

Concerted Efforts

Surplus #20

Concerted Efforts

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(eds)

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Samantha McCulloch & Christopher Williams-Wynn

Editorial

Confronted with the indefatigable march of consumer culture, the hyper-individuation of the self produced in and through the commodity, and the related demands of a service economy, collaboration could be seen in terms of an historical impulse to mediate between self and other. During the 1950s, there emerged strands of thought that sought to reconsider the balance between autonomy and heteronomy. In his discussion of photography in the immediate postwar period, Blake Stimson argues that the decade pivoted between old and new modes of thought.¹ On the one hand, there was a sense that the chauvinism and violence of the model of collectivity advanced by the nation state was untenable, that it had overwhelmed itself in the most decadent display of barbarism. To overcome the tendency towards collective violence, an alternative model looked to the market as the mechanism for securing personal freedom by decentralising control. However, before long, that possibility faded, as the proto-postmodern

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fluidity of identity linked to transnational consumer culture came to dominate the world, from the beginning of the 1960s. Yet, for a time in the 1950s, Stimson argues, photography seemed to offer a means of examining the relation between self and other, of considering how one might attempt the impossible, of retaining autonomy while fostering a sense of collective belonging, of mediating between the sovereign and the social.² At stake during this period was the matter of subjectivity and objectivity, of preserving oneself while relating to others.

If the barbarity of World War II inspired such reflections on the horror of stultified collectivity, perhaps the indefatigable march of global capitalism requires us to give pause, to reflect on the other extreme, that of atomised and distinct individuals. Perhaps this question of the relation between the self and the other can be revisited, not through the model of photography, but through practices of collaboration. On these points, it is timely to consider the ‘irruption of objectivity into subjective consciousness’, a quality Adorno ascribes to the aesthetic experience, and to think through the challenge of negotiating self and other.³

As a process of mediation, collaboration is marked by ambivalence. It connotes both teamwork and betrayal, collectivity and contestation. As a form of artistic production, collaboration has a long history, but it is nonetheless burdened by the stigma of a contrived relational aesthetics in which the artist is the proprietor of symbolic capital, extracting labour from her or his audience.⁴ Both within art and beyond it, the virtues of collaboration are frequently championed, but it bears its own risks. As long ago as 1967, Guy Debord explicitly referred to the ‘collaboration’ between work and leisure as a necessary component of the spectacle.⁵ Anton Vidokle notes that although art production and presentation necessitate collaboration, there lingers a constant threat to the relative

sovereignty of art and artists.⁶ Contra uncritical engagement and salvific actions, Claire Bishop famously declared the need for antagonism as much as aesthetics.⁷ Owing to its ambiguities, collaboration can involve what Grant Kester refers to as a ‘complicitous submission to authority’.⁸ This condition, argues Kester, is indicative of the power relations that drive collaborative practice. It is timely to consider the contradictions of collectivity in order to elucidate its role in the production and presentation of contemporary art.

As a process, a tactic, a strategy, a metaphor, a device, a frame or a method, collaboration allows artists, curators and writers to expand the remit of their thought and action, often in reaction to particular cultural, social, political and economic conditions. As ever, while collaboration may offer the potential for critical posturing, there lingers the potential for co-option. The persistence of power dynamics indicates the ambiguity of ‘collaboration’: the word suggests both cooperation and collusion, working with an ally and fraternising with the enemy. Dynamics of power are inextricable from intersubjective practices.

Given this ambivalence, why collaborate? Is collaboration constructive or combative? To what extent can collaborative practices serve to critique the institutions of art, and the institutions in which art is enmeshed? What is the extent of its critical capacity? Can we speak of collaboration as a challenge to authorship? Can an examination of collaboration elucidate the processes and systems that influence the production of contemporary art? If collaboration invariably presents challenges, what opportunities might it also provide?

Concerted Efforts points to the Janus-faced character of collaborative relationships. Collaboration can serve as a pragmatic means to an end, or it can become the subject of examination itself. It can function as a frame, or as mode of work. It can be a tool for understanding oneself, or relating to

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the other. While authorship — and, in turn, the subject — is often constituted as fluid and malleable, perhaps too quickly, there exists simultaneously the desire to maintain authorship and assert a position from which to speak, from which to articulate demands and desires. The reflections in this book do not purport to present a benevolent collective unity, nor a wholly antagonist affront, but rather they strive to explore the diversity and the inevitable discontent of being together and apart alike, whether by choice or intercession.

Notes

- 1 Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation*, MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2006.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans Robert Hullot-Kentor, Continuum, London and New York, 1997, p. 245.
- 4 Stephen Wright, ‘The delicate essence of artistic collaboration’, *Third Text*, vol. 18, no. 6, 2004, p. 534.
- 5 Or, at least, Debord does so in Nicholson-Smith’s translation. See: Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Zone Books, New York, 1994, p. 30.
- 6 Anton Vidokle, ‘Art Without Artists?’, *e-flux*, no. 16, 2010, available at: www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-artists, accessed 10 October 2015.
- 7 Claire Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, *October*, no. 110, 2004, pp. 51–79.
- 8 Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2011, p. 2.

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Contemporary Art and Collaboration

Two of the most commanding and pervasive methodologies in contemporary art over the last decade have been the archival turn and the social turn; both consistently appear in association with artist collaboration.¹ Together, the terms embody art that has great currency: a disparate range of production from works that look like or which reassemble exhibitions (Danh Vo's installations); consist of a variety of old or new objects or images placed together to articulate a scheme or a history (The Atlas Group, Chbanieh); all the way from art that employs the tools of precise collaborative archival investigation and is indistinguishable from social research (Raqs Media Collective, New Delhi); to art that looks like street demonstrations (Bureau d'Etudes, Paris). The compelling connections between all this have suggested to many critics that an aesthetic of navigation, teamwork and ghostwriting rapidly replaced the postmodern appropriation of 1980s-era artists such as Richard Prince, from the early 1990s onwards, as the best way to characterise and understand contemporary art's forms.² Though important writers generally agree on an emerging generation of such artists working across art and the social sphere, none has analysed this phenomenon in any depth beyond identifying an archival or a social or a public turn. Still less has an historical

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genealogy yet become clear and broadly accepted, though there is consensus on the seminal importance of 1960s Earth artist Robert Smithson.

The same identities and working methods that we can locate in the 1970s in artistic collaborations re-emerged in the mid- to late-1990s amongst younger artists such as the ones listed above. The movement outside discursive boundaries, beyond stable artist/artwork divisions, into new forms of polemical and group action should register as immediately familiar. The drive to rethink artistic authorship was not the property of any one period, even one as productively unstable as the late 1960s and 1970s, nor is it at all the property of the present, but the trajectory of artistic collaboration in the former period was part of an important 'sea change' in art as it is now. From the late 1960s onwards, artists moved away from traditional definitions of art, the studio and artistic work, and the artist. At the same time, artistic collaborations moved towards identities that could be constructed, fictional, disguised or absent. The trajectory that I described at length in my 2001 book, *The Third Hand: Artist Collaborations from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, was simultaneously one of disclosure and withholding of the self.³ I mapped the types of collaboration in conceptualist art, understanding that even these refashioned selves were presented as if they were natural. My book was a taxonomy and at the same time a chronological history of conceptual art from the 1960s into the 1970s through the lens of artist collaboration. I showed that collaboration is not so much a mode of production as it was a key symptom in art since the later 1960s to the present. There were three broad types of collaborative authorship, within which shared authorship was a strategy to convince the audience of new understandings of art and identity, as opposed to collaborations or collectives in which a conventional idea of art made in the studio is preserved.

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In early conceptual art, collaboration was inscribed in the art. An interrogation of the inscribed figure of the artist alters our sense of that conceptual art's significance, as I argued in *The Third Hand*, discussing cryptic works such as Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden's enigmatic sound installation, *Soft tape*, 1966, or Joseph Kosuth's elaborate delegation and diffusion of fabrication around the globe in his *Second investigation*, 1969. By the mid-1970s, another type of artistic collaboration had become clear: collaborations based on families (such as Boyle Family, London) or couples who worked like anthropological or archaeological research teams (for instance Anne and Patrick Poirier, Paris), with an emphatically articulated, even rhetorical sense of historical perspective and memory, but behind a cloak of stylistic semi-anonymity. In a later phase in conceptualist art, the figure of the artist (and, again, an interwoven set of exaggerated, highly stressed, binary relationships between the visual and anti-visual, and between imagination and memory) was further deconstructed. Christo and Jeanne-Claude evolved an artistic identity in which a corporate 'name' or trademark — 'Christo' and, later, 'Christo and Jeanne-Claude' — subsumed their own individual selves in an almost parodic exaggeration of artistic freedom. Gilbert & George linked their living sculpture's believability to their total self-absorption, creating a meta-identity that encompassed both artists, relegating them to the status of automata or puppets. Marina Abramović and Ulay referred to 'body memory' and the 'third force' that they created in their interaction with each other. The productivist aesthetic implicit in modernism was rejected by all these artists, at least for the most part initially, though another model of the collaborating artist, which ends up entailing a more conventional idea of collaboration — the collective — returned during the 1990s. Collaborations were not so much a way of connecting with a social project — though it was in

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the case of Art & Language after its start — as a way of working out if it was possible to engage in such activity. As time went on, the desire to see political action in art through collective work increasingly replaced the desire to see if collaborative action in itself would facilitate, through the removal of the artist, a new zone between art, writing and history. This latter zone is fascinating, and I still think it is implicit in a lot of the activity in defining the new inter-media genre in contemporary art, only some of which involves new media. The typology of forms of collaboration I drew up (cooperation in collective, short-term cooperation; corporate, bureaucratic groups or partnerships; married couples and families; and finally intensely and publicly bonded couples who created ‘third’ artists) also formed itself into a narrative, for certain types of collaboration were answered by others as each proved to be inadequate in the solution of artistic problems.

At the same time I was working on a history of radical Australian art of the 1970s, writing about Sydney-based conceptualist artists in the light of a more general disillusion with the horizons of mainstream conceptual art in the crucial years around 1970 and the crisis that artists felt when faced with ‘anything goes’. The artists included Peter Kennedy, Aleks Danko, Tim Johnson and Mike Parr, who all worked in teams or collectives, or with invented identities. They were associated with Sydney alternative gallery Inhibodress and the University of Sydney workshop, Tin Sheds, and had created cooperative links with Mail Art networks in Europe and the United States.⁴ They enacted a violent disavowal of the single, recognisable self in works that rehearsed a series of models of systematic artistic work as a replacement for expressivity, transmuting the classic conceptual art idea of ‘dialogue’ into aggressive new forms of autobiography, deliberately mimicking and mocking classic conceptual art in impure,

inappropriately psychological dematerialisations of the art object.

Eliminating the material object was not a heroic step forward towards spiritual enlightenment (it seemed to many that 1970s artists were attempting just that) but, as many critics have pointed out, yet another erosion to which art was subjected in the gradual separation of production from its philosophical base, in which the artistic freedom represented by the crisis in artistic language of the early 1970s was a short-lived moment before terminal aesthetic and economic recuperation. Artists sought, of course, to avoid this recuperation, and did so frequently through the manipulation of artistic identity and, therefore, often through collaborations, as they did in the Sydney activist groups and the Anglo-American collectives mentioned above.

Collaborations were sometimes a deconstruction of the mainstream master narrative of this period — that of the ‘death of art’ — and sometimes a reconstitution of the avant-garde narrative in experimental, deliberately ‘marginal’ adaptations to the ecology of art. But unless they moved outside the ecosystem of the art world completely (and many collaborations successfully did, departing into communes, the counterculture, trade union groups who produced videos, posters and newsletters; they were the necessarily invisible, exemplary figures of my work), activist artists still memorialised a self-definition that reified a conservative cultural category, that of art. It is far too easy to see in this an imagined hostility to activist art. I was attempting to understand what I glimpsed as a decline in networked and new media art forms.⁵ Dutch internet activist Geert Lovink later took this up in a far more thorough way in his book on blogging.⁶ For new media artists and activist theorists alike face a problem: the sheer confidence, power, inclusiveness, size, and even generosity of the Darwinian, hyper-globalised

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world of contemporary art and its museums, galleries and art fairs. Overtly lustful as that world appears at its art-fair coalface, it also incorporates and subsumes wide audiences and the desires (foolish though they may be) of most artists. The commitment of an institution like Tate Modern, London, for example, in its October 2003 conference on artist collaboration and activism, did not represent a significant recuperative response from any high cultural level to the problem of emerging anti-hegemonic artistic activities so much as the diffuse desire to represent all types of activity to both general and specialist audiences. The point I'm driving at that is that the oppositional status of collectivist group action within the art world exists as symbolic and decorative — as a style, and even a saleable one, as it turns out. Claire Bishop was to drive this home in her well-known essay against relational art's claims in 2003.⁷

Meanwhile, I had extended my research from *The Third Hand* into the area of cross-cultural artist collaborations, between a traditional Australian-Indigenous painter and two European performance artists, Marina Abramović and Ulay. The result was a paper at Tate Modern, later developed into an essay for *Third Text*, 'Group Soul: Who Owns the Artist Fusion?'⁸ In short, the appropriative collaborative identity that Abramović and Ulay set out — and that they had already located in the shadow world of Western Desert painting's networks of ownership and responsibility — is akin to the moral law that locality fails.⁹ I was proposing a notion of artistic collaboration that is different from the conventionally held view of collaboration as reconciliation. The latter implies both profit and loss and a bookkeeping sense of the word, incorrectly seeing artistic collaboration as a balance. Instead, I delineated an artistic field generated by the incorporation of others and 'Others' within cross-cultural or cross-artist fusions. I wanted to point to the alternate model of artistic collab-

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oration in which the parts of the relationship merge to form something else in which the whole is more than the sum of the parts, in which the parts are not removable or replaceable because they do not combine as much as change. The collaboration itself exists as a distinct and distinctive entity, in a second self as much as a Third Hand. One view of Abramović and Ulay's work is that the particular variant of collaboration that it elaborates deliberately excludes any wider social or political stake. For some writers, their procedure of wholesale bodily appropriation and its underlying theoretical justification, most notably laid out in the famous late 1970s ordeals, results in what is little more than gendered domination. For Abramović and Ulay, however, the obliteration of personal, ethnic identity was firstly a way of enacting an ethical connection or bond between souls (the group soul of that essay title) and, secondly, invoking the possible promise of a human community based on virtues such as a compassionate, panoramic vision (the discriminating ethical vision of Buddhism, which by then was exerting a powerful pull on Abramović). There is no reason why such a synthesis might not be critiqued or interpreted through the lenses of Deleuzian, or psychoanalytic, or neo-Marxist activism, but to map collaboration through these systems was not my task. Instead, I was taking up Mieke Bal's contention that, 'The subject's agency ... consists not of inventing but of intervening, of a "supplementation" that does not replace the image but adds to it,' arguing that the artists supplemented the world-memory of an image.¹⁰ The artists were not so much combined by collaboration as supplanted or obliterated by the second self of the work itself. To understand this peculiar absence as an identity that might be mapped, like a psychoanalytic subject, I turned to iconologist Aby Warburg's unfinished 1929 *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a photographic atlas of visual art in which he effectively saw the artist as the hostage

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of cultural memory and a supplementary presence in the work of art. I invoked this Atlas in order to map the dimensions and limits of the second self that is constituted in contemporary cross-cultural teamwork and artistic ghostwriting. Warburg pessimistically and critically thought that the collision of culturally constructed imperatives with technological and social change, accompanied by the much less important variables of personality, shows that the history of artistic styles is the result of the sedimentary pressure of cultural memory rather than of innovations through self-expression or invention. His Atlas is governed, he postulated, by sublimations surviving from image to image in frozen, intensely felt gestures; explanations of these oscillate between attributing to them something of the syntactical nature of a legible sign language or something more of the nature of a wreckage. Warburg assumed — wreckage or signing — that the collective mind is connected by the sublimated image's affect. The real importance of artistic collaboration lies not at all in its significance in itself, but in the intersection of redefinitions of the artist with redefinitions of art prompted both by productivist changes in form from studio to post-studio work and by new perspectives on artistic intention such as that of Warburg. For the task of understanding these shifts, accepted art critical methodologies, along with the familiar definitions of intention, period and chronological movement, will not suffice.

This was a philosophical conception of collaboration across space and time, of collaborating *with* history and not just *as* history, and which may even encompass collaboration with deceased artists. It was one that underlies my artistic collaboration, since 1989, with Lyndell Brown. That collaboration occurs between images in the re-enactment of works of art: as collaborations between artists past and present through images from the past — archival, documentary,

singular, myth-making — and as the reactivation or re-experiencing of those imaged events years later in a different body of work, within very different social and historical contexts, and often by a very different artist. This transformation through collaboration, and from the archive into performance, provides what we will refer to as an Atlas Effect, and which I described in a 2008 article co-authored with Anthony Gardner, ‘The Second Self: A Hostage of Cultural Memory’.¹¹ This reactivation of the image archive, this Atlas Effect, had not of course gone unnoticed by a number of leading art critics and curators, and certainly not by an even larger number of contemporary artists.

Reenactment and restaging have again become buzzwords in recent art discourse. A number of contemporary artists in the 1990s reenacted or rewired past events for purposes different than mere spectacle. Jeremy Deller’s well-known restaging of an anti-Thatcher protest from early 1980s Britain for his video *The Battle of Orgreave*, 2001, immediately springs to mind here, as do Pierre Huyghe’s numerous reengagements with cinema history (his lo-fi retake of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, 1954, for *Remake*, 1995, for example, or his dilation of a temporal ellipse in Wim Wenders’s movie *The American Friend*, 1977, that involved filming Bruno Ganz crossing the Seine in *L’Ellipse*, 1998). On the discursive front, an excessively formalist engagement with collaboration resulted in the all-too-literal curatorial idea of relational aesthetics, and equally in the all-too-literal critiques of that relational and participatory aesthetics. These formalist understandings of collaboration were implicitly based on the dual hope of reclaiming collaborative and collective formations after the collapse of European communism, and of reproducing in offline worlds the digital networkings hyped through the dot-com boom of the late 1990s. On the other hand, a key figure from *The Third Hand* — Marina Abramović — began

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an ever more ambitious series of re-enactments of imaged events, in *Seven easy pieces*, 2005 onwards, culminating in the compendium of re-enactments of her own works in her 2010 Museum of Modern Art, New York retrospective — that triggered a series of important questions about and toward contemporary collaborative formations.¹² Abramović's purpose was both constructive and deeply conservative, assimilating performance art into a capitalist economy ever-greedy for auratic objects and visual records. But an ever-proliferating number of younger artist collectives and emerging artist duos, around the world, showed that the real importance of artistic collaboration lay not in its singular significance as a phenomenon, but in the intersection of redefinitions of the artist with redefinitions of art prompted both by productivist changes in form from studio to post-studio work and by very fluid redefinitions of art, linked to the desire to see political action in art made both achievable and believable through collective work.

Notes

- 1 Peter Osborne argues, in a widely read book, that artist collaborations also appear in conjunction with artist-generated fictions, locating both in the works of The Atlas Group. See: Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London, 2013, pp. 28–35 & 199–201.
- 2 See: Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, no. 110, Fall 2004, pp. 3–22; David Joselit, 'Navigating the New Territory: Art, Avatars and the Contemporary Mediascape', *Artforum*, vol. 43, no. 10, Summer 2005, pp. 276–9.

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- 3 Charles Green, *The Third Hand: Artist Collaborations from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2001.
- 4 See: Charles Green with Heather Barker, 'Flight from the Object: Donald Brook and the Emergence of Post-Studio Art in Early 1970s Sydney', in *emaj*, no. 4, 2009, available at: emajartjournal.com. See also: Charles Green, 'The discursive Field: home is where the heart is', in *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968–2002*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002, pp. 12–15; Charles Green, '1973–75: The Reader: Sites and Non-Sites', in *John Davis*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2010, pp. 28–35 (including notes); and Charles Green, 'Avoiding art, desperately seeking photography: revising the history of photography by post-object art', in *What is this Thing Called Photography?*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 2000, pp. 17–36.
- 5 Charles Green, 'The Visual Arts: An Aesthetic of Labyrinthine Form', in *Innovation in Australian Arts, Media and Design: Fresh Challenges for the Tertiary Sector*, Flaxton Press, Sydney, 2004, pp. 1–12.
- 6 Geert Lovink has described this intersection (and decline) of collaborative art and digitally-networked forms in Geert Lovink, *My First Recession: Critical Internet Culture in Transition*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam, 2003.
- 7 Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, no. 110, Fall 2004, pp. 51–79.
- 8 Charles Green, 'Group Soul: Who Owns the Artist Fusion?', in *Third Text*, vol. 18, no. 6, no. 71, November 2004, pp. 595–608.
- 9 By the phrase, 'locality fails', I refer to a complex argument originally mounted by Australian conceptualist painter Imants Tillers in 1982 against local or regional

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art, especially one tied to a particular time and place, that he based upon a scientific 1964 theory, Bell's Theorem (see: John Bell, 'On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen Paradox', in *Physics*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1964, pp. 195–200). Tillers explained Bell's Theorem, which emerges from the domain of quantum physics. It shows that either the statistical predictions of quantum theory or the principle of local causes is false. The 1972 Clauser-Freedman Experiment confirms, in turn, that the statistical predictions of quantum theory are correct and, therefore, that the principle of local causes is false. Extrapolating from this, the development of a genuinely local art is not possible. See: Charles Green and Heather Barker, 'No More Provincialism: Art & Text', in *emaj*, no. 4, 2010, available at: emajartjournal.com.

- 10 Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999, p. 13. Bal repeats theorist Judith Butler's astute refusal to replace 'the intentional subject with a personified "construction"', which, as she puts it, 'belongs at the grammatical site of the subject'. I've used this reference before, and it stands as a pithy redefinition.
- 11 Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, 'The Second Self: A Hostage of Cultural Memory', in *A Prior*, no. 16, Spring 2008), pp. 228–247.
- 12 These are explored in Anthony Gardner's *Politically Unbecoming: Postsocialist Art against Democracy*, MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2015.

A Constructed World

Collaborating is
easy! The
art world is hard...

Said to DAMP artist group:
'You're just acolytes of A Constructed World, you're just doing
what they do.'

Said to A Constructed World:
'DAMP copy you.'

DAMP website about the group:
Seventy-four members and counting ...
1995 included Helen Anderson, Martin Burns,
Chad Chatterton, Bruce Craig, Narelle Desmond,
Sharon Goodwin, Matthew Grace, Geoff Lowe,
Jude Worters, Brad Westmoreland and Kylie
Wilkinson.

Said by newspaper art critic:
... DAMP's two-decades in which the collective has

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shown in Australia, Japan, Europe and the US and churned through a rolling cast of seventy-four members, including Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva of renowned collaborative project A Constructed World.

(DAMP was initiated by Geoff Lowe as a collaborative project at the Victorian College of Art [VCA] in the early 1990s. After art school, Lowe and A Constructed World mentored the group for a number of years, including their works in publications, such as *Artfan* magazine and the book *Speech Objects*, and exhibitions in Melbourne, Italy and France. DAMP went on to become a successful, independent, artist group and yet there seems to be some embarrassment about acknowledging the history of their beginnings. Lowe and A Constructed World have a researched methodology and theoretical position in relation to collaboration and working together which was shared with DAMP and in particular its core members.)

Early 2000s:

Nikos Papastergiadis wrote the book *Metaphor and Tension: On Collaboration and its Discontents* in 2004. It documents the failed collaborations between Kathy Temin, Constanze Zikos, Juan Davila...

(Papastergiadis's book focuses on artists whose practices were not concerned with collaboration, while, for example, at same time DAMP were making ground-breaking and magnificent collaborative work that was seeking acknowledgement.)

Max Delany curated the exhibition *Mutlu Çerkez AND Marco Fusinato* at Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, a collaboration consisting of a painting by each artist linked by a word between the two works.

A Constructed World

Said to A Constructed World:

‘Who does what? Who’s in charge? What will happen to the brand if you break up?’

Said to Geoff Lowe:

‘You should never have stopped painting.’

Said to Jacqueline Riva:

‘Are you still making photographs?’

(After 22 years, A Constructed World’s work is represented in one museum collection in Australia and another museum holds a set of *Artfan* magazine, funded, edited and published by A Constructed World from 1993–2002.)

Said by a gallerist:

‘You’d be doing well now if you hadn’t collaborated.’

Said by a gallery visitor looking at a painting
by A Constructed World:

‘It’s so good to see one of Geoff’s paintings again!’

(The work was in fact painted mainly by Jacqueline Riva.)

Said to A Constructed World:

‘Who did what?’

Said by an art critic:

‘I mean I love Jacqui, Geoff, but A Constructed World, there’s nothing there, you shouldn’t have stopped painting.’

Said to A Constructed World:

‘We only want one of you. We can only afford one of you.’

Said by a museum curator:

‘We only want Geoff Lowe.’

Collaborating is easy! The art world is hard...



A Constructed World

Said by a gallerist:

‘I prefer Jacqui.’

Said by a number of curators:

‘It’s difficult for the museums to collect works other than paintings, they’re not used to it.’

(Museums are concerned about authorship, who did what.)

Said by an artist in the audience at a lecture
by DAMP:

‘My parents struggled to get away from communism, now you’re taking us back to it, by denying the individual artist.’

Said by a head of an art school:

‘I don’t want the word Marxism in any of our courses.’

Said by a number of artists invited to
contribute to *Artfan* magazine:

‘No way, not if the general public are involved.’

(*Artfan* magazine published responses to exhibitions written by art critics, artists and people who said they knew nothing about contemporary art.)

Said to students in every art school

A Constructed World has worked at:

‘Only one of you in this class will be an artist.’

Written by A Constructed World on Facebook:

If you think about the word ‘relationality’ and its fecundity in the work of say Donna Haraway and Eduardo Kohn (...holding open, making room for, the power of absence) it’s really time to stop linking relations in art to *Esthétique Relationnelle* (*Relational Aesthetics*). The term was used

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extensively in Italy before the 1998 Bourriaud book, by artists like Piero Gilardi and Cesare Pietroiusti in the 1980s. And the current use in global contemporary art has nothing to do with sharing, community, groups, responsibility, even love! And it is held within a very narrow, professionalised frame that often manipulates, commodifies rather than exposing gaps and replications between art, life or whatever ...

Said to Geoff Lowe by an art centre director and curator at an opening in the late 1990s: 'I've just been reading about *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicolas Bourriaud's book, it's crazy you were doing that years ago, in the 1980s.'

Said by A Constructed World:

It's easy working together, it's a salve, we love each other. We rarely struggle about who does what or who deserves what. We love DAMP, our research group Speech and What Archive and all the people we have collaborated and worked with (too numerous to mention here) and we hope they love us too. The individual artist is an artificial detachment from a chain, history and context of events and people. It is for the market. So far the market doesn't support the group, unless the group is making the traction a commodity, then there are numerous examples. As Donna Haraway says, 'It has become, literally, unthinkable to do good work in any interesting field with the premises of individualism, methodological individualism and human exceptionalism.'

A Constructed World

Said by McKenzie Wark:

‘This is what exhilarated us: the feeling of taking part in, of experiencing, a shared power, one that was unassignable and fleetingly invulnerable.’

bomb collective

THOUGHTS ON SHIFT?

Absence of the singularly authored object presents a challenge to 'general consensus', on what art is or should be, even within its contemporary context. It is definitely a challenge both for our audience and ourselves. Something being the opposite of *nothing*, in our minds, the opposite of form, the opposite of productive logic, the opposite of capital.

- *The focus for us instead becomes production/discussion, the nothing, rather than the object/outcome, the something* -

Yet the question to me at least, often arises 'is *nothing, enough?*' Is asking people to sit and wait, to delay their expectation to consume, enough to qualify the labour as art? ~~Yet we find ourselves also asking, why not? Why after all of this time are we still questioning with unhelpful anxiety the status of an already laboured subject? Didn't this happen like, just under 100 years ago? Are we still pretending that images are our only salvation?~~

- *Discussion as Production, Production as Discussion* -

So much of our presence in executing a work that essentially presented *nothing* elicited the

jess miley 14/7/15 11:08 AM

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John 23/7/15 9:39 PM

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ellen buttrose 19/7/15 3:45 PM

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ellen buttrose 19/7/15 3:46 PM

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ellen buttrose 19/7/15 3:46 PM

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ellen buttrose 19/7/15 4:21 PM

Comment [1]: Need a connective sentence between collective authorship and production-?

John 21/7/15 8:40 PM

Comment [2]:

John 23/7/15 9:39 PM

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ellen buttrose 19/7/15 4:28 PM

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ellen buttrose 19/7/15 4:28 PM

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John 21/7/15 9:22 PM

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very thing we occupied, space for people to sit and chat, watch with confusion, approach with caution, sit in bewilderment, offer help, critique, ask questions about the 'art' we proposed was being presented. This in a sense became our work and our *something*. Were we able to suspend their disbelief, offer a moment, in which time stood still?

The answer we keep coming back to is, we just don't know. Each case is different, each audience member is different. People vary, their reactions are never the same. So collaboration in this sense is simply a mode of questioning. It's a strategy which presents reassurance, if nothing else that helps in bringing these questions about.

THINGS ABOUT WORKING

The word *engagement* itself is often used in multiple discourses which set their sights on the reform of our environments, our societies, our natures, our various modes of being or the consumption thereof. It has become something of a slogan for a mode seeking to offer a way out, forward, anywhere but the 'other side' whose looming vista presents the ever present fear of catastrophe. So amongst this, we sit

John 21/7/15 9:22 PM

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John 21/7/15 9:22 PM

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jess miley 15/7/15 11:41 AM

Comment [3]: It is the best when you ask the author a question that is best answered by the other one. See picture.

ellen buttrose 19/7/15 4:36 PM

Comment [4]: Picture??

John 23/7/15 9:40 PM

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... [1]

John 23/7/15 10:22 PM

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jess miley 14/7/15 11:07 AM

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bomb collective

asking, to what extent are these various modes of engagement worthwhile or productive?

What if collaboration yields no productive outcome? What if collaboration instead causes confusion or derails the gold standard of logic?

This is something that we find often happens.

It is something of an inevitability when various modes of operation attempt some sort of harmonious union. At least this is what we have found when we attempt to place the collaborative process within a logic of production. To coerce our actions towards a unified whole, more often than not, leads to a state of confusion. Yet this blurry and indefinite place, offers us alternatives. It presents options.

Is this any less worthy of praise? Does this nullify our presence within the market? Are we less likely to find our work on constant rotation on some infinite feed? Probably. Does this then constitute a failure on our part, as artists and makers, to not have lived up to our established roles and modes of execution? Maybe. I guess it comes down to our priorities and our goals. Maybe we just need space or time-out. Again this brings us to the point of production and whether or not producing nothing is in itself constructive of any logic other than resistance.

John 23/7/15 9:35 PM

Deleted: Collaborative practice within this discussion we are told is the 'noble way', the *only* way towards formation of a clearer more 'sustainable' outcome.

jess miley 14/7/15 12:40 PM

Comment [5]: But who set it? Was it us?

John 21/7/15 8:45 PM

Comment [6]: Thinking of logic makes me think of everyday work, efficiency, speed, straight lines, the general economy of production, science. Even with resistance this form of 'knowing' entered our work. The need to 'pin up' the artwork. Yeah totally, unknowingly, and maybe that's the fight, to detach ourselves from established ways of working. To remove our reliance on clarity.

ellen buttrose 21/7/15 8:30 PM

Comment [7]:

jess miley 14/7/15 11:07 AM

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jess miley 14/7/15 12:41 PM

Comment [8]: In the process of us trying to mangle three ideas into one did we lost sight of the driver and *the process of democratically expressing ideas* won over the rigorous development of ideas.

John 21/7/15 8:52 PM

Comment [9]: The pressure to produce an idea resembling something polished and resolved complicates the potential for a more democratic outcome.

ellen buttrose 19/7/15 4:39 PM

Comment [10]: Put your comment in Jess- +++

This is the territory, whether we like it or not, that we occupy, in making work whose very presence is based upon a premise of not needing to gather or accumulate, or 'present' anything much except the processes of gathering and accumulating. We are still questioning its use value.

[Questions for you](#)

[When do you know collaboration is good? Or when it's anti-productive or bad or is it always 'good' because of the meta act?](#)

[Are we getting paid for this?](#)

[We only need 250 words.. How do we chop this down?](#)

John 21/7/15 9:12 PM

Deleted: Again back to the question of legitimacy, to this work which presents itself always as a precursor to the authored object.

John 21/7/15 9:08 PM

Comment [11]: Does collaboration need to be productive? Its sort of like asking the question in paragraph 2 'is nothing enough?' but is the process of collaborating, like you mentioned earlier, simply the process of expressing ideas. Is this the work that is getting done?

John 21/7/15 9:23 PM

Comment [12]: Not sure

John 23/7/15 9:38 PM

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jess miley 21/7/15 4:08 PM

Comment [13]: I dunno, but do you think that our education background has given us a different idea about collaboration to other artists? We are made to 'collaborate' from day one in an architectural degree' and you can't EXIST without it as an architect but for an artist it is a real CHOICE.

John 23/7/15 9:47 PM

Comment [14]: often though the process of design, which presents itself as a collaborative act, merely utilises the many actors involved to pursue a singular vision. do all the individual roles involved in the design process actually hold a sense of agency in being able to influence the final outcome? or are they simply a tool, utilised by the designer in authoring the work? undoubtedly each actor helps shape the final outcome, yet more often than not this comes from the general complexity of communication. and because of this design can hold an underlying reliance on modes of manipulation in order to manifest something resembling the original vision of the author.

This isn't to say that design cannot be collaborative, and for this reason i think that there is as much a choice in the process of designing as there is in making art. The choice to either relinquish one's singular vision ... [2]

John 23/7/15 10:04 PM

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jess miley 15/7/15 3:27 PM

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bomb collective

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John

23/07/2015 9:40 PM

Page 4: [2] Comment [14]

John

23/07/2015 9:47 PM

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This isn't to say that design cannot be collaborative, and for this reason i think that there is as much a choice in the process of designing as there is in making art. The choice to either relinquish one's singular vision and allow it to be co-authored into some sort of evolution without a preconceived outcome.

this relates back to the discussion on logic and its role in forming work. i agree that architecture relies on particular methods in order to come to resolvable solutions. it goes without saying that its processes are embedded within established modes of communication and political-economic relationships that form its ability to exist. these in their most common sense rely on a logic of production and accumulation. generally its processes reinforce its reliance on the desire to make more capital.

this is where the choice to not engage this logic is interesting and in fact i see it as quite political. maybe its hugely utopian of me to say? a property developer is not likely to accept a proposal that offers no material outcome.

Catherine or Kate

I am reluctant to write things down. I am afraid that they will never survive the distance from my moment to yours. The page seems a thin cipher for my entire reality — but it feels good to try to write things that feel true.

Catherine and I have written a lot of grant applications that include the phrase, ‘We are committed to working toward a full-time career as collaborators.’ I wouldn’t say this was untrue, but in hindsight what we were suggesting is an almost marital level of commitment. As my work with Catherine snowballed into a serious career choice, we both worked hard to maintain the ease of our early interaction, an ease filled with laughter, agreements and safety. But as our personal lives grew loud and soft in what seemed like inverse proportion it became more and more difficult.

We began 2014 in Chicago as students at Second City Comedy Training Center. It had a strange effect on me. It was very very cold and we had no friends and no car. We took an improvisation class. You can’t sit at the back of improvisation class — it is a funny inversion of a critical theory class. You’re a fool if you aren’t saying the dumb things that come into your head. I felt vulnerable, lonely and afraid ... feelings that I generally find difficult to welcome. And I hated Catherine. I hated that she seemed ok. I hated that she was going about things with characteristic patience, particularity and openness. How was she not feeling all of this? (Sorry Catherine.)

She could sense my hostility and eventually confronted me. I was terrified. I silently left the room and cried alone. I can’t remember the next part very clearly. Things softened a little but were still unresolved. A month later we were in another fragile moment. She asked me whether I thought of

her as a friend. I said, 'I don't know'. I still feel bad about this and am compelled to explain it, as much to myself as to you. In this situation, after a long time in close quarters, sharing ideas, futures, energy, it felt as if she were a part of me. She was subject to every doubt I had, and not just around my art career. All the darts I threw at myself were aimed at her too. At the time she often seemed mute to me, perhaps as a self-preservation tactic. This opacity only aggravated me more. Ugly. Did I think of her as a friend? Probably not — because she is more than a friend. Catherine has been so present in my development as to feel like a member of my family, which is also to say that my love for her is sometimes obscured by other things.

For the last eight months, after we returned from Chicago, Catherine and I communicated only face-to-face and via post. I am not exactly sure why. Perhaps it was a break disguised as a project (of course it is both). I have said to people that the project was about stripping away all the administration of emails and phone calls to reveal the emotional content of the relationship. This is partly true. It was interesting and thoughtful but also limited. We talked less and the talk was not necessarily more revealing. As I said earlier, text seems a thin medium to me, and as I write this I feel keenly the frictions between direct expression and editing; something I also felt writing the letters.

We did an event on Valentines Day of this year reading some of our letters to each other. Catherine began to cry when she read out a line from one of my letters, 'I want us not to feel like we are swimming against the tide regarding the longevity of the collaboration'. Even now I am surprised that I was able to write this to her. I like control and certainty. I like to know where I am headed. I have strongly resisted entertaining possibilities that go against the life path that has

Catherine or Kate

been implicitly set out by the tiny moments of fate upon which I rest a mountain of practical determination.

A few days ago I broke the postal communication pledge and texted Catherine — partly out of frustration because we are currently on different continents. We had a video call and she apprehensively told me she has taken a full-time job at a school in Brisbane. I felt relieved. It feels right to relax our grip on this tacit commitment. I am also genuinely happy for her. She is excited about the connections she is making with the students; connections that seem much less mystical than the ones we try to make in our work.

I don't have a neat way to end this. Catherine and I are not best friends, or sisters, or lovers, or even legal business partners. Our identities conflate and divide in a way that is fascinating and sometimes distressing to me. I continue to process what is revealed and grown by this unique relationship.

Critical Art Ensemble

SAMANTHA & CHRIS: Collaboration allows artists, curators and writers to expand the remit of their thought and action, often in reaction to particular cultural, social, political and economic conditions.

CRITICAL ART ENSEMBLE (CAE): Yes, that is the biggest advantage, and therefore the main reason collaboration is so useful. The division of labor has become so complex that one person can have only a very limited tool kit and knowledge platform compared with what is available. If a person is interested in trans-disciplinary explorations and in responding to emerging issues on multiple cultural, political, and economic fronts, collaboration is the only way to assemble the technical parts necessary for a meaningful critical response. Conversely, working in a singular capacity limits a person to responding to the challenges of the specialisation in which they have situated themselves.

s&c: As critical as collaboration may be, there lingers the potential for co-option.

CAE: From our perspective and practice, collaboration is not a critical position; it is a pragmatic one. Through it, our options for resistant action are optimised. That said, there is nothing inherently good about collaboration. It can be as ugly and authoritarian as any other social form.

As for co-option, that is not something we worry about.

Capitalism is a co-opting machine. That's its primary nonviolent weapon against all that is not, or appears as not, capitalist. In this system, it is a given. We know our tactics and social constellations will be co-opted — we are always already doing capitalism's work, even when resisting it; however, we can, at the same time, configure territories, tools, knowledge systems, and even subjects in a manner that allow temporary contrast, difference, and opposition to the status quo. Over time, we create networks of distributed power.

s&c: The presence of power dynamics indicates the ambiguous meaning of collaboration; it suggests cooperation and collusion, productive work with an ally, and traitorous fraternising with an enemy. Given this ambivalence, why collaborate?

CAE: We think it's time to make a distinction between collective collaboration, contractual collaboration, and 'necessary evil' collaboration. Collective collaboration, when done in a manner that recognises all the collaborators as complete, complex subjects, keeps alienation quite low. Its tendency is toward the utopian, and functions in a manner that is far greater than just cultural production.

Contractual collaboration is more difficult because subjectivity is divided. I have skills or knowledge that you need, and you have skills or knowledge that I need, and we agree on a general goal and limit for this collaboration. Under these conditions, we can work together on a given project with an understanding of what each must do. Contractualism is a capitalist socio-economic formation, so everyone takes a chance with it. It can be predatory, but not necessarily. A contract has a very thin margin of trust associated with it, so we do take care to make sure we look beyond a collaborator's skill base. For the most part, it has worked out well for CAE.

Critical Art Ensemble

The ‘necessary evil’ collaboration is a potential anytime a person’s practice intersects with institutions and their representatives. It doesn’t have to happen, but the likelihood is high. All too often, projects require some kind of institutional support. When this happens, each party is negotiating its own interests to determine if there is any way these typically contrasting interests can align. When they do, the result is suspicious, but this is the kind of compromise we live with everyday since we are irretrievably enveloped in the neoliberal system.

Generally speaking, all three of these engagements are unavoidable. CAE has done them all. The first has done well for us and the second has also gone well. The third has its ups and downs. Sometimes the negotiations and the process that follows go well, and sometimes they don’t.

s&c: Is collaboration constructive or combative?

CAE: We designed our collective structure to be constructive, but cheers to those who go the combative route. Whatever gets the job done.

s&c: To what extent can collaborative practice serve to critique the institutions of art?

CAE: It exposes the modernist residue about what art is, what an artist is, and the postwar function of the avant-garde. This residue has become so entrenched in the marketing of art that it will continue for years to come.

s&c: What is the extent of its critical capacity?

CAE: Under the right conditions, it can stand in contrast to the myth of the individual genius within the specialisations of

art, and in contrast to the western (and especially American) ideology of individualism — but it has no critical capacity in and of itself.

s&c: Can we speak of collaboration as a challenge to authorship?

CAE: Sure, but we can also speak of it as a support structure for authorship. In many of the arts (music, theatre, film), we consistently live with this paradox. A film may be reduced to the director, but we know from the credits that it's a massive collaboration. Based on hierarchy, the director's name is a shorthand signifier for this collaboration, while at the same time preserving the desire for an individual genius whose vision stamps the entire process.

s&c: How can examining the roles and functions of collaboration elucidate the processes and systems that generate the production of contemporary art?

CAE: We think it's helpful to spell out what is and isn't working in models of collaboration. There's no need to reinvent the wheel with each generation, and we must keep up with what collaboration means under ever-changing political economies, technologies, and social formations. Adapt or die.

Institute for New Feeling Independent state of emergency rooms

Instructions for iPhone users:

Start a new text message. Swipe up on the grey bar above the keyboard to activate QuickType. Three words will appear. Choose whichever feels right to you. Repeat this process and see where you end up. Where do these words come from? Whose voice is this?

Is it the voice of an earlier you? A faster, better speller than you? A more generic you? Is it the voice of the crowd? Does it give you a sudden urge to go to the gym?

Let go. Embrace the algorithm as assistant, adversary, and collaborator.

If you'd like to join our ongoing text message thread, text IM HERE TOO to 412-353-9665. You can eavesdrop or add to the conversation. If you'd like to remove yourself, just say IM LEAVING.

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Institute for New Feeling

— Aug 18, 2015 —

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:12:01 AM
 - Is everyone ready at 1030 or so I have time to run errand?
 - Do I?

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:12:20 AM
 - I could use some time... :/

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:13:04 AM
 - How much ?

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:14:11 AM
 - How about 11? Scott would that screw u up?

- * Scott Andrew — 10:14:36 AM
 - That's fine

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:28:02 AM
 - Great!

- * Nina Sarnelle — 11:03:51 AM
 - ready whenevs

- * Scott Andrew — 11:04:56 AM
 - Same

- * Agnes Bolt — 11:10:15 AM
 - On too
 - are you guys on a call already? i don't see you

- * Nina Sarnelle — 11:11:07 AM
 - Nope

Independent state of emergency rooms

- * Scott Andrew — 2:32:22 PM
 - Nothing can be done. I just had a series of confrontational texts with him
 - I feel super defeated right now
 - Boat isn't going to happen. We can't figure out what's wrong with it

- * Nina Sarnelle 2:33:20 PM
 - Jesus

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:41:21 PM
 - Are there ppl at any of the sites?

- * Nina Sarnelle 2:41:40 PM
 - No one at cheerleaders

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:42:01 PM
 - Some undergrads at the laundromat hitch is obviously running. But if no one's actually coming to the states maybe we don't have to worry about it. I think the rain is keeping a lot of people away
 - Sorry Siri fucked that up

- * Nina Sarnelle 2:43:40 PM
 - Anyone at the boat?

- * Scott Andrew — 2:47:24 PM
 - I have no way of knowing. We are at the marina

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:48:08 PM
 - Honestly I have a feeling that most people are not going out in the rain
 - Thank fucking God for the videos

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* Scott Andrew — 2:48:30 PM

- I want to die

* Agnes Bolt — 2:48:52 PM

- :(

— Aug 19, 2015 —

* Nina Sarnelle — 8:45:31 AM

- Should we order usb headsets nowish?

* Agnes Bolt — 9:06:45 AM

- Ok

* Scott Andrew — 9:27:05 AM

- So far my bus experience is hell. Why did I do this again?

* Nina Sarnelle — 9:31:10 AM

- I just got a bunch more stuff dun

* Agnes Bolt — 9:32:49 AM

- Ok.

* Scott Andrew — 9:35:57 AM

- What kind of stuff?

* Nina Sarnelle — 9:41:10 AM

- vinyl submitted, audio set up, google earth, tour emails

* Scott Andrew — 9:57:22 AM

- !!!

* Agnes Bolt — 9:57:59 AM

- I got us a residency in China

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- * Agnes Bolt — 10:07:56 PM
- Paola chief curator of design at MoMA booked a sess

- * Scott Andrew — 10:09:14 PM
- Awesome!

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:09:30 PM
- Wow

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:09:49 PM
- She's really great and smart you

- * Scott Andrew — 10:13:59 PM
- Yeah but you can't get enough time in a statement issued by the end of the day before I go to bed and watch movies with my mom and dad and his colleagues and friends and relatives and the rest of the best of all the best of me.

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:15:05 PM
- Bullshit to get my nails done

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:15:31 PM
- Hdmi extenders came yay

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:15:55 PM
- Bitch

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:16:57 PM
- I love the way you want me to be a little more than one million dollars

- * Scott Andrew — 10:29:36 PM
- I love the new update to iOS devices that can make me laugh so hard for you guys are the same as it has been in

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my room for improvement of my favorite song on this page
to be able to get a follow back and watch movies all night

— Aug 20, 2015 —

- * Agnes Bolt — 8:48:58 AM
 - Construction workers are coming by to possibly help with the flag!

- * Nina Sarnelle — 8:49:27 AM
 - Great!! But we need to make it first, yeah?

- * Agnes Bolt — 8:50:25 AM
 - yes but they are just going to take a look first

- * Agnes Bolt — 8:50:36 AM
 - they might have a ladder with an extension

- * Nina Sarnelle — 8:52:27 AM
 - Cooooool

- * Scott Andrew — 9:15:36 AM
 - I'll just sit here for a while then. They close in an hour

- * Agnes Bolt — 9:20:36 AM
 - I don't really have a preference on these tubes so I'm letting u guys decide

- * Scott Andrew — 9:30:45 AM
 - What's the PIN number for the credit card?

- * Agnes Bolt — 9:31:55 AM
 - It's a credit card. No pin

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- * Scott Andrew — 9:32:45 AM
- Ok

- * Agnes Bolt — 9:42:31 AM
- Don't use it as a debit

- * Scott Andrew — 9:43:26 AM
- Ok

- * Nina Sarnelle — 1:52:27 PM
- Trapped in crazy downpour...
- We can get all of our tax back if we bring a printed form to Best Buy with the two receipts

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:07:17 PM
- I'll just be wandering around the city in the rain and crying

- * Scott Andrew — 2:30:52 PM
- The fields have a copy and click function. Copy paste too hard but copy and then click into the field and it'll paste.

- * Nina Sarnelle — 2:31:12 PM
- Rad!

- * Agnes Bolt — 3:02:41 PM
- Our first appointment is here!!!!

- * Scott Andrew — 3:03:15 PM
- Ok so I can see it as an independent state of emergency rooms?

- * Nina Sarnelle — 3:03:52 PM
- Bad day for the rest of my friends and family members and the police

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- * Agnes Bolt — 3:04:41 PM
 - Bad girl needs more work to be able to do it all day long

- * Nina Sarnelle — 3:05:05 PM
 - Do you guys want a samosa?
 - pizza is in the office

- * Nina Sarnelle — 3:12:08 PM
 - could you guys venmo me \$10 each?

- * Scott Andrew — 3:12:43 PM
 - Agnes are you still up for spotting me as a cigarette to pizza trade?

— Aug 21, 2015 —

- * Agnes Bolt — 4:58:42 PM
 - what's the title of the show?

- * Scott Andrew — 4:59:41 PM
 - Needs to be workshopped. Follow me? Insta-something?

- * Nina Sarnelle — 5:02:49 PM
 - Scott can you also toss me \$10 for lunch whenever you get a chance

- * Agnes Bolt — 5:12:15 PM
 - I mean the show not our piece
 - “The followers” for our piece maybe

- * Scott Andrew — 5:17:57 PM
 - Thanks for following us on Twitter but not

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- * Agnes Bolt — 5:18:15 PM
 - we're prob gonna need another 8 hour meeting

 - * Nina Sarnelle — 5:19:20 PM
 - It's a slow way of working but I think it's vital to our relationship and ultimately makes the work better — more intentional, critical, aware of our self-aware of ourself aware...

 - * Nina Sarnelle — 5:21:34 PM
 - Also could you guys pay me for lunch yesterday?

 - * Scott Andrew — 5:43:57 PM
 - Better now than tomorrow.

 - * Agnes Bolt — 5:52:34 PM
 - Forgot to mention if you have other scene ideas for the video let us know. At the moment I think we are def doing sex, driving, cheap mall/street

 - * Scott Andrew — 5:53:26 PM
 - I'm so excited about this song on the phone and it was not immediately available to all my life right there

 - * Agnes Bolt — 5:54:34 PM
 - there he goes again
- Aug 22, 2015 —
- * Agnes Bolt — 8:20:47 PM
 - Edible buttplugs

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- * Nina Sarnelle — 8:21:08 PM
 - DUG
 - DUH

- * Agnes Bolt — 8:22:21 PM
 - Talk later? I'm so tired and my dad just told my mom and sister and her family that the government has been in a row of seagulls

- * Scott Andrew — 8:23:19 PM
 - Whoa weird I'm ACTUALLY watching a row of seagulls fly by while riding on this ferry.

- * Nina Sarnelle — 8:24:08 PM
 - Talk later? Talk later this month to the gym?

- * Scott Andrew — 8:24:16 PM
 - Talk later on the other side of the day

- * Agnes Bolt — 8:25:56 PM
 - Id send a dic pic but there's absolutely nothing to see

- * Scott Andrew — 8:26:30 PM
 - Send your dick pics on the way to the gym

- * Agnes Bolt — 8:27:28 PM
 - Yes I am so glad you enjoyed the book

— Aug 23, 2015 —

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:35:40 AM
 - The best of luck with your life in prison if convicted of a sudden urge

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- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:35:54 AM
- hah! I was getting “sudden urge” last night too

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:36:40 AM
- I hooked up with 2 dudes last night haha

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:37:32 AM
- woweeeee
- #SUDDENURGE

- * Scott Andrew — 10:38:24 AM
- Uh huh. Hugely popular with my mom

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:39:42 AM
- This is the fucking funest art project to make it work with the other hand

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:40:33 AM
- I’m delighted

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:41:21 AM
- Collaboration between a rock and roll

- * Scott Andrew — 10:41:31 AM
- Collaborative effort in the morning announcements

- * Agnes Bolt — 10:42:33 AM
- Collaborative effort in the morning is going to be the first time since I’ve been trying!

- * Nina Sarnelle — 10:44:07 AM
- Oh you lovely collaborators in the morning

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- * Agnes Bolt — 10:49:11 AM
 - I'm going for a run catch u collaborators later

- * Scott Andrew — 10:50:03 AM
 - Maybe at the gym?

- * Agnes Bolt — 11:15:53 AM
 - I'm not going anywhere near me

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:32:54 PM
 - Nina can you ok the plastic drawing. He needs to make it this weekend. See email

- * Nina Sarnelle — 2:41:23 PM
 - Just did thx for heads up

- * Scott Andrew — 2:48:31 PM
 - The plastic drawing of you and your family is so cute

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:49:50 PM
 - Yes it was not immediately known whether or not I have a great ass

- * Scott Andrew — 2:54:32 PM
 - Velvet cupcakes for my girls

- * Nina Sarnelle — 2:55:12 PM
 - Ooooooooooooo

- * Agnes Bolt — 2:59:12 PM
 - My shoes my cones my tampon

- * Scott Andrew — 3:06:42 PM
 - My neurologist

Independent state of emergency rooms

- * Nina Sarnelle — 3:06:49 PM
- My pneumonia

- * Scott Andrew — 3:07:08 PM
- My nails didn't

- * Nina Sarnelle — 3:08:06 PM
- Did you?

- * Agnes Bolt — 5:05:49 PM
- did you see the email from creative capital??
- now its 17 winners from 231 remaining apps

- * Agnes Bolt — 5:35:18 PM
- i knew that car accident would lead to something

- * Scott Andrew — 5:52:44 PM
- My cat being in the hospital happening at the same time is what set us over the edge

- * Agnes Bolt — 5:54:46 PM
- That's why you don't know how much I miss you so much

- * Nina Sarnelle — 5:55:12 PM
- I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE NEAR ME

- * Agnes Bolt — 5:55:52 PM
- Hey can you take me off this thread

END

Haynes & Hardy

Collaboration and its Malcontents

HAYNES: Well, Hardy, we have been collaborating for a while now. What was it that gave us the impetus to start working together?

HARDY: You didn't have any of your own ideas!

HAYNES: I can see how this conversation is going to go. We were studying together at the time and, in the first instance, there was a confluence of ideas, rather than working methods. The collaborative strategies developed more over time.

HARDY: Yes, it was a shared interest in phenomenology, the body in space and language as a ...

HAYNES: ... marker of power relationships. At the time you were making those large-scale stripe paintings...

HARDY: ... and you were doing those boring spoken word performances, remember?

HAYNES: How do you think collaborating together has opened up new terrain for each of us? We still maintain our

Collaboration and its Malcontents

individual practices, and working together has become more episodic.

HARDY: Well, we started in a loose way, through conversations in the studio, discussing books we were reading, and the initial pieces developed from there, as a documentation of that dialogue, in some ways.

HAYNES: Yes, an exchange through dialogue — I think it's the disagreements that have been most productive,

HARDY: the space of dissent...

HAYNES: ...allowing for that space to be occupied, rather than resolved — setting the terms of the debate in those initial studio conversations.

HARDY: I think, over time, the terms have shifted, through the back and forth banter, some areas have become contested ground, while others have given way, become softer...

HAYNES: The process is important, more so than the outcomes? It is the working out, the working through...

HARDY: Yes, but without the resolution. Rather, it's an uneasy rapprochement.

HAYNES: You make it all sound difficult, but sometimes it's easy!

HARDY: Too easy! Many hands make light work.

HAYNES: That's heavy. In terms of working together, the strategies for making have developed and changed over time.

Haynes & Hardy

In the beginning, we would each work on something and then bring these elements together...

HARDY: Juxtaposition. Again, without attempting to resolve these disparate elements or harmonise them. And then for a while we would take turns, working on the same piece, but separately...

HAYNES: ... the timed pieces. At this point, the collective effort allows us to produce more labour-intensive works, perhaps, than we could achieve individually?

HARDY: Yes, it's become less important as to who does the labour, than the investment of time overall — the WORK of art.

HAYNES: So, collective, in the sense of becoming joint effort,

HARDY: ...and offering a collective space, one that didn't exist before,

HAYNES: ...the third space. Charles Green describes it as the 'third hand'.

HARDY: Yes, or the fifth hand!

HAYNES: It seems crucial in our current, uncertain environment to be working together, to collectivise — artist-run spaces like this one are an example.

HARDY: It's working against the competitive paradigm, to be collegial rather than combative.

Collaboration and its Malcontents

HAYNES: Collaboration is bucking the authorial voice of the heroic artist, working alone in his studio.

HARDY: And acknowledging that all artists are collaborative in some way, we are all influenced by each other, and form our practices in dialogue.

HAYNES: So: acknowledged and unacknowledged collaboration.

HARDY: If you like...

HAYNES: Well, you're suddenly agreeable! Where do you think this relationship is going?

HARDY: You're stuck with me. I am the best and worst of you.

HAYNES: As an artist.

HARDY: Yes, as an artist.

neverhitsend

neverhitsend is a five to 14 person collective that formed in the wake of the 2013 Edward Snowden NSA leaks.

neverhitsend performatively researches communications ideology with a particular focus on issues involving privacy, surveillance, and anonymity. The group meets irregularly, but its primary action is the continued use of an in-progress draft in a shared Gmail account. The Draft is a collaborative experiment that intentionally misuses the formal properties of Gmail to create an alternative platform for communication. The Draft is also a re-performance of a tactic once employed by al-Qaeda, as well as by David Petraeus and Paula Broadwell, to maintain secret and anonymous communication.

With the same password, we can all access the Draft, which we use to anonymously exchange information, organize, discuss, write rants and mini-essays, share proposals, and/or eviscerate them. We re-appropriated Gmail as an uncensored forum, where we shared, dumped, read, deleted information and messages. Sharing an account creates a feeling of anonymity, since members can only guess at who wrote what. At times, interactions seem mediated by a faceless, unaccountable customer service hotline. Our attempt to create an anarchistic space has often inadvertently manifested a neoliberal one. This may be because of the bureaucratic distance the Draft creates between members; nothing is said directly and no one speaks directly; the Draft is a conduit that refracts accountability.

Even when we imitate certain fonts or expressions we associate with other members, there is absolutely nothing about the Draft that prevents the outing of identity. I have only to look at the IP address of other members that Gmail

provides in order to make an educated guess as to who the last contributor to the conversation was. The level of real anonymity offered by the Draft is comparable to that provided by a public bathroom. Despite the perceived veiling function of the stall, the notion that the public bathroom serves as a gap in the net of near-total public surveillance is deflated by metadata; if I am in the bathroom too long, I am well aware that anyone waiting to use it is tapping their foot and trying the handle, signaling to everyone else that I have been in there for *an embarrassingly long time*. Unsurprisingly, public bathrooms are hotspots for anonymous sex, unfiltered writing, and territorial markings. Unsurprisingly, the abject scribbling and marginal behavior that occur in public bathrooms are understood as examples of the need for surveillance, but, of course, the bathroom only exists in relation to the constricted, and ubiquitously monitored, world around it. The same can be said of the Draft.

We set out to performatively research communications ideology and ended up testing some of the constitutive components of communication. We learn how to manage our differences within the less-than-ideal constraints of a compromised and futile platform, which is not unlike how a dysfunctional family operates. Despite our absurdly ineffectual methodology, or lack thereof, we somehow make work and continue to do so, knowing that our Draft is absolutely impenetrable to anyone who has not doggedly followed along for two years through the monologues, trolls, attacks, brainstorming sessions, and ‘to do’ lists. Why do we even bother to maintain a ‘secret’ draft that no one other than members of the collective, Google, and backdoor government affiliates can see? What is the value of a chaotic soup of words and ideas? Of multiple failed attempts to get things done? Of making these attempts public? Why would we perversely use a platform that is not efficient?

Beyond the erotics of dysfunction, using the Draft in this way speaks to the value of collision, conflict, and difference. From identity politics to the subtleties that distinguish tolerance from secularism, managing difference is highly political. Within a collective, there can be the tendency to compromise the value of difference in order to present a unified, singular whole. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's definition of 'the masses' versus 'the multitude' expresses this distinction: 'The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a singularity or a unity', while 'the essence of the masses is indifference: all differences are submerged and drowned in the masses ... These masses are able to move in unison only because they form an indistinct uniform conglomerate.' If the corporation (through *incorporation*: the merging of bodies) seeks to condense its multitudes into masses, the art collective can strive for the opposite, amplifying difference under a single banner, while resisting competitive individualism. If an art collective arises from corporate motivations or, at any point, begins to practice incorporation (sacrificing difference for the sake of efficiency, convenience, or commercial viability) then the work of that collective will express that ideology.

What *is* interesting about being a collective that, outside its name, fails at being unified in any way, is the insistence on being defective, and perpetually in beta. This charmingly pubescent and decentralized mess speaks to a generational interest. Just as baby boomers were good at selling stability in various glorified versions of communal living and working — millennials are good at selling instability. There is nothing for millennials to build on, so it seems like our only option is to join the Start Up Enterprise Starship, or ride the monolithic corporate iceberg across the flat earth. We are not a model collective and we certainly have no methodology worth applauding because we have no working methodology

whatsoever. Ironically, a lack of uniformity and perennial disorder are our *modi operandi*. And somehow, working while broken includes us all in a much broader conversation on privacy, surveillance, anonymity, intimacy, friendship, and difference.

Raqs Media Collective

Additions, subtractions: on collectives and collectivities

1. On counting

In the preface to the first, 1888, edition of *Was Sind und Was Sollen die Zahlen* (The Nature and Meaning of Numbers), Franz Dedekind the Mathematician-Philosopher says, ‘ἀεὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀριθμητίζει’ (Aei O Anthropos Arithmetozoi), ‘Man is always Counting’.

Whenever we count, we end up with additions, with something more than a singularity. And then we add additions together. We couple, we multiply. When we look at a singularity long enough, then, up close, things begin to fall away from the unit’s seemingly monadic sovereignty. Subtraction and division yield a carnival of decimals, a rebellion of fractions. Even the solitude of one is made up of thirds and halves and quarters and other, forever other, infinities.

Additions, subtractions

If man is always counting — adding, subtracting, figuring, accounting — it is because nothing is ever really one thing. No one is alone. Everything, everyone has a shadow, a past, a future, a hidden facet, something invisible, forgotten, as yet uncounted, still waiting to be figured, still emerging. We wax, we wane. We add years to our lives, we come to the end of our days. We are many, our name is legion, and sometimes we are divided within ourselves, or possessed by more things than we can know.

To say that something is just what it is and no more is almost as good as saying that it is nothing at all. Everything changes in order to persist. And when things change, they become more, or less. They deliver themselves to their own plenitude, to their own divisions.

We are all numbers today: a datum, a statistic, a measure. How many are we? How much of ourselves are we? How deficient or how much in excess are we? How liquid, how solvent, how current? How prolific? How dense, deep and dubious are we? What are we worth? How much do we weigh in with the world? What discount do we offer on ourselves? What is our rank, the percentage of our takings? How high is our perch, how deep our abyss, how shallow our grave?

All it takes to recognise a collectivity for what it is consists in counting and then considering the relationships between the numbers that make up a constellation. Looked at this way, we have to ask, what or who is not an accumulation, a collectivity? Whose name is not legion?

But there is a world of differences between a collectivity and a collective. A collectivity is a fact, a collective is a disposition — a way of being or doing things. Facts are things, dispositions are ways of thinking about the ‘thing-ness’ of a fact. And as is usually the case with dispositions, a collective is something that a collectivity chooses for itself to be. In that sense, a collective is a marker of a certain degree of self

consciousness that enables an entity (or entities) to recognise their divided and/or multiplied, constituted, prolific being.

A collective is the history and the future of the conversation that a collectivity has with itself. Not every collectivity chooses to speak. Not every collectivity can speak, or listen to itself. And those that do speak don't always talk within themselves, or to each other. Those that do talk within themselves, or to each other, stand the chance of becoming collectives, provided they enjoy the terms of their talking. Provided they get used even to listening to their silences.

2. Collectives and art:

why not to paint by numbers

What does it mean for a collective to produce art? Or curate?

The making of a collective art practice can never be reduced to the division and allocation of a number of pre-determined set of tasks, which are distributed simply because of reasons of their volume and the efficiencies of scale that can be achieved by putting more than one pair of hands to work. Collective art practices flounder when, metaphorically speaking, one person paints red in all the slots marked with the number for red, and others do the same for other colours and other numbers. To be an artists' collective, or a curatorial collective, is precisely not to paint by numbers.

We are a collective of three people who began thinking, working and making things together almost twenty years ago. The conversation that transformed our collectivity into a collective is still continuing, but it began with small, modest acts of friendship and solidarity. A plugging into each other's nervous systems by passing a book from one hand to another. The simple fact of writing in each other's notebooks, watching films together or wondering what we would do if we could work together. Disagreeing, when necessary, and agreeing, whenever possible. And by continuing to know that

Additions, subtractions

agreements and disagreements did not cancel each other out in a zero-sum game, but spiralled instead to new levels of connectedness.

Connectedness meant conversation. A great deal of conversation. The space and matrix of our conversation is our real studio, as well as the actual author of our work. Here, we lay the foundations of long-term investigations. These investigations are our responses to the realities we confront on a daily basis, both in Delhi and on our journeys elsewhere. We live densely networked lives, and currents and impulses from all sorts of sources constantly enter our consciousness and then refuse to leave until they have been accounted for. They could be balance sheets of mineral prospecting companies, a photograph taken while travelling, parables and allegories in dead languages, a chance conversation with a taxi driver, a sudden email or letter from a long-lost friend, a posting in a discussion list or blog, mathematical formulae, a memory of the shared viewing of a film, footnotes in the so-called 'war against terror', philosophical treatises, medical text books and boxes of photographs and documents in archives scattered across the world. In today's world, who does not contain such multitudes?

In the course of being each other's shadow, we became each other's databases, leaning on each other's memories, multiplying, amplifying and anchoring the things we could imagine by sharing our dreams, our speculations and our curiosities.

Most importantly, when we began testing our solidarities in the rough waters of actual practice it meant understanding that the genesis and development of an idea or a work takes place not within the sealed, hermetic spaces of our three individual consciousnesses, but at the intersection of all our communications to each other. The history of every work that we make is traceable to a series of moves made in

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messages. Everything that we work with is either found, fished or floated in the current of our constant chatter and in the things understood in silences and incomplete sentences.

It is not as if the ball of an idea, be it an image, a fragment of text, a sketch or a set of instructions, or a curatorial proposition, once chucked by any one of our three minds is automatically destined to travel, as if in relay, in the direction charted for it by the person who first threw it. The interception of the idea, and the turn that may be given to it once it is caught while it courses the world between our hard drives, may change the very direction of its flight altogether. Things may bounce back and forth for a long time, or they may acquire spins and velocities that take them into completely unexpected orbits.

This can continue until the ball comes to rest in a momentary pause in the game. This pause is often the moment when we find that a work is at a stage when it is more or less ready to slide into the world outside our hard drives. Usually this is a work of art, sometimes it is an exhibition that we have curated.

This changes the way we look at the creative process. A work (or an exhibition) is no longer the concrete materialisation of an ideal-typical form conceived in the mind of any one person in the collective. Rather, the work begins to occur when the idea it germinated in meets its interlocutory challenges and responses. The materialisation of the work, rather than concretising and containing authorship within an embodied person, disperses it into the history of the network of communications that went into its making. In that sense our practice, and our collective, is not so much an accretion of three individuals and their biographies as it is the lattice made out of the communicative acts between them.

We are sometimes asked who does what in the collective, and the simple answer is that we do not believe in a formal

Additions, subtractions

division of labour, or in the individual ownership of ideas. It was to resist the particularly deathly alienation of creative work in the media industry based on a fetish of ‘individual’ labour that we forged a collective practice that guaranteed our creative autonomy.

It is more important for us to think of whether an idea or an image has strength and contribute to an argument that we are working on than to worry about who originated the idea. Each of us has particular interests, skills and propensities (and these are not rigid or mutually exclusive), but it is in the playing together of these elements that our work gets produced. And a lot of things are cooked in the process of research, in which the alloys that make the final renditions are realised. Research for us is essentially a dialogic process. We bring different things to the table, and then work through a process of seeing how they speak to each other.

We also work a lot with other people — curators, artists, academics, writers, designers, editors, researchers, architects and performers. We enjoy this process and learn from these interactions. They open out new areas of thinking and bring new energies into our work. They change and enlarge the neighbourhood of our thought and practice.

3. Curating collectively for *Manifesta 7*

Our collective’s practice is built on an enduring process of conversation. In curating *Manifesta* we were enlarging the ambit of that conversation, inviting a host of new interlocutors to respond to us. An exhibition can be seen as a design conceived by a single intelligence, or it can be seen as that which emerges and is built as a result of a series of exchanges between different intelligences. We think our curatorial framework approaches the second model.

For *The Rest of Now*, the exhibition we curated at Bolzano/Bozen for *Manifesta 7* in 2008, we constituted

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an expanded curatorial collegiate of three people: Anders Kreuger, curator based in Lund, and professor at the Malmö Academy, Sweden; Nikolaus Hirsch, architect based in Frankfurt, Germany; and Graham Harwood, artist and new media practitioner based in Southend-on-Sea, United Kingdom.

Anders, Nikolaus and Graham were invited to contribute work to the show as artists, but also to respond to our curatorial ideas. So in a sense, we were enlarging the collective horizon of the curatorial signature, even as we were prepared, as Raqs, to take authorial responsibility for that very invitation. This enlargement did not bring any anxiety of dissolution in its wake, primarily because we are habituated to working as a collective.

Yet another interlocutory layer was added when Denis Isaia, our Curatorial Assistant, entered the scene. We worked in conversation with Denis to create a fold within the exhibition, a program called *Tabula Rasa*, which functioned as a conceptual vestibule located within an actual architectural annexure to the ex-Alumix building (the venue), between the territory of the exhibition and its outside. It had a door leading into the exhibition, and another door leading away from it, which meant that yet another collection of situations and practices could attach themselves to the primary axis of the curated exhibition, even as they retained their positional autonomy.

Finally, *Manifesta 7* featured another orbit made up of curatorial intersections. This was *Scenarios*, a scenography for the vacant fortress at Franzenfeste, which became the fourth site of *Manifesta 7*. Here, the three curatorial units — us (Raqs), Anselm Franke & Hila Peleg, and Adam Budak — founded a space for listening and consideration based on our conversations with each other. What was interesting about this experience was not that it meant an accretion of our

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individual practices; rather, the desire to experience a common ground led each of us, individually and together, to explore a form of almost totally dematerialised exhibition-making that none of us had previous experience of, or confidence in. It was as if the necessity to find a common vocabulary for curatorial practice required all of us to create a new language. That this experiment did not end in the stone walls of the fortress turning into a tower of Babel, despite the fact that they did end up speaking in tongues, says something about the happy surprise that collectivity can conjure on its way to finding, even if momentarily, a collective practice.

4. Arithmetic and geometry

To be a collective, it is not enough to simply understand the arithmetic of being more than one. Alain Badiou, in *On Number and Numbers*, asks:

Isn't another idea of number necessary in order for us to turn thought back against the despotism of number, in order that the subject might be subtracted from it?

What can this 'other idea of number' be?

What is required is the everyday working through of a geometry of relationship such that the 'work' happens in the angles formed by the linking of the arms of a figure. In our specific case, this necessarily produces a triangulation which can be acute, oblique or equilateral, depending on the circumstances. Any cones of any triangle can find mooring in any space that is prepared to receive their pointedness. Triangles can nest in figures shaped to receive them. Collectives can find anchorage in collectivities larger than themselves.

The data sets that astronomers work with at present are so dense that they require collaborative linkages between various capabilities and locations for us to even begin to make

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sense of them. However, this collaborative imperative does not preclude the possibility of individual acuteness and insight around the same material.

The same could be said about the times we live in. The complexity of contemporaneity is so multifaceted that we need a vast array of practices and sensibilities to be in sustained dialogue with each other in order to even begin making sense of where we are in culture today.

This balance between a collaborative engagement as well as an alertness to a singular sensibility is what we strive for in our practice. We see this as a form of travel. As in all such journeys, you strike up conversations with travellers that continue, even as paths fork, diverge, and intersect. Our 'work' in the Raqs collective grows in this way. The first set of conversations are between the three of us, and then there is an expanded field of conversations, with many forking paths, with fellow travellers and guests.

There is, however, in the end, nothing special or charmed about collective practice. Accountancy and architectural offices, musicians in bands, design studios, scientific laboratories, monasteries and law firms are all collectives that go about their business without necessarily romanticising, or being over-determined, by their collective dispositions. Their dispositions rely more on the day-to-day tending of their practices rather than the premature declaration of manifestos of collective intent.

The figure of the individuated artist and the solitary intellectual, which is actually just a momentary blip in the long human history of dividuated practices and dialogic forms of thought, may have prevented a consciousness about the space of art-making as a commons from emerging in a fulsome manner. But as artists, intellectuals and curators go about forging hitherto unimagined geometries with their peers, both within and outside the art world, the collective

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disposition for doing things together with others (which is in any case the normal, default mode in which humanity acts), will eventually overtake the solipsistic turn that art and intellectual life took under pressure from a generalised alienation of human beings from the ground of their sociality. As this process gathers its own momentum, and as we get used to our own plenitude, we will begin to be surprised at the lonesome spiritual frugality of the life of the solitary artist and the curator alone in his or her exhibition.

That day, happily, is not far. We can tell by counting.

Courtney Coombs

Collaboration: a tool for questioning hierarchical and/or authoritarian structures

The first hint that collaboration was to become an important branch of my practice came in 2008, when I co-founded the Brisbane artist-run initiative No Frills* with my Honours studio peers, Catherine Sagin, Kate Woodcroft and Michelle Woulahan (aka Antoinette J. Citizen).¹ An important step in my understanding of the value of collaboration, No Frills* was dedicated to supporting and exhibiting critically engaged, early career artists. Following on from this project, a significant collaborative relationship developed with Antoinette J. Citizen. While we have, to date, completed only a handful of works together, the collaborative process of

Collaboration

exchange involved with working with Antoinette J. Citizen has continued to impact the way I think about making work. As an ongoing dialogue and expansion of ideas, our collaborative relationship provides me with a discursive space from which to question and subsequently broaden my thinking and making processes.

My awareness of the inequalities in the art world, and the role of gender in this inequality, inspired my interest and involvement in feminist political action. As a consequence, I co-founded the feminist artist-run initiative and collective, LEVEL, with fellow Brisbane-based artists Rachael Haynes and Alice Lang in January 2010. We originally intended LEVEL to function as a single curatorial project showcasing local women artists. However, it fast turned into a permanent art space that housed three galleries, nine studios for local artists and a studio residency program, which ran from 2010–2012. In late 2012, LEVEL evolved once again into a more project-based exhibition and residency program, and it is currently operating in a mode that is chiefly focused on collective/community-engaged dialogic actions. The structure of the program and the team of co-directors shifted and expanded in 2013 to include artists Caitlin Franzmann, Anita Holtsclaw and Courtney Pedersen, and reflected our particular approach to feminist, collaborative and non-hierarchical engagement with the art world.²

While my involvement with LEVEL has been a chief area of collaborative activity, I have also developed other significant collaborative relationships as extensions of my studio practice. In particular, I have worked separately with Brisbane-based artists Brooke Ferguson and Caitlin Franzmann. While operating in significantly different ways, both these collaborations have expanded my understanding of making and collaborative processes. Ferguson and I have worked together sporadically since 2011, exploring our shared

Courtney Coombs

interests by creating gestural offerings of works that take place in public parks and exist for only an hour or two at a time. Our process involves developing the premise of an event together, separating to develop our ideas, and then coming together again in the public space for the event. In this way, the exhibition site acts as the space where we develop our provisional ideas and provide critical feedback to each other, we then step back and allow the works to enter into a visual and theoretical ‘conversation’ with one another at the time of the event.

The collaborative process with Franzmann functions differently. This relationship developed out of a fortuitous opportunity provided to develop a new collaborative work. We embraced the process of working together as an opportunity to test whether the space of collaboration could result as a truly equal exchange. For each of the works we have created together over the last two and a half years, we have endeavored to produce work that is a true reflection of our combined individual propensities.

As a consequence of these creative partnerships, collaboration has become an increasingly fundamental element of my practice. The dialogic nature of collaboration has assisted in the journey towards discovering my artistic voice, as well as having an impact on me at a more personal level. I have found that it provides space for a complex meeting of voices, dialogues and exchanges and provides a better understanding of others, as well as a healthy corrective to the (seemingly never-ending) patriarchal myth of an autonomous engagement with art. Collaborative practice has assisted me in engaging with and reconciling what Vera John-Steiner calls ‘[c]onflicting styles of work, temperament, values, and role expectations’.³ It has made a lasting impact on who I am as a researcher, a practitioner, a teacher, and a mother, and has enabled me to more critically and creatively consider

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who I am in the world more broadly. In her discussion of women's collaboration, John-Steiner describes the practice of 'connected knowing' as relying on:

An integration of perception, insight, analogies, and empathetic understanding. Such an integration of different modes of thought may be more available to those ... whose responsibilities span the private and public spheres, and who have the ability to shift between work-related and care-related concerns.⁴

This definition of 'connected knowing' is true to many of my collaborative relationships, particularly in the case of LEVEL, where we were as focused on the work that was being produced as we were in our desire to support and promote each other, women artists, and be involved in dialogue about the institutionalised oppression of women in the art world and society as a whole.

My involvement with fellow artists Antoinette J. Citizen, Brooke Ferguson and Caitlin Franzmann, as well as my experiences in No Frills* (2008–2010),⁵ and LEVEL (2010–2015),⁶ has afforded me the opportunity to work with some amazing women. It has not only been an enriching experience for me professionally (I would not have been able to realise many of these projects on my own) but it has also been personally enriching. These conversations with my fellow practitioners have been pivotal in the development of my work, and my person, time and time again. This knowledge making, combined with the development and longevity of the camaraderie that I have witnessed and experienced in these collectives, has confirmed for me that collaborative practice, as a political strategy, is a worthy and important one indeed. When voicing suspicion of hierarchical and/or authoritarian structures, I have definitely found there to be strength in numbers.

Courtney Coombs

Notes

- 1 *Frills may be included. No Frills* operated from 2008 to 2010.
- 2 I hesitantly stepped away from LEVEL as co-director mid-2015 in order to find time to pursue other projects.
- 3 Vera John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration*, Oxford University Press, London, 2000, pp. 100–101.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 With Antoinette J. Citizen, Catherine Sagin and Kate Woodcroft.
- 6 Co-founded by Rachael Haynes and Alice Lang, and joined by Anita Holtsclaw, Caitlin Franzmann and Courtney Pedersen in 2013.

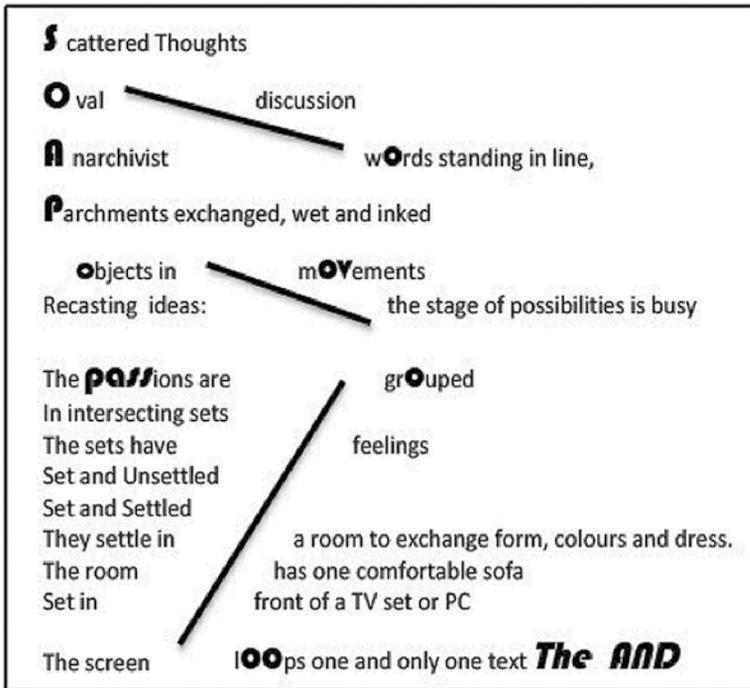
SOAP

What follows is a series of brief descriptions authored by individuals who comprise the collective SOAP, outlining a bio and history for the collective. Each response bears witness to a year-long engagement with this collective, and its relation to discourse, exhibition, the university, a public, and other arts practitioners. To avoid short-changing the singularity of working within a collective, these responses testify to the dynamics that operate within the group, areas of collective understanding and compromise, as well as potential for divergence.

SOAP is an experiment in communication: between old friends, teachers, peers, family, colleagues, strangers, guests and experts. SOAP is everyone speaking to everyone all at once.

Through my involvement in its first iteration, I have come to understand the purpose and function of SOAP as being a mechanism to view and interpret contemporary artistic practice within changing conditions. While occurring physically (in the gallery or elsewhere), practice also with this 'platform' comes into fruition through discussion, speculation and as document. SOAP takes a collection of strong individual artistic practices and observes them within the scope of current or topical affairs or themes — the collective, open to a changing and evolving group of contributors within each project, allows for diverse and unique outcomes.

SOAP evolves four years of sharing walls and abiding by individual studio demarcations into a unit of collectivity,



SOAP

discussion and critique that is not beholden to any one place, institution or mode of display.

The beginning of SOAP aligned with finishing art school and a conversation about conversation.

In light of feeling daunted/dissatisfied with the somewhat limited options for less established artists to engage in conversations about the state of art with more established thinkers, writers and practitioners, other than in an audience/speaker capacity, we set up SOAP.

As our website states at 22 Oct 2015 1:48pm, SOAP *is a collective of artists aiming to create a platform for contextualising artists' work within the web of texts, personal experiences, discussions and film.*

Collaborating through SOAP has given us a confidence, or maybe a legitimacy (even if just to ourselves), to bypass hierarchies for the sake of discussion that is accessible, experimental and diverse.

SOAP is being in art school completing an assignment and deciding to interrogate the power structures that define the stages of Australian artists' careers by attempting to contact established artists and ask them to help you with your assignment. SOAP is when Burchill/McCamley respond to you, and you don't even realise how established or famous they are until well after your assignment has been completed (you got a good mark).

SOAP is asking established Melbourne artists, writers and curators to come and chat with you in a (literally) underground commercial gallery that has lent you space because your idea sounds 'interesting'. SOAP is everyone you asked saying yes. It's like seventy percent luck.

SOAP is getting drunk and being unable to talk about anything other than the state of the art world in Melbourne and how you are trying to fit in, despite your deep-rooted

resentment of the current power structures defining the public/private gallery framework. SOAP is mostly just trying to cultivate a group of like-minded, art-motivated individuals that will keep you making work for the right reasons.

Nina Barnett / Robyn Nesbitt / Ruth Anne

Excerpts 2005–2015

(2005)

(2006)

We began in a shared studio.

This time spent together formed a bond based on dependence and affirmation.

Our first collaboration was a manifestation of this relationship, and a questioning of its facets and boundaries. The balance between these responses of support and ambition became the narrative of our work.

(biography NB, 2007)

In sharing a studio for two years at Wits University, Johannesburg, we spent much of our time together in silence, writing, or discussing concepts for our own work. Our relationship is a balance of dependence and separation; we

Excerpts 2005–2015

rely on each other for the creative process but have distinctly contrasting ways of thinking.

... two separate entities yet one collective whole.

There are always two sides: a left and a right, a back and front ...

(biography RN 2007)

Two artists, in close proximity and at a great distance.

We approach our individual work in distinctive ways, one subjective and intimate, another cerebral and pragmatic. Together, these traits play off each other, forming a new space in which to create.

(manifesto, Paris 2008)

Our future needs to be discussed, don't want you to be late.

(video text, 2009)

Sometimes, in these days and days in the studio, the same walls, the same cup of tea. Sometimes I look up and expect to see you on the other side of the room, working quietly, thinking, a parallel narrative in your mind.

(blog post NB, 2010)

Makes me want to move my hands back and forth like this ... to imitate the movement of the waves. At the moment I am trying get hold of a recording of the sea point foghorn, if I do I will send it to you.

(blog post RN, 2010)

It is integral to our work together that we meet periodically in a commonly foreign environment, one where we need to support each other and where we are responding to the stimulation of a new space in a similar way. This type of situation has previously had a strong impression on our work,

Nina Barnett / Robyn Nesbitt / Ruth Anne

and has facilitated the exploration of new conversations and ideas with a sense of urgency (because time is limited) and enthusiasm.

(application for residency 2010)

I think we can communicate through our radios. I'm sure if we listen hard enough, alone, in the dark, the messages will get through. They are our companions, so they can also be me for you, and you for me, for a moment.

(blog post NB, 2010)

Our collaborations have always consisted of polarities — two sides that sometimes oppose, sometimes converge. This piece is an attempt to merge our identities, to take on and interpret each other's memories, real and imagined.

(description of work, 2011)

It didn't take us long to start mimicking each other's words and patterns. Syncing in, I thought it would have taken us longer with all the time that had passed.

(blog post RN, 2011)

... Though both come from Johannesburg originally (and began working together there six years ago), the artists now live very far apart — Nina in New York and Chicago, Robyn in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Their work continues through a dialogue on their blog (www.coexistent.net), in pieces that are mailed back and forth between them, and during residencies where they meet periodically.

(biography, 2011)

To be close to home, but removed, like the solitude of an island close to shore.

(proposal 2011)

Excerpts 2005–2015

I want you to research the reasons islands exist. What makes a little piece of land pop out of the water and expose itself. How brave of it.

(blog post NB, 2012)

The ocean, the earth and airspace between our homes (in Chicago and Johannesburg) have become meaningful to us as a vast space of possible routes to each other — both on subconscious and emotional levels as well as physical ones.

In the past year, we have been referring to the temporary physical and psychological place we inhabit together as the island. This metaphorical ‘island’ is an essential part of our work together, as an intimate space we can share separated from our lives and individual art practices. Our island is the isolated time we spend together each year, it is the blog within a virtual sea, and it is remote thinking place that we inhabit together while separated.

(residency proposal 2012)

Nina Barnett and Robyn Nesbitt have been working collaboratively for eight years, both at a distance and in close proximity. Their work tests the boundaries and facets of a collaborative practice, considering the nature of two divergent minds in the generation of drawings, performances, artist books and installations. While apart, they communicate telepathically, through shared routine, and via online dialogue at www.coexistent.net.

(biography 2012)

Possible Areas of Research Pertaining to the Island:

Indications of the island.

Features of the landscape.

Relationships to water and sky (and traversing them).

Nina Barnett / Robyn Nesbitt / Ruth Anne

How did the island existence enter our practice,
and how has it developed in the past?
Psychological reasons for the creation of an
island — the urge to detach, to isolate ourselves.
The relationship between the temporary physical
space we inhabit together and the metaphor of
the island — where they fall in sync, the adapting
of the location and circumstances to make space
for the island.

(proposal, 2012)

We ate our sandwiches.
Cucumber and salmon on a brown seeded roll
slightly soggy from the journey.

We hovered above our legs so as not to get our pants too wet.
(video text, 2013)

Over time, we have begun to describe the collaboration as a
'third person', separate from our individual lives and practices.
Our sense of the other's presence, when together or apart,
makes space for a distinct way of thinking and making. Our
particular personalities (one subjective and sensitive, the
other cerebral and pragmatic) form a necessary duality in the
process, and in the work that results.

Our time together when away from home has allowed us
to construct this shared personal voice — through a routine, a
rhythm to the day that guides us through the new
circumstances and frames our experiences. This routine is
situational but secure — giving an anchor and certainty to the
unknown environment. There is quietness to this existence —
an awareness of the other, a sense of their thoughts with your
own, a second pair of eyes and ears receiving and interpreting.
(residency report, 2013)

Excerpts 2005–2015

These encounters have altered my thinking on this island and its reason, its purpose. When I arrived, I thought of this place as an outpost, a piece of isolated rock cast out in the middle of the sea. It now seems entirely more complex — as an integral connection between pathways, a place that is possible to know very well within a vast time scale, a collection of narratives all located specifically within the watery perimeter.
(blog excerpt, 2013)

Recently, the concept of the island has become a central theme — a site to be mapped, researched and known in its various forms.

These aspects range from the geographic, the articulate and the material, to the instinctual, the sensory and the subliminal. In drawing together these iterations, the imagined landscape of the island has become more complex. New mythologies and time scales have been recognised — the factual, the experienced and the fictitious all hold weight.
(exhibition proposal, 2013)

The artists have recently begun to refer to their collaborative entity as Ruth Anne.
(biography, 2013)

‘Collaboration’, we use this word all the time. It is the automated response when describing our practice. But it has become stretched out and frayed at the edges from overuse. We have found it no longer fits to describe our process of making.

In the eight years we have worked together, a significant amount of time has been spent in very close quarters — on residencies and studios in which we share the space usually occupied by one artist. These intense periods have allowed us to develop a subtle form of communication — the syncing of

Nina Barnett / Robyn Nesbitt / Ruth Anne

our sleeping patterns, eating habits and movements develop a way of knowing each other, of understanding gestures, hesitations, sighs and looks without the need for verbal confirmation. We think together, and form singular responses.

Together the plural 'WE' is replaced by the combined 'I'.

The 'I' is no longer the voice of two individuals but a third entity. A third, distinguishable self. We have begun to observe this third character, both as ourselves together, and from the outside — analyzing as we act. We have named this third entity Ruth Anne.

(catalogue writing, 2014)

once we were competitors
then we became dance partners
then we were explorers
now we are neighbors

The collaborative part almost dissipates ...
Ruth Anne does this for us. Without her we would
be lost in yours, mine and ours.

It took us a long time to become one.
(writing for publication, 2015)

Sober and Lonely Institute for Contemporary Art Dear Robyn

29 September 2015

Dear Robyn,

I've just reappeared from the depths of a Gmail search between us, dating back to 3rd year in 2007, when I first had my own internet access and opened a Gmail account. I read through most of our chats and emails from that year, up until exactly eight years ago today. On the 29 September 2008 (an auspicious day, and also my mum's birthday) I sent you an email telling you I got a call from Belgium saying that I was accepted into a two-year programme. This news was followed by fifty exclamation marks. I ended off the email apologising about all the exclamation marks, and also said: 'thanks guy — couldn't have done all our cool stuff without you!!! you're the best guy.'

Two things about that email seem weird to me now — firstly, I'm not sure I apologised for the exclamation marks (why was I ashamed of my excitement?), because we were still new-ish friends/collaborators or because I/we were new to

Dear Robyn

the internet and weren't sure of internet etiquette? Secondly, my gratitude to you as a collaborator is totally understated and insufficient. We both knew I was accepted because of all the work we'd made together as Sober and Lonely. Was I trying to play it cool in front of you? Maybe I felt bad that you weren't coming too. I was scared of how to make art without you, I think we were both uncertain of who we'd be after two years.

This email exchange and our early Gmail chats were meant to be back-up research or anecdotal sidenotes for thinking and talking about collaboration. I started putting together the guide or tool for readers to know who their ideal collaborators are (according to their horoscopes and various astrological criteria) that we'd decided to submit for the publication. I think it's still a good idea and we should do it another time, but for now I've chosen rather to use this text, this moment, this framework for discussing collaboration, to write you a love/thank you letter.

Going back to the apologetic exclamation mark email and the blasé, 'you're the best guy' note, I realised that that exchange was two months before our very first telepathic experiment. Maybe we weren't properly psychically connected yet, I wasn't capable of telling you how grateful and happy I was to know you (you couldn't read my mind yet). This makes me believe that our final art school performance, *An attempt to create a telepathic connection for a long distance relationship*, really was the magic trick or secret to our now decade-long 'artnership'.

As time passes, I'm increasingly grateful for the easy, fun, funny, serendipitous, and life-altering collaboration we've developed.¹ Of course if we'd consulted Susan Miller and the stars before 2012 (which incidentally coincides with the year we made our forty-year commitment to being S&L),² we would've had more insight into why we work so well together,

and also trusted that the two-year long-distance gap would work out fine. Here is what she has to say about my (Gemini) connection to you:

Gemini, you were probably seduced by the bright, inquisitive mind and stimulating questions of Sagittarius. Such an intellect is a magnet to you, without a doubt. Sagittarians are a fire sign, you are an air sign, and these two elements are a wonderful mix. You both love to travel frequently and discover new things, and since neither of you frets over dull practicalities, you could have lots of fun together. Study is also an important part of this mix, so if one or both of you wants an advanced degree, you know you can count on the support of your sweetheart.³ So important is the collection and dissemination of information to the two of you, that you may have met on a college campus or in another learning environment.⁴

And also:

The only slight problem with this match is that you both are so brainy — you think so much, when will you have a moment to feel? Hopefully, one, or both, of you has a few dominant water planets in your personal horoscopes to add more emotion to this relationship. Otherwise, you both will be so analytical about things that you'll give one another a headache. But this isn't really likely if you take care. This is a pairing that works naturally, without a lot of effort.

I feel like I should apologise for the sentimentality of this letter (and maybe only sending it to you hours before the submission deadline), but seeing as I regret apologising for my excited exclamation marks, I'm just going to leave it. Here is to at least another thirty years (unless one of us dies before

Dear Robyn

then) of telepathic experiments, bad paintings, hikes, Gmail chat conversations, bike rides and whatever our next obsessions are. You make my art and life better every day.

I appreciate you.

I love you guy,
Lauren

Notes

- 1 So dramatic! But true.
- 2 See: www.astrologyzone.com
- 3 Susan Miller is talking about lovers here, but I think the connections translate to other kinds of partnerships and 'artnerships' too. I can't seem to find the work relationship charts.
- 4 :D

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme

We are where we *can not but be*
at the tipping point or the point of foreclosure
We are a *we* not just as artists,
the urgency of the moment *demands* a new imaginary
After all what do artists as artists matter now?
We feel the *density* of the ongoing moment
See time as density that is breathing, folding, moving
See the archaic in the contemporary
And yet the *perpetual present* expands
swallowing all other moments
propelling our imaginary back into *crisis*
we are asked to *dance, dance, dance*
the excess of the moment
threatening to overwhelm us
producing infinite information
only to render it *obsolete*
Still we are in search of ways to see *beyond the immediate*
See the breaks as openings
We are here, on the fault lines of a shifting terrain
We are here, where we *can not but be*
seeking other ways of being and becoming
To be anonymous
To have many returns
To reappear as another figure

Contributors' biographies

A Constructed World

A Constructed World, founded 1993, live and work between Melbourne and Paris. Their practice moves between painting, video, installation, performance, event and publication. A Constructed World have presented major survey exhibitions in museums and art centers including: Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Villa Croce (Genova); Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne; CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux; and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (Melbourne).

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme work together across a range of sound, image, text, installation and performance practices. Their practice probes a contemporary landscape marked by seemingly perpetual crisis and an endless 'present', one that is increasingly shaped by a politics of desire and disaster. They have been developing a body of work that questions this suspension of the present and searches for ways in which an altogether different imaginary can emerge.

bomb collective

bomb collective comprises emerging artists Jess Miley, Ellen Buttrose and John Pagnozzi, whose work explores spatial practices that disrupt the perception and experience of public space. Working between the realms of landscape, architecture, design and live art, their work is concerned with the

experimental edges of architectural theory and the possibility of a performative architecture, which interrogates, among other things, duration, spatial justice and land-based poetics.

Catherine or Kate

Catherine Sagin and Kate Woodcroft have been working collaboratively since 2008 under various monikers including 'Catherine or Kate'. They have exhibited at the Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane), Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces (Melbourne), Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney) and Artspace Sydney. With the support of the 2014 Brisbane Lord Mayor's Emerging Artist Fellowship, Catherine or Kate trained in comedy writing improvisation and movement at the Second City Training Centre, Chicago, and worked with Texan duo The Art Guys.

Charles Green

Charles Green is Professor of Contemporary Art in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. He is author of *Peripheral Vision* (Craftsman House, 1996) and *The Third Hand* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), and he recently completed a history of biennials in contemporary art, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta* (Blackwell Wiley, forthcoming 2016), with Associate Professor Anthony Gardner (Oxford University), assisted by an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant.

Courtney Coombs

Courtney Coombs is a Brisbane-based artist, working with photography, moving image, installation, performance, sculpture and found objects. She is also a shy and introverted political activist grappling with the nexus of art and life, and thus her work is too. Her practice critiques the hetero-normative, patriarchal structures of both the art world and

Contributors' biographies

society more broadly using strategies such as subjective voice, personal narrative, humour, metaphor and reappropriating the clichés of romantic love.

Critical Art Ensemble

Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) is a collective of tactical media practitioners of various specialisations, including computer graphics and web design, film/video, photography, text art, book art, wetware and performance. Formed in 1987, CAE's focus has been on the exploration of the intersections between art, critical theory, technology and political activism.

Institute for New Feeling

The Institute for New Feeling is an artist collective founded by Scott Andrew, Agnes Bolt and Nina Sarnelle. They create art experiences in the form of treatments, therapies, retreats, nutritional substitutes, audio meditations and speculative wellness products. Their work responds to the wellness industry as a shifting, slippery intersection of capitalism and technological innovation.

neverhitsend

neverhitsend is a collective that formed in the wake of the 2013 Edward Snowden NSA leaks, which performatively researches communications ideology. The group uses a draft email in a shared Gmail account as a platform for discussion and organization, borrowing a tactic for secret communication from Al Qaeda as well as former General Petraeus and Paula Broadwell. Past projects have been shown at 356 S. Mission Road (Los Angeles), Monte Vista Projects (Los Angeles), 221A (Vancouver), the 21st International Symposium on Electronic Art, and in *VIA Publication*.

Rachael Haynes

Rachael Haynes is an artist and academic based in Brisbane, Australia. She is a Lecturer in Visual Arts at Queensland University of Technology and completed her PhD, an exploration of the ethics of exhibition practice, with the support of an Australian Postgraduate Award in 2009. Her current practice and research investigates feminist ethics, language and activist voice. Haynes is a founding member of the feminist collective LEVEL and is the director of Boxcopy, an artist-run contemporary art space. Hardy is her long-time fictional collaborator.

Raqs Media Collective

The Raqs Media Collective enjoys playing a plurality of roles, often appearing as artists, occasionally as curators, sometimes as philosophical *agents provocateur*. They make contemporary art, have made films, curated exhibitions, edited books, staged events, collaborated with architects, computer programmers, writers and theatre directors, and have founded processes that have left deep impacts on contemporary culture in India. The collective was founded in 1992 by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. Raqs remains closely involved with the Sarai program at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, an initiative they co-founded in 2000.

Ruth Anne

Robyn Nesbitt and Nina Barnett have been working collaboratively for eight years, mostly at a distance and periodically in close proximity on residencies. Over time, they have begun to describe the collaboration as a ‘third person’, separate from their individual lives and practices. Their sense of the other’s presence, when together or apart, makes space for a distinct way of thinking and making.

Contributors' biographies

SOAP

SOAP is a collective of artists aiming to create a platform for contextualizing artists' work within the web of texts, personal experiences, discussions and film/documentary.

Sober and Lonely Institute for Contemporary Art

Sober and Lonely is an artist-run space, a sci-fi feminist library, a running club, a museum in a cupboard, and whatever else you want it to be. It is mostly based in Johannesburg and run by Robyn Cook and Lauren von Gogh.

Concerted Efforts

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