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Intercessors, ventriloquists, thieves, anon. On Art's Divestment of the Self

SpringMeeting 2021

Part 1: 28 September – 3 October 2021

@ Performing Arts Forum

IMPORTANT! If you wrote us an email and your stay hasn't been confirmed via contactpaf@gmail.com, your spot is not reserved and you should contact us ASAP. If you have to cancel your participation, please let us know so we can notify those on the waiting list.

Since the announcement went out in July 2021, we have had a change of guests (see below)



This gathering, originally planned for SpringMeeting 2020, now takes place in two parts: the first this autumn, and the second in April 2022. In the many months since we began this undertaking, the themes have lost none of their relevance. Can aesthetic practice divest from the self? If so, how? This is an invitation to abandon, mediate, forge and falsify selves.

Today, Mladen Stilinović's artwork stating, "an artist who cannot speak English is no artist" could just as easily be rephrased as: "an artist who cannot speak about their own work is no artist". Is there a more exploited genre and pronoun among artists than speaking in first person singular?

For SM 2021 we would like to approach what is singular as already multiple, to reimagine the individual through mediation. We would like to question origin, identity and ownership in the act of directing attention instead to intercesseurs, mediators and intermediaries, to true and falsifying personae and to collective or common agencies.

Against two decisive factors of the art market today – the compulsion to speak of one's own work, and performance of one's own brand-name – we would like to inquire into other possible articulations of personhood, authorship, ownership, agency, milieu, transindividuation and production that do not begin with nominal identity, that do not start with or return to "I/Me".

An example. "Intercesseurs" (mediators) was the word portray his collaboration with Félix Guattari:

"Mediators are fundamental. Creation's all about mediators. Without them nothing happens. They can be people ... but things too, even plants or animals ... Whether they're real or imaginary, animate or inanimate, you have to form your mediators. It's a series. If you're not in some series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own... There's no truth that doesn't 'falsify' established ideas. To say that 'truth is created' implies ... a series of falsifications."

There are many more terms that could apply apart from intercession: intervention, interlocution, translation, appropriation, forgery, ventriloquy, bastardization, theft. There is an abundance of modes in which artists produce, collaborate, distribute subjectivities and present work. Collectivity or group work might also be an opaque

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façade that conceals and protects political strategies and undercover operations.

If our point of departure is not the individual but the common, then we must look into what we share at a level prior to or beyond the personal – language, modes of production and cooperation, sensory apparatuses and habits, and history. While we do not want to affirm dehistoricization, we recognize good reasons for its contestation that point to canons and canonization. In a canonical culture relations between artists serve to cement significance. Canonical artists are often those who are centers of influence or those whose networks include other canonical figures. What ways are there to be in dialogue with and through others, which does not further secure the position of the self in the canon?

Art occurs, regardless of whether it resembles the canon of autonomous, functionless, exceptional, single-authored, manifestations of the artist's will. Some occurrences might be found in invisibility, refusal, collectivity, name changes, shifting the locus of art making and thus its legibility as such. In a time of over-investment in the self as commodity and an aggressive disinvestment in collective resources and services – in order that we can all have the privilege of loneliness – how to choose the group every time, above and beyond the impoverished and impoverishing path of atomization?

The problems posed here seem ill-suited to individual inquiry. The world is neither neat nor kind. One's interiority cannot present an innocent starting point or refuge of the beautiful soul. For SM 2021 we do not want to think only about single author-artists, but also to dedicate time to those who make the work possible but remain in the shadow: performers, assistants, translators, and so on. The author has long been declared dead, but shared authorship remains rare. Theaters, museums and other institutions demand unequivocally delineated individuals who guarantee for their products.

For SM2021, we want to devote time to the dependent, non-sovereign, subjected forms of making art and thought. We are specifically interested in working methods that say no to "working alone". And we are also interested in artists speaking about the work of others in which they recognize something they themselves could not do. This is not about denying individual responsibility: one's individual actions matter as they materialize the world. So, we ask: What can we learn from art's investment in the divestment of the self?

Jackie Karuti

Subversive Film

Georgia Sagri

From the organizers,

Bojana Cvejić, Eleanor Ivory Weber, Nikhil Vettukattil, Stefan Govaart

credit
extra credit
to
the
author

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