival and passers-by. What are your priorities in terms of audience?**

**JT** The constant thing is that the audience is made of people living in the city. It creates an interesting dynamic and question around programming the festival because in many cases, a project makes real sense to us, the artist and the local audience because it deals with something very local. It's about the amount of traffic on a particular road, the history of a path through a particular neighbourhood etc... That works very successfully for this rather large local audience. We shouldn't even think of them as audience, they are just people living there, meeting these projects but they don't necessarily check out the ANTI brochure and decide to go anywhere. Those pieces can be lived very differently by national or international audience. In some way, we've always felt more

responsibility towards locals living in Kuopio than for the classic audience of an international art festival.

**GW** Sustaining these local encounters that have now been happening for many years is very important. Even though the whole population does not support it... Every year, some letters go to the press, wondering why the festival is still happening, but in the end, the festival stays there, it keeps happening, and I really like the fact that sometimes the locals wonder if something is an ANTI action or just an odd situation happening as in everyday life. I like this ambiguity.

**So people now expect things to happen at that period of the year?**

**GW** It's great, but problematic as well, because it creates its own frame where you can just dismiss things because it's ANTI as opposed to really get inside of things. But in another way, we've heard stories where something happens in May and people will react to something crazy happening by saying "ah, it must be the ANTI festival" because it becomes synonymous with something which is problematic in, or challenging the public space.

**JT** Although we think a lot about the local audience, we also think of what we call the hard-core audience, which is very much aware of the festival, walking around with the brochure, knowing something is supposed to happen somewhere at a certain time. Sometimes we think they can ruin the encounter for the everyday passers-by, but at the same time, it does not mean that we just want to present artists who do social work, it's important that we acknowledge that our artists are professional, working site-specifically, that their aesthetics are dialogueical, they are internationally recognised as live artists. We think about the field of live art internationally although we have a strong focus on local audience.

**GW** The idea of the local audience isn't necessarily connected to local art. The excitement comes from having an artist from Mexico or from Japan working closely with the

Finnish community. That's where the sympathetic relationship starts to happen. Often it's the dynamic of the visitor coming in from outside, and investing in that place which makes something else happen.

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The audience is valued and equal to the stuff that is being presented.

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**A lot of the work you produce is about the relation it creates between people rather than interested in creating a spectacular artwork, even though it often brings a spectacular image...**

**GW** The potential of these projects is that they set up something that is immediately dialogueic. However that happens, whether it is a real discussion or just by participating, they set up a dialogueue. Everything we programmed involved some sort of discussion in which both sides, the artist and the audience, are equals. We've had many projects where the audience's role in the discussion completely changed the work in very unexpected ways. That's really what's at stake in working in that way. It highlights the aliveness of the work and its social impact or efficacy. We both make work as artists in theatre spaces, so we're not against this way of working, but there is this other way of operating of which ANTI is an example: we try to move away from theatres or galleries structures, opening up this potential for social encounters. So it's open to interpretation and open to re-authoring. In a way, the audience is valued and equal to the stuff that is being presented. Even if it's really low key, it's entertaining, provoking, it makes you think about the world in a different way.

**JT** ANTI still exists nowadays because a large amount of artists are interested to work in that way and it has grown over the years. And of course, audiences are interested in this kind of art too. If you think, in Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey's footsteps, according to which space is entirely

social, then all these encounters in public spaces are also producing, reproducing space and therefore changing the space and the city. It's also a way to affect what the city is, how it unfolds in time.



The artist has organized a happening in which she deconstructed a car with the help of a group of teenage girl apprentices.

*The Car*  
Dina Roncevic

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2012

© Pekka Mäkinen



One Finn who knows the city and two international visitors walk in solo but simultaneously through the streets of Kuopio where they interact on several city blocks of real estate with real people.

Go  
BodyCartography

ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2009

© Pekka Mäkinen



In the *Blue Wedding to Lake Kallavesi*, Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens married the lake Kallavesi. Guests had to wear something blue.

*Blue Wedding to Lake Kallavesi*  
Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2012

© Pekka Mäkinen



La Pocha Nostra collaborates with Finnish artists on a series of public performance art interventions. They visit various public sites in the city and stage humorous and provocative performance interventions.

*The Pocha Nostra Performance Intervention Brigade*

La Pocha Nostra

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2009

© Pekka Mäkinen



At *The Race*, runners from Team A and Team B replace shower gel with milk and potatoes in a grocery store. The event is judged by the speed with which each round is completed.

*The Race*

Glen Redpath and Jennifer Nelson

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2004

© Pekka Mäkinen





Albedo is the diffuse reflectivity or reflecting power of a surface. Scientists use albedo to measure how much energy and heat our planet absorbs. Keski-Korsu's project takes a critical view on technical, large-scale climate manipulation. In all its absurdity, the piece questions the validity of the idea of making the planet lighter in colour.

*Albedo Dreams*  
Mari Keski-Korsu

ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2013

© Pekka Mäkinen



The artist asks passers-by to wash his feet, raising questions on mercy and kindness towards strangers.

*Pesetkö Sinä*

Pentti Otto Koskinen

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2003

© Pekka Mäkinen



The artist designed and created unique festival T-Shirts with the text "Public Space My Ass"

*Public Space My Ass*  
Iva Supic Jankovic

ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2003

© Pekka Mäkinen

**The festival is not only site-specific, but in a way, audience-specific: addressing specific communities, people, neighbourhood, practices within the city... in a highly local approach. Why is it important to be specific? One of the visions one has of art is that it should be universal; can you approach that through specific strategies?**

**GW** One of the perceived ideas of working site-specifically, whether it is visual art or performance, is that it addresses itself to a very specific physical location and the artwork speaks directly to that place in a way that is entirely apparent. Its own conditions construct the piece. Being there in that spot makes that dynamic to work. I think it is true and right for many of the works ANTI proposes, there is also the sense that working as specifically as we do actually becomes a frame that can be worked within or without. Working contextually, you start somewhere, in a specific context, but this context can be much broader, it might happen somewhere else in the city.

One of the interesting things about live artists is their ability to move across from traditionally site-based to a much more expanded idea of it. It seems to me that site-specific live art or performance are much more fluid than site-specific theatre or even site-specific visual art, which produces an object which stays somewhere. It reaches a much wider array of outcomes and methodologies.

We are discussing the idea of having “language” as a theme for ANTI one year, particularly Finnish or Swedish (there are Swedish-speaking Fins) as site of context and work with that. Those contexts are literally embodied by Finnish people. So the idea of site is very much expanded. There is something contradictory in the idea of working very specifically with the hope that art wouldn't be too closed in and speak more openly. Perhaps that is one of the nervousness around traditional site-specific work. But you can navigate it by working with artists who don't work only in those patterns.

**JT** If you believe space is entirely social, then people in those spaces and places are as important as physical space. But I must say that in Finland, there is also this pressure from the funders to engage different communities in the work that we do. For example, there is some funding for what they call “well-being projects” where community-based and dialogueical projects are supported. It’s not in contradiction with what we do, but it encourages us to continue working that way, very specifically with certain minority groups such as sexual minorities, immigrants, and mentally disabled people as well as for work with children. We would do this work otherwise anyway, but this funding creates incitation to continue.

**Johanna, you live in Kuopio. How much has the city imaginary been infused by the festival? Do you have an evaluation of what is left in the minds of the people?**

**JT** It’s impossible to evaluate or measure. I guess it would require a ten years long research which we have not done. But it does surprise me, when I talk to people in Kuopio, how often they bring up something they have seen or talk about something that happened ages ago, and how it has affected them or encouraged them in different ways. So I do believe that it makes a difference. Especially for local people who encountered it many times, I think it starts to become a sort of archive, another layer of the city. It encourages people to think about public space and their behaviour in the city... But obviously this is based only on my conversations and experiences.

**Gregg, you are less often in Kuopio, but maybe being there from time to time creates another vision?**

**GW** Kuopio as a place is a small city—in UK you would call it a large town. So even more broadly, this festival that has happened there for many years, is a very unique thing, especially in Finland. The fact that it’s there at all, a free festival showing what for many people is very contemporary and provoking art, is a real sign of hope that something like that can happen. The distinct nature of ANTI, the fact that the work happens in public space, the fact that it’s free, the fact

that it's a very international mix of artists, therefore a mix of cultures and sensibilities coming to a northern town, is in itself a hopeful act. That alone causes changes, that are sometimes easily readable, sometimes microscopic, in the social fabric of the place but not necessarily at the surface.

[bit.ly/1dPLQp0](https://bit.ly/1dPLQp0)

Interviewed by Antoine Pickels.



*On a Voyage* focuses on the childhood dream of taking a sheet of paper a little imagination, and using it to create a vehicle with which to travel into unlimited realms of fantasy. The artist created a paper boat with assistants and sailed away.

*On a Voyage*  
Frank Bölter

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2008

© Pekka Mäkkinen



*Can teddy bears fly?* Children found out by building wings or a parachute, attaching them to a stuffed animal, and launching it from 30 meters up. The project provided fun and hands-on science education for children aged 3-12.

*Can Bears Fly?*  
Amos Latteier

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2009

© Pekka Mäkinen





In intimate one-to-one performances in a bomb shelter Kira O'Reilly lets the participants mark her body with small wounds.

*Untitled Bomb Shelter Action for Kuopio*  
Kira O'Reilly

ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2003

© Pekka Mäkinen



*On the Scent* takes place in a domestic setting through which four audience members at a time are invited on intimate and aromatic journeys. The performance explores the elusive connections between smell and memory.

*On the Scent*  
Curious

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2008

© Pekka Mäkinen



Nine hired laborers made each a bread-bed using twenty-five loaves of white-sliced bread. The rest of the labor consisted of lying on the bed. Laborers were hired for half a day to “lay down on the job”, and to gain comfort from their “daily bread”.

*Bread-Bed*  
Karen Spencer

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2004

© Pekka Mäkinen



John Court left school at 16 unable to read or write. He developed these skills through his interest in visual art. Literally returning to school for this performance, the artist created a 'written' drawing. His writing-hand immobilized behind his back, he moved from left to right and right to left, creating layer upon layer of textual information in response to the site of his development as an artist and the physical site of the school. The school received the work as a gift following the performance.

*Eight Hours Writing*  
John Court

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2004

© Pekka Mäkinen



In the Provincial government building of Kuopio, the artist, blinded by spotlights, melts with her body's warmth a male torso made out of ice. The action lasts 4 hours.

*Teresias*  
Heather Cassils

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2012

© Pekka Mäkinen



Photographer and performance artist Antti Laitinen cut down a tree at Karhonsaari island and chopped it into small pieces. Of these pieces he built the tree back with the aid of nails and strings.

*The Tree*  
Antti Laitinen

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland, 2003

© Pekka Mäkinen

BIOGRAPHY  
Johanna Tuukkanen & Gregg Whelan



Artist Johanna Tuukkanen (FI) has worked as senior producer and artistic director of ANTI since 2002. Writer and artist Gregg Whelan (UK) has worked as a co-artistic director of the festival since 2007. The festival has attracted over 50 000 visitors since its inception in 2002. It takes place every year at the end of September.

Photo : © Pekka Mäkinen.

REMARKABLE EVENT

**Belluard Bollwerk**  
**On the Frontier of Communities of Practice**  
Sally De Kunst

The annual Belluard Bollwerk International Festival in Fribourg, Switzerland, each year produces and presents some twenty projects by Swiss and international artists in a convivial atmosphere.

As acting festival director between 2008 and 2013, I proposed a wide variety of configurations: from traditional formats such as theatre, dance, installation pieces and concerts to more unusual forms like the acupuncture of a building (*Building Therapy* by Thomas Bratzke - 2010); a concert of 'tuned' cars in the city (*Bolidage* by Stéphane Montavon, Antoine Chessex and Gilles Lepore - 2012) or an islet to let placed upon a scaffolding in front of the train station (*Die Insel* by Christian Hasucha - 2008). Local and cutting-edge projects were essential elements of the program, in the sense that I often worked in a distinctly urban vein, and/or that I involved different specialists and city residents in international artistic projects.





“Tuned” cars concert in the Basse-Ville neighbourhood.

*Bolidage*

Stéphane Montavon, Antoine Chessex and Gilles Lepore

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Charlotte Walker



“Tuned” cars concert in the Basse-Ville neighbourhood.

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Stéphane Montavon, Antoine Chessex and Gilles Lepore

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Charlotte Walker



Treatment by acupuncture of an abandoned building, Route Neuve.

*Building Therapy*  
Thomas Bratzke

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Nicolas Brodard



Treatment by acupuncture of an abandoned building, Route Neuve.

*Building Therapy*  
Thomas Bratzke

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Nicolas Brodard



Treatment by acupuncture of an abandoned building, Route Neuve.

*Building Therapy*  
Thomas Bratzke

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Nicolas Brodard



Treatment by acupuncture of an abandoned building, Route Neuve.

*Building Therapy*  
Thomas Bratzke

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Nicolas Brodard





Treatment by acupuncture of an abandoned building, Route Neuve.

*Building Therapy*  
Thomas Bratzke

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Nicolas Brodard



A platform covered by grass 3 meters above the ground, next to the train station. The space can be booked for a sunbath, a picnic or a night under the stars...

*Die Insel*  
Christian Hasucha

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Christian Hasucha



A platform covered by grass 3 meters above the ground, next to the train station. The space can be booked for a sunbath, a picnic or a night under the stars...

*Die Insel*  
Christian Hasucha

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2012

© Christian Hasucha

## Constructing a narrative space

My fundamental concern was to find a healthy balance between artistic autonomy on the one hand and the relationship between the artists and the world surrounding them on the other; between artistic activities and society as a whole; between an arts festival and its social function in an urban context. That doesn't mean we set out to undertake social work. Rather, the festival explored performativity in different ways: actions, for instance, which thanks to their performance altered a situation, or the power structures within a given context or during an encounter. Chris Kraus<sup>02</sup> writes: "The art world is interesting insofar as it reflects the vast exterior world." This perspective constitutes an essential part of my practice. I do not, however, think that art ought to save the world, but it is necessary to invent new links between artistic activity and a range of other human endeavours by constructing a narrative space that encapsulates everyday happenings and structures.

**02.** Chris Kraus is an artist and has published, among other works, *I Love Dick* and *Aliens & Anorexia*, and co-edited *Hatred of Capitalism: A Semiotext(e) Reader*.

A festival such as the Belluard Bollwerk International is comprised of several sub-communities: the artists, the specialists who accompany the artists, the staff and members of the team, friends, officials, sponsors and the public. It is indispensable that the community bolsters its development through the artistic projects. In his book *The Emancipated Spectator*, the philosopher Jacques Rancière insists on the necessity for each of us to restore our ability to think. "Being a spectator is not a passive condition that we need to transform into an active mode, but rather our default condition. Each spectator is already an actor in his own story." Condemning art activism as an attempt to infiltrate the coarse art of politics, Rancière views truly critical art as one that grasps the fact that its political effect comes about through aesthetic distance, as an art that

instead of wanting to suppress the spectator's passivity re-examines the notion of activity<sup>03</sup>.

03. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Verso books, 2009.

Using Fribourg's streets for its stage, Laurence Payot's *The Man Who Was Everywhere* (2010) was a subtle but effective presentation in that sense. Pursuing her research and artistic practice on how to unsettle our day-to-day modes of perception, Payot attempted to devise a new urban myth. To this end she had twenty-five young men aged between 20 and 35, measuring between 1 m 70 and 1 m 85, in blue jeans, a white tee-shirt and a violet sweater with a hoody, holding a white plastic bag, walk around the streets in a precise and exact fashion. Adapting a similar mode of behaviour – absent-minded, slow-paced yet determined – they replied effortlessly to the numerous questions that were addressed to them: "I don't have the time." She documented this surprising and disturbing appearance; a film chronicles the initial phase of a newly born myth.

Testimony from an observer of the work of Laurence Payot.

*The Man Who Was Everywhere*  
Laurence Payot

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2010

© Juan Morard



Watch the video here: [bit.ly/1OMScrz](https://bit.ly/1OMScrz)



Twenty five men between 20 and 35 years old, between 170 and 185 cm tall, wearing a blue jeans, a white t-shirt, a purple hoody and carrying a white plastic bag walk around the streets of the city, following precise track and time.

*The Man Who Was Everywhere*

Laurence Payot

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2010

© Nicolas Brodard

nom	parcours 1	retour a environ	parcours 2	retour a environ
1 David VETTERLI	10:00:00	10:35:00	11:02:30	11:37:30
2 Frédéric Beuret	10:02:30	10:37:30	11:05:00	11:40:00
3 Basile Mulhauser	10:05:00	10:40:00	11:07:30	11:42:30
4 Maxime Felder	10:07:30	10:42:30	11:10:00	11:45:00
5 Pigat Paul	10:10:00	10:45:00	11:12:30	11:47:30
6 Xavier Meyer	10:12:30	10:47:30	11:15:00	11:50:00
7 Natanaël Esseiva	10:15:00	10:50:00	11:17:30	11:52:30
8 Dominik Tomasik	10:17:30	10:52:30	11:20:00	11:55:00
9 Rey Sébanha	10:20:00	10:55:00	11:22:30	11:57:30
10 Yoric Anasica	10:22:30	10:57:30	11:25:00	12:00:00
11 Adman Marc	10:25:00	11:00:00	11:27:30	12:02:30

Twenty five men between 20 and 35 years old, between 170 and 185 cm tall, wearing a blue jeans, a white t-shirt, a purple hoody and carrying a white plastic bag walk around the streets of the city, following precise track and time.

*The Man Who Was Everywhere*

Laurence Payot

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2010

© Nicolas Brodard





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*The Man Who Was Everywhere*

Laurence Payot

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2010

© Nicolas Brodard



The inhabitants of the Jura neighbourhood and the audience of the festival are invited to dig a whole towards the centre of the earth.

*The Digging Project*  
Kosi Hidama and Gosie Vervloessem

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2010

© Charlotte Walker



The inhabitants of the Jura neighbourhood and the audience of the festival are invited to dig a whole towards the centre of the earth.

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Kosi Hidama and Gosie Vervloessem

International Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2010

© Charlotte Walker

## Innovation on the perimeters

Nowadays many artists function more as multi-personalities, developing their projects on the perimeters of 'communities of practice'. According to Étienne Wenger, the Swiss cognitive anthropologist, communities of practice constitute groups of people who share a particular concern, interest or profession, and who learn through inter-interaction how to improve their performance<sup>04</sup>. Through sharing and exchange of knowledge, these groups can evolve naturally. They can, however, also be formed voluntarily so as to acquire know-how or skills or a specific experience.

**04.** Étienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1998 (it is noteworthy that Wenger makes no mention of artistic fields in his writings).

A fine example is *The Digging Project* by Kosi Hidama and Gosie Vervloessem in which both artists invited the public and residents of Fribourg's Jura district to dig a hole towards the centre of the earth. They suggested to the diggers and spectators alike that they rediscover a metaphor through the slow rhythm of the physical labour involved: if we need to dig to find hope, it follows perhaps that time is a necessary factor if we are to see our wishes and dreams come true. So as to help bring the project to fruition, the festival put in place a 'community of practice'. Thanks to the efforts of the local police, the city engineer, the city's technical crew, Fribourg's archaeological bureau, a geo-biologist, the Department of Geo-Science at the University of Fribourg they were able to organise the necessary permits, technical support and scientific advice, as well as to count on the good will and co-operation of the area's residents and all those who came along to dig.

I've noticed how numerous interesting artists are working on the perimeters of communities of practice. They've positioned themselves at the frontier of a community with the world that surrounds them, and accessible to other such



communities. It's exactly at this nexus where innovation occurs, where new practices are developed in collaboration with others. In a process essential to creating their works many contemporary artists share and exchange their know-how and experience with other practitioners, with specialists, scientists and with their public. These exchanges are not necessarily about specific expertise but could rather be considered as tacit knowledge: valuable experiences based upon a particular context which can not easily be captured, stored or codified, in other terms those often characteristic of contemporary artistic practice. As Nicolas Bourriaud remarks in his book: "Every story begins with a meeting."<sup>05</sup>

**05.** Nicolas Bourriaud, *Post-production: How Art reprograms the World*, Lukas & Sternberg, New York.

[bit.ly/1hq47xt](https://bit.ly/1hq47xt)

BIOGRAPHY  
Sally De Kunst



Sally De Kunst (Belgium, 1974) is a freelance cultural worker. Before assuming post of director at the Festival Belluard Bollwerk International, she was programmer for the STUK dance arts centre in Louvain. As well as being a dance, theatre and cinema critic for the Belgian daily *De Morgen*, she was also an independent curator and producer for various international art projects.

Photo : © DR.

ROUTE

## Poetics of Artistic Discourse

Rajni Shah's *Glorious*

Diana Damian

*"The political process is not a process of expression, but a process of separation."*

Alain Badiou<sup>06</sup>

<sup>06</sup>. Alain Badiou, *Politics of a Non-Expressive Dialectics*, London: Urbanomic, 2005, Print.

The currencies of Rajni Shah's practice attempt to resist, perhaps implicitly, the nominal structures of neo-liberal social politics, informed by a particular poiesis of affect. Often critics and audiences alike associate with Shah's work notions of gifting, poetry, musicality, tenderness, feeling — a set of internal geographies explored with professional artists as well as those from outside the immediate artistic landscape. Shah takes the potential of a theatrical gathering and extends it into the wider landscapes that dominate social life, constructing discourses of gentle dissidence. Her work takes the form of live performances and publications, interventions and exchanges, in galleries, on the streets, in theatres and institutions. Collaborative and interdisciplinary, Shah's work has engaged with questions of being, belonging and relating, cultural and identity politics; she invites both participants and audiences to engage collectively in communal and intimate processes: eating together, writing together, sharing or walking. Yet across these practices, the emphasis remains on process and discourse; often the life of pieces of work extends beyond into reflective symposia, publications and public events.

That there is an element of activism in Shah's work is undisputed, yet its presence explicitly understated.

That there is an element of activism in Shah's work is undisputed, yet its presence explicitly understated. This is not activism veiled in formal shifts or nuances of meaning; it's an embodiment that is shape-shifting, springing from the personal without resting on any nominal element of autobiography. To speak of Shah's work is to speak of the artist herself as a figure, a presence; a positioning that might disable both identity and work to be inscribed rather than ascribed. Shah does not speak of her ethnicity as something fixed; likewise, her work could be understood to belong to the wide-reaching landscape of live art, yet finds itself in constant re-positioning. Her aesthetics navigate iconography with vivid candour, with a particular politics only stylistically defined by context. Meaning here is directed, and directional.

## Glorious

Between 2009 and 2012, Shah embarked on the most ambitious project to date, part of a trilogy of works examining cultural identity. *Glorious* was a large scale collaborative musical that investigated the ways in which place and community might shape our thinking about identity. It followed *Mr Quiver* (2005), a durational performative installation linking questions of identity to those of theatricality that examined the formal problems of representation of ethnicity in a British context, and *Dinner with America* (2008), which reflected on the ways in which America permeates cultural identity, questioning ideas around consumerism, human rights and division. The musical was re-worked every time it toured to a new location; a new company of musicians and performers underwent a process of re-composing the work, re-addressing its raw material.

Accompanying this work were a series of publications, workshops and websites: *Dear Stranger, I Love You*<sup>07</sup>, a publication documenting the process and providing a critical evaluation through testimonies from participants and collaborators; a symposium that marked the end of the trilogy, *Beyond Glorious: The Radical in Socially Engaged Practice*, bringing together artists, activists, audiences and academics for presentations and collective lunches, walks and performances; a temporary online community for all the participants of the project in its many iterations; and a residency at Lancaster University in preparation of the work itself.

<sup>07</sup>. Edmunds, Becky, Paterson, Mary. (Eds). *Dear Stranger, I Love You: The Ethics of Community in Rajni Shah Projects' Glorious*. London and Lancaster: Lancaster University and the Live Art Development Agency, 2013. Print.



Display for public encounters at café “Le Vieux Marché”.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Un Pas de Trop Festival, Maison Folie, Mons, Belgium, 2012

© Sophie Grodin



*Write a Letter to a Stranger* at the commercial centre Les grands prés.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Un Pas de Trop Festival, Maison Folie, Mons, Belgium, 2012

© Sophie Grodin



*Write a Letter to a Stranger* at the commercial centre Les Grands Prés.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Un Pas de Trop Festival, Maison Folie, Mons, Belgium, 2012

© Sophie Grodin



Public intervention at the commercial centre Les Grands Prés.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Un Pas de Trop Festival, Maison Folie, Mons, Belgium, 2012

© Sophie Grodin





*Write a Letter to a Stranger* at the commercial centre Eldon Square.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Festival Wunderbar, Newcastle, United Kingdom, 2011.

© Sophie Grodin

Rajni Shah invited critic Matt Trueman to a conversation about his initial reactions to the performance at Spill Festival in London. Trueman found the production itself tedious and problematic; the show itself had received a set of mixed reviews altogether. Trueman responded to Shah's invitation to see it in a different context, outside of the impositions of a festival of radical work. In the artist's own words: "we were both very clear that this invitation to see the show again was made with no strings attached. We were both curious to see where it might lead- and it felt, to me at least, like an exciting opportunity for real dialogue between someone who makes work professionally and someone who watches work professionally"<sup>08</sup>. The conversation itself navigates a myriad of topics, from the intent of the performance itself to the shift in perception that context provided; challenges present themselves to both artist and critic as they navigate their way through the complex poiesis of a conversational critical exercise, without pinning down with any precision any particular form of judgment. Process dominates the discussion and in doing so, facilitates an engaged problematisation of the aesthetics of the piece itself, but also the implications of social engagement and its theatrical representation. Value of the mundane and the personal become an intriguing point of contention.

**08.** Shah, Rajni and Trueman, Matt. "A Short Extract from a Long Conversation" in *Thoughts from Uncertainty*, 10.10.2013. Web. 3.12.2013.

[bit.ly/1hWGsYe](http://bit.ly/1hWGsYe)

The work itself does not terminate with its public manifestation, but continues in a dialogue towards which it holds responsibility.

I identify three traits that are at play both here and in the symposium Shah organised, and across the different modes in which the artist navigates discourse, critique and

documentation: temporality, extension and process. It's clear that Shah values the potential of argument as something emerging from a dialectic, and within a process of the work; and that for her, the work itself does not terminate with its public manifestation, but continues in a dialogue towards which it holds responsibility.



*Glorious* rehearsals

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Un Pas de Trop Festival, Maison Folie, Mons, Belgium, 2012.

© Jonathan Brisson



Performing.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Festival Nottedance, Nottingham, United Kingdom, 2011.

© Oliver Dalby



Performing.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Festival Nottedance, Nottingham, United Kingdom, 2011.

© Oliver Dalby



Performing (Pauline Frost).

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Wunderbar Festival, Newcastle, United Kingdom, 2011.

© Steve @ 4130 Photography



Performing

*Glorious*

Rajni Shah Projects

Festival Spill, London, United Kingdom, 2011.

© Pari Naderi



Perfoming (Brian Warby, Vicky Cowell, Shauna Concannon, Jyoti Narayan, Collin Clay Chase).

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

Festival Spill, London, United Kingdom, 2011.

© Pari Naderi



What might be at the heart of this desire to engage with one's own artistic discourse? Is it a politics of authority that informs this, or perhaps can Shah's engagement be considered as part of a wider iteration of practice that seeks to directly construct and enable communities of meaning, sites with various political potential. On the one hand, this can be understood as an extension of the paradigms of her work: the enabling of discussion on the formal values of a work that problematizes certain notions of identity, place and togetherness positioned in relation to neo-liberal values, as something within the processes of art. On the other, there is dissolution of difference of contexts and situations that could be seen to foster a fragmentation of potential meanings. For work that aims for social engagement, the implications might impose an inability for meaning to free itself from process and intent.

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### Does a duty of care extend to a duty of representation?

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In the instance of Shah's work however, this is not simply an issue of binaries towards meaning. In her public thinking about *Glorious*, Shah is particularly candid and open towards the problems imposed by such a project and some of its inherent contradictions; on her blog and throughout her conversations, she returns to the idea of host and hosting, of understanding disappointment and considering questions of cultural value and political aesthetics in relation to the work. For Shah, some of the negative responses to her work have felt and seemed destructive. They foregrounded her interest in engaging in a dialogue that isn't reliant on one form of dissemination. This is implicitly found in the ways in which she approaches the documentation and contextualisation of her work.

As the artist herself writes, does a duty of care extend to a duty of representation?



Launching Party of *Glorious*.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

© Theron Schmidt



Departure day.

*Glorious*  
Rajni Shah Projects

© Lucy Cash

It's undeniable that this particular approach to consider discourse within and around work posits certain challenges to art practice and its critique. It's unclear whether here we are dealing with an assumption of difference of responsibility between makers and audiences, those within and outside of the landscape of work. Particularly in the case of works that problematize social politics and the ways in which discourse is valued in the knowledge economy, the questions of what political thinking in and around art might be, and the ethics of its manifestation remain central. Perhaps it's reductive to consider an extension and certain ownership of discourse to be a question of legislation; at the same time, the implications on the life and shape of a work, be it something durational and iterative or representational and contained, pertain to processes of meaning-making, their fracture and orientation.

[bit.ly/1hWGsYe](https://bit.ly/1hWGsYe)

[bit.ly/1eScSOH](https://bit.ly/1eScSOH)

About *Glorious*

[bit.ly/1d3YeEi](https://bit.ly/1d3YeEi)

BIOGRAPHY  
Diana Damian



Diana Damian is a London-based performance critic and dramaturg. She is currently a funded PhD candidate examining performance criticism through the lens of political philosophy at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is a part-time Lecturer at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Guest Editor of academic journal *Platform and Performance* Editor at *Exeunt Magazine*. She has written for publications internationally in the UK, Germany, France, Romania and Czech Republic and is co-founder of the Institute of Critical Practice, a nomadic organisation that aims to explore the ways in which criticism manifests itself in contemporary performance as mode of inquiry and production, strategy for visibility and practice of dissemination.

Photo : © Gareth Damian Martin.

STROLL

## **Kris Grey** **An Afternoon in Brussels**

**“My practice does not start or stop. It happens when I am making a performance in the public, when I am crossing a border into a different country, and when I use public restrooms. I see my life as my work in the world and I use my body as the raw material. I am particularly interested in inter-generational trauma, masculinity and vulnerability. Much of the work I have done in the public interrogates systems of power often through the lens of gender. Live performance is a means to make visible that which usually remains shadowed, to challenge power dynamics between surveyor and surveyed, and to produce queer visibility. By demonstrating the permeability in the gender binary I hope to challenge other binary systems of power.**

**I start at a place of personal vulnerability that becomes a platform for strangers to exchange ideas and emotions. Regardless of the task I perform in public, the underlying urgency is about social justice and building unexpected connections. Public spaces mix people across age, race, class, ability, gender, sex, sexuality and identity. When my work is successful it brings together a diversity of people in a public place and creates a forum for collective vulnerability and connection.**

**The greatest challenge to this work is clashing with authorities that disapprove of my use of the spaces we call public. We talked at length in my workshop about the reciprocal relationship between the “public body” and “public space”. Each constitutes the other—the space supports the meeting of bodies and the bodies gathered therein constitutes the space as public. These sites are often highly policed. Even doing the most pedestrian actions like sitting down, standing**

**still, or holding hands, if done in a way that is unfamiliar or slightly different can be cause for great alarm. I am often asked by “authority figures” to stop doing what I am doing in the public. It can be difficult to continue if one is not fully aware of one’s rights in public space. “Rights” can be complicated by citizenship, language, age, race, class, ability, gender, sex, sexuality and other people’s perception. Even if I am not breaking any laws by doing a work in public, it can be shut down by authorities based on their perception of the action. At a time when cities have become hyper-aware of global terrorism something as loving as holding hands in a group can be perceived as threatening and the bodies congregated there may be subject to the force of authority. This is exactly the tension that makes working in the public so profound and exciting.”**

## A testimony by Jessica Champeaux

Composed of twelve adults holding hands and walking in a single file, a somewhat unusual chain advances roughshod along Brussels's rue de Flandre.

In the middle of a square, this human chain – still hand in hand – halts and its members arrange themselves in an open circle so as to welcome newcomers. They remain on the spot for ten minutes, during which time two unknown bystanders join the circle without posing too many questions. It would appear they know each other for as one of them was about to leave the circle, the other bids: "Go and get some cash from the automatic distributor and meet me back here!" This being done, they continued about their business.

Those remaining reformed the earlier chain and continued meandering through the neighbouring streets. A waiter in a fish restaurant remarks: "It's the chain of life." In any case, while commonplace to see a male-female couple walking hand-in-hand through the city's streets, one rarely observes more than two or even a dozen people doing so. Thus there are conventional ways in which people associate with each other in public spaces in cities, and others much less so. And by the same token, there are also corresponding conventional physical behaviours and others less so.

The human chain halts at the Grand Place of Brussels where it once again assumes the form of a large open circle, this time for twenty minutes. Many passers-by join the chain; some are mystics, others somewhat amused, while others are without a clear intent to express their feelings. Some remain just a few moments, while others hang on longer before their heading off on their way individual ways. Some prefer to remain apart, staying outside of the circle and passing comments. The most commonly voiced are: "And what's next? Are you going to break



into dance?” When suddenly a kid breaks through into the circle and starts dancing a solo before eventually changing his mind all the while being filmed by his friend on a mobile phone camera. Shy, the boy! Or, is it a case of the good citizens of Brussels really wanting to dance more in the streets but just somehow can't manage to do so?

Several minutes later, the chain members let go of each other's hands. The twelve individual members dissipate, dissolving as such their particular community and there and then melting into the coming and goings of all the passers-by in the Grand-Place. The adults walk alone or in pairs. And thus Kris Grey's workshop comes to a close. He proposed that a small group adapt an unconventional physical behaviour for an hour in a public space. Following a series of surgical procedures, the artist, who had lived the first thirty-one years of his life in an outwardly “feminine” body now appears as a “bearded young man”, is deeply aware of how the body projects itself in an urban setting. He treats public space as a stage for the body, a theatre for the creation of communities of human bodies. While especially interested in the possible pluralities among these diverse communities, he is also fascinated by the variety in the levels of participation within these communities.



03/09/2013 15:48

*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

© Charlotte David



03/09/2013 15:49

*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

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03/09/2013 15:50

*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

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03/09/2013 15:50

*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

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03/09/2013 15:51

*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

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*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

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03/09/2013 15:52

*Public Appearance*  
Kris Grey

Brussels, 2013

© Charlotte David



BIOGRAPHY

Kris Grey / Justin Credible



Kris Grey/Justin Credible is a Brooklyn based gender queer artist whose work exists at the intersection of communication, activism, community building, storytelling, lecture, and studio production in mediums two dimensional, three dimensional, and time based. Grey earned a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Maryland Institute College of Art and a Masters Degree in Fine Art from Ohio University. Grey has performed and exhibited work internationally, was a 2012 Fire Island Artist Residency recipient, and the resident artist for the 2012 ANTI Festival for Contemporary Art in Kuopio , Finland.

[bit.ly/19tXjyt](https://bit.ly/19tXjyt)

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

## Galerie Royale Centrale

rewriting history

Claudia Bosse

Developed during a two weeks research in collaboration with Bram Borloo, Koraline De Baere, Cathy Del Rizzo, René Georges, Nathalie Rozanes and the users of Galerie d'Ixelles in the neighbourhood of Matonge (Brussels), presented 23 - 27 April in the frame of Festival Trouble.

A live installation of activities, thoughts, stories, traces, documents, talking boxes, colonial photos, maps, confrontations... A project *in situ* dealing with the positioning of (post) colonial structures, hierarchies of space, and promises of objectified knowledge.

The base material was created on the spot, with shop tenants and daily users of the Galerie, through interviews and personal documents, and a process of rewriting stories connected to the space of the Galerie, confronting the collected material with documents from the colonial memory from the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren.

The everyday life culture and the organisation of the Galerie were "read" through the concept of the first exhibition of the Museum which had been created in order to find funding to exploit the new colonial territory.

A coproduction by Les Halles and Cifas, with the support of the Royal Museum for Central Africa and Nadine.



During 5 days, the shops of a commercial African gallery in Brussels were discretely infiltrated by elements of Belgian colonisation in Congo. A more disused part of the gallery is set for listening or reading documents.

*Galerie Royale Centrale, Rewriting History*  
Claudia Bosse

Festival Trouble, Brussels, Belgium, 2013

© Delphine Braive



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*Galerie Royale Centrale, Rewriting History*  
Claudia Bosse

Festival Trouble, Brussels, Belgium, 2013

© Christopher Hewitt



Watch the video here: [bit.ly/1OMScrz](https://bit.ly/1OMScrz)



BIOGRAPHY  
Claudia Bosse



Claudia Bosse (DE/AT) works on socio-political signs of the City, offering in her works new critical understandings of urban space through artistic forms of “displacement”. Artist and Director, she is the artistic director of theatercombinat, a transdisciplinary company based in Vienna. Her activities go from Theatre to installation, choreography to urban intervention, conferences, research projects and teaching. Born in 1969 in Germany, Claudia Bosse graduated at the Germany’s Ernst Busch School of Dramatic Arts for theatre directing. From 2006 to 2008, she was artist associated of Theatre du Grütli in Geneva. From 2006 to 2009, Claudia Bosse developed a theatrical series called “Producing Tragedy” with Chris Standfest, Gerald Singer and others. Since 2010, she has been working with sound artist Guenther Auer. She also works on political and hybrid aspects of theatre, based on speech, text, readymades sounds and autofiction.

[bit.ly/1eScYWg](https://bit.ly/1eScYWg)

[bit.ly/1drgOXY](https://bit.ly/1drgOXY)

Photo : © Elsa Okazaki

## NEIGHBOURHOOD

**Urban Bodies, Human Space****To what extent can we relate?**

Miriam Rohde

Lately I saw a film<sup>09</sup>. A middle-aged woman with a new hairstyle is driving along a dusty street by a dried-out canal when her mobile phone rings. She bends over to search in her handbag and at that very moment one hears a dull thump on the bonnet. She stops the car, the radio continues, she is shaken and hesitates. She doesn't look around but instead opens up the throttle. Though nobody has witnessed the scene, it is obvious that she has just run over one of the three youngsters we saw in the same street at the beginning of the film. From that moment on the woman is mentally absent, as though in a trance. And while she herself almost comes to a standstill, she remarks how life about her simply continues. Her family life, her sex life, her social existence require her physical presence now and then, but they don't necessarily need it as an agent. How does the story unravel? Her husband has the car repaired, her cousin, the doctor, removes all documentation from the hospital where she was treated so that all traces of the accident were disposed of.

**09.** *La mujer sin cabeza/ The Headless Woman* (2008), the third fiction film by the Argentinean director Lucrecia Martel. (This highly recommendable film is also available on DVD with English sub-titles and can be rented at Muntpunt in Brussels Centrum.)

The body of the young man, an underage casual labourer, wasn't initially found. Moreover, the woman's middle class family had no social relationships whatsoever with the area in which he was reported missing. Without drastic interventions, elaborate lies or great efforts, a version of events arose in which that fatal accident simply hadn't taken place. At the end, as the woman accompanied by her daughter once again drives along the same street, she sees the police at the spot retrieving a body from the canal in which water

is once again flowing following a storm. Her daughter remarks that she read in the newspaper that a murder had taken place there.

The film chronicles the traumatised Verònika, and how reality and fiction come about in a similar fashion through multiple detours, misunderstandings, spontaneous decisions and coincidences, and moreover, how people in the real life and/or in fictive stories can interact in different ways: as actors and spectators. It is less a case of the process of alienation, but rather of how someone is periodically redeemed, while continually having to forge their own destiny and happiness. A similar figure to Iggy Pop's *Passenger*<sup>10</sup> who, while driving through the city at night, keeps looking around and though separated from the world by a pane of glass, it is obvious: *all of it is yours and mine*.

**10.** Word has it that Iggy Pop wrote this song while living in West Berlin, where he would often ride throughout the city at night on public transport.

At that juncture in which Verònika loses control over her life (and grasps that it was hardly ever under her control) she asks herself a surprisingly subversive question: What has that which is happening around us actually got to do with us? How are we related to our surroundings? *To what extent can we relate?* Heike Langsdorf has chosen this very question as a subject for her current project: *OTÇOE – Works for Passers-by*<sup>11</sup>.

**11.** OTÇOE – *œuvre pour les passants* is a temporary artwork which Langsdorf develops within the context of a so-called artists' trajectory. Launched at the beginning of 2013, it is due to run for two years.

[bit.ly/K1DjaZ](https://bit.ly/K1DjaZ)

## Out of The Corner of Our Eyes

OTÇOE is an acrostic based on: *Out of The Corner of Our Eyes*. While city-life is the project's starting point, it is not the city as a social, political or aesthetical terrain but quite simply that city where Langsdorf lives and works, namely Brussels. Or, to put it in more general terms, the city as a place one can't avoid and inevitably shares with acquaintances and strangers alike, in which encounters and confrontations are all part and parcel of life. Langsdorf structured the project in three completely independent setups, thus enabling an approach to collective space from various angles, with a variety of partners and under a variety of circumstances.

“Bureau Annex” [bit.ly/1ao18DQ](https://bit.ly/1ao18DQ) is a heterogeneous and open-minded group from diverse social and cultural backgrounds who practice artistic activities together. The group came about in a similar manner to which a group of strangers at a railway station, for instance, would come in contact with each other – through coincidence, by accident, randomly. Taking an artistic approach in such a **configuration** could signify initially a collective coming to grips with the notion of art, and thereby fundamentally question a concept of art that has become too established and mainstream.



Configuration...

*Bureau Annex* - (Jason Tshikala, Heike Langsdorf, Wayaba Tokpwi, Hubert Moba, Adil Mabchour, Dieudonné Zoko, Océane Kifulu, Anarie Kifulu, Stéphane Galère)

Heike Langsdorf / radical\_hope

Brussels, 2013

© Charlotte Bouckaert

At “shopshop”, [bit.ly/1hq4ZIE](https://bit.ly/1hq4ZIE) a group of some ten artists, mostly with backgrounds in the performing arts, have set themselves the task of producing artistic projects without relying on subsidies. As I write this text, this experiment is to be launched in Brussels-Molenbeek, where the group were able to find a purpose fit premises. Following an initial phase in which costs for the rent and upkeep will be paid by the Molenbeek municipality, the participants will then assume financial responsibility with help from the revenue obtained from products, services and projects that have been developed and offered locally. In this particular set up economical questions predominate: how does one assess the value of work, the time factor while not forgetting to question the suitability of the proposition for the local community. What effects the surroundings have on the proposition, and finally how amenable the group is for such an exchange.

With “Sitting with the Body”, [bit.ly/1cnmptP](https://bit.ly/1cnmptP) Langsdorf probably draws most directly on her training and long experience as a dancer and a performer. The theme is physical presence and absence in public space. So as to grasp what this project is all about, or what one could possibly understand from this concept, it helps to consider its experimental basis. Somebody sits in the shop window and meditates. Langsdorf describes meditation as a form of withdrawal into one’s inner realm. According to this definition, the body is also a space, just as a city, a supermarket and a tram.



There and not-there...

*Sitting with the Body* - (Heike Langsdorf, Renée Copraij)  
Heike Langsdorf, radical\_hope

Brussels, 2013

© Christoph Ragg



That which should be visible...

*Sitting with the Body*  
Heike Langsdorf, radical\_hope

Brussels, 2013

© Christoph Ragg





Ephemeral audience...

*Sitting with the Body*  
Heike Langsdorf, radical\_hope

Brussels, 2013

© Christoph Ragg

The particularity of withdrawal, while being present in the same space, is that one is **there and not-there** at the same time. This entails an absence while yet remaining visible<sup>12</sup>, thus creating a visual paradox. Visibility is a decisive criterion in implementing this task. Just as in the theatre, clear visibility is closely linked to roles assigned to the diverse scenic elements: the actors to the stage, the spectators to the gallery.

**12.** In contrast to this situation, for example, a park bench, from which somebody gets up and walks away, not an abandoned but simply a vacant park bench (unless of course one was an observer on the spot right at the moment the person got up from the bench.)

In urban spaces one can't have recourse to such distinctions in function<sup>13</sup>. So as to catch the public's attention, to attract the world of fleeting passers-by **that which should be visible** needs to be correspondingly quicker, more intense and direct. To find out how this functions in practice, situations involving physical concentration and withdrawal will be acted out. Gestures, movement sequences, body language will be condensed with the most possible direct visual intensity by means of props, objects, tools and situational conditions to stylised images.

**13.** This statement is subject to change. A salient characteristic of gentrification and privatisation of public spaces is clearly, however, the endeavour to incrementally establish an allocation of roles for the various agents and users of these spaces.



Passengers enjoy the view in the observation car aboard Expo '74 as the passenger train passes through the Cascade Mountain Range enroute from Spokane to Seattle, Washington.

*Passengers*

Washington State, 1974

© Charles O'Rear / Creative Commons

Even though the art practiced within a given project can differ each time, OTÇOE functions overall like an organism. It is at once a project, in which the city serves and is served, uses and is used. An invitation to an expedition in the wildness of public space. It deliberately remains an open question concerning who is observing whom, who is the observer and who the observed, who watches and who acts. In this context the question “to what extent can we relate” could be understood as a provocation and a challenge to constantly question our own position.

BIOGRAPHY  
Miriam Rohde



Miriam Rohde lives and works in Brussels. Studied architecture and graduated at the University of the Arts in Berlin. Worked in the field of architecture and design for various offices and on her own account. Besides her involvement in the practical process of building she is interested in investigating the circumstances and definitions of her profession: the making of built environment and social space. Since 2012 she is part of the interdisciplinary collaboration *ceci est un magasin de vêtements* [bit.ly/1fxpCPo](https://bit.ly/1fxpCPo) in 2013 she joined POP (*Potential Office Projects*) [bit.ly/1eSdqUy](https://bit.ly/1eSdqUy).

Photo : © Bruno de Wachter.

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