

# Malene Dam & Ashley Hunt

# What Goes into the World: Treacherous Teachery and Arting in Art School

**AH:** Are you here?

**MD:** Yes.

**AH:** What do you think of the prompt from the editors of *Shifter*?

**MD:** Well, they are getting at questions that feel familiar and central to conversations we have had in many classroom situations.

**AH:** They are familiar to me too, and importantly so. They are questions that many of the people I teach with ask one another, primarily through a rejection of the binary that the editors note, via George Bernard Shaw—between *teaching* and *doing*—which in this particular case might refer to teaching and making, or “arting,” if I can make up that word. We don’t only share a disagreement with Shaw, but we require a shifting of terms, a reformulation that asks, instead, whether we see teaching as a part of our practice *as artists*.

**MD:** The prompt also talks about negotiation and collaboration as core notions, which for me seem to get at teaching and learning as a part of one’s practice—being colleagues, as different from a teacher teaching student. Perhaps the “arting” and making in this sense come about fundamentally through *conversations*: it is through our conversations with other people that we practice our practice so to speak. So to get back to the teacher–student relationship, how do we (and I use “we” consciously because the responsibility is both on teacher and student) bring about this conversation together?

**AH:** So on one hand we have the question of this very negotiation: Am I a teacher at one moment and an artist at another, or do those two activities have a relationship? On the other hand, while this negotiation might take place within oneself—when I teach, or as a part of *my* practice—we’re also talking about what this means to a “we”: *between* the student and teacher, or within a class.

There seems to be a problem where the overlaps between one’s teaching and art-making are understood in default categories of material and conventions belonging to the discipline itself (are the students then “my medium,” or is what’s done in the classroom “my art”); as opposed considering the practice to which one is committed, whose nature might not be discipline or medium specific, but is driven instead by a set of values or a vision of the world.

For example, many of the things you and I have studied together, whether the subject at hand was art, pedagogy, or both, have circled around questions of liberation and justice. Values of liberation and justice don’t necessarily privilege the classroom, as an academic might, nor do they privilege objects or “works,” as an artist might.

A practice predicated upon such values; on values of social change and a different world, require many spaces of praxis, some of which is art, and some of which require the possibilities, potentials and powers of classrooms, with the collective learning, research and thinking that can take place there. Others will have nothing to do with art or educational settings, but will have to do with different forms of action and thought—activism and political action, advocacy, community building, philosophy, and so forth.

In this sense, teaching and making wouldn’t have a relationship because they look similar, because they’re adjacent to one another, or because they involve a similar subject matter, but because they form parts of a larger practice that one inhabits in the world. Does that make sense?

**MD:** Yes, very much, and I want to talk about how this relationship is negotiated in the classroom, in our independent studies, in our conversations, in our art making, and possibly in its relationship to activism. Along my way as a student, I have sought out and created spaces for thinking through our larger practices. These spaces were sometimes the classroom, sometimes the street, and at other times private spaces. It takes experiences, conversations and conflict to arrive at these ‘values’ and strategies. Sometimes for me there is a difficulty in actually getting to the conversation of this larger practice, to these larger commitments in the particular classroom setting of the critique, where we then default to the comfortable common place of talking about formal issues, discipline and medium.

**AH:** So does this get at another tension then, or another distinction, in terms of the kind of learning that one privileges in the classroom? I ask because reducing the space of critique to ‘disciplining by way of the discipline’ contradicts the teacher–student relationship we’re addressing—one in which teaching is about helping a student to locate their values and to find their practice, rather than delivering values and a form of practice *to them*. Either way it touches on the larger notion of your point, that of a shared practice between those in a class, where the classroom houses a collective practice that we are formulating and pursuing together.

The challenge pedagogically is not to assert one's own practice as *the* practice of the class, or as that of the students. This is where an interesting edge, perhaps a messy one, can be found—between the collaborative and anti-hierarchical impulse on one hand, where one sees oneself “in collaboration” with students, while at the same time, needing to be vigilant about the authority that your own ideas, values and desires carry, asserting themselves even inadvertently (especially if the teacher's authority is merely *masked* behind a style of the horizontal). This is where our “Collaboration” class became especially interesting. And challenging!

**MD:** Or the “Prison Class”.

**AH:** Do you mean because my own practice is so centered around prison issues?

**MD:** No, not because of that. But in the Prison Class I saw a particular challenge in trying to understand our own positions within these discussions, or in fact *developing* our own positions. And how do we create a space that allows for the time to actually think through these notions. What would be the implications of prison abolition, for instance?

**AH:** The challenge I often felt in “Prison and Systems and Structures” was that I might be simply indoctrinating people, or enforcing an ideology, since I am, quite simply, against prisons, and things like prisons.

But on the other hand, it was quite simple for me to think about the ideological aspects of almost any discussion that goes on about prisons and “criminal justice,” which, no matter how objective they present themselves to be, continue to reinforce distorted ideologies of race, class, gender and sexuality through the figure of “the law,” “law enforcement,” and the presumption of binaries like “good guys and bad guys” and “us and them.”

I had no interest in creating one more space in which those ideologies could pass unsuspectingly and be reinforced, or reinscribed through our conversation, learning and working.

Of course, any subject matter—by the time it can be discussed as an object of study—has already issued from a historically specific constellation of ideas, subject positions, legibilities and politics, all of which are carried implicitly along in the conversation. Just as a part of our conversation involved familiarizing ourselves with the critique of prisons that has issued largely from the New Left, its ancestors and offspring, it also required an awareness that the ideological dispositions hidden within the figure of the law would be asserting themselves quite sneakily, as they are most likely already within us. Assertions for instance in how we discipline one another, in what we expect of institutions, laws, rules and rule-breaking, in our very perception of what “safety” means, in our very identities, and in regard to what all this helps to constitute and limit within our political imaginations. In other words, to even begin the conversation, we had to call these things out and question the very language we already have for prisons, which might inevitably be experienced initially as points of view, as indoctrination rather than critique.

Hopefully this manifested as an opening rather than an enclosure in that class, allowing people to, as you said, consider and develop their own relationship to the prison, and to decide what one does with that—whether that manifests in your art practice, in your academic life, in your civic life, or more deeply in relation to your larger subjectivity, thoughts and so forth.

**MD:** But we decided to do an event at the end, to do the making, the “arting,” if you will. People did performances, installations, etc., collaboratively and individually. I found a tension in that for myself; I had not come to a point where I felt like I could *make* a work through our class. I remember this awkward event we did. At this moment, the question became so potent: How do we speak about this, make work, invent a language around this that does not fall into those exact ideological dispositions? What is our language and position as a class, what is it for us individually, how do we negotiate that?

**AH:** I can see how that was a problem, if our awkward event felt like a way of having to “take a position,” especially if it was perceived as one that the teacher would be assessing.

**MD:** Could I, as a student, disagree with how some of these works were operating, in the context of the classroom, and even more so when talking about other classmates' work?

Just as it takes time to find one's position and to figure out how to speak from it, making work adds to that challenge; how do you develop these strategies? Having a class focused on the prison industrial complex, in some way, forces you to stake out a position, even if it's ever so discretely. There are ethics in a classroom.

Maybe this is the difficulty between having a conversation around prisons, and teasing out these ideological dispositions and so forth and then making work about it.

**AH:** This dilemma—between providing the critical tools to find one's position and being asked to assume a position—could that be a part of the difficulty of each one of us already having a position, which we bring into the room on the first day?

**MD:** I remember the first day in that class, there were close to forty people there, all wanting to join the class. People came in fired up. I also think of our Skype with Rachel Herzing from Critical Resistance (CR), and I think this was important. She spoke to what abolition of prisons might mean. It was amazing, and in a lot of ways it blew my mind.

When I speak about time, I think you yourself have spent so much time thinking about prisons, and you are quite clear on your position.

Then I remember you talked about possibly submitting something to CR, which at that time felt way too soon. We had that conversation in class, and we agreed that we were not there yet. There was so much energy and excitement in the class, but I also felt we were all in very different places.

**AH:** That was one of the most challenging moments for me, when I suggested making something more directly activist in response to where that excitement seemed to be directed; but at the same time, I was trying to be clear that my desire wasn't to influence the desire of the class, but rather to present the possibility. Nonetheless, it was a very good sign that, despite the ease of getting swept up in such excitement, you all had the space and perspective to make that decision collectively.

To be honest, there was a question in my mind as to how much of that hesitation reflected an internalized desire to keep our art practices sanitized of “the activist,” a problem that I too often observe, stemming from both the privileged sensibilities and the discipline-policing that pervade art schools—in terms of what are considered the kinds of practice “appropriate” to art and the tones of voice that are most tasteful. But I was equally self-conscious about the presence of my position and felt it was important to trust the assessment of the class. In hindsight your assessment seems to have been very sound!

**MD:** We somehow did come together though. I remember when we made a “mind-map” from the reports on everyone's group research, and the debate afterwards about the presentation that had some clear homophobic strains in it, and some of us got a bit snappy at that. I think we all came out of the Prison Class with a lot, but I didn't feel like we reached a unified consensus on the right strategy, or a singular approach to making work. It opened up to a lot of things and was a bit unruly in that way. I loved it and found it frustrating at times too.

And as much as I understand your point about art practices in art school being sanitized of “the activist”, for me the concern was how we would come together around a work for Critical Resistance. We all were speaking from very different places. I tend to think that these more committed collaborations will organically grow out of classroom structures, but thinking of attempting a submission amongst 30 people honestly made me a little anxious. The classroom is for me a space that allows for these differences to be explored, but not necessarily resolved.

**AH:** So on one hand we have the question of timing: is this enough time in which I can come to my position?, along with the difficult question of collaboration: how do I allow the particularity of my voice to be submerged into a unified voice and not feel subordinated? While on the other hand, there is the place of “making work” within one's learning process.

One of the things that I came upon when I started teaching at CalArts was this emphasis on classes making exhibitions together at the end of each semester—supported by the fact that we have seven student galleries on campus which we regard as classrooms. At first, I felt this was a bit too prescriptive, suggesting that the outcome of a semester's work should be perfected to the level of public presentation, which may not be right for some students, or for particular works, forms of learning and so forth.

What I find, however, is that this allows a space in which students don't necessarily have to take a final position. It does not have to be all that you ever get to say on the matter. Instead, it provides an instance of learning by thinking and speaking—not only through one's materials, media, processes, and so forth, but through the communicative acts of exhibition and presentation, including the responses one receives and the conversations that might follow.

The interesting wrinkle with the Prison Class, however, is that we decided not to do an exhibition per se, but to twist this trope of the school, calling it a “conference”—a way of naming a multi-headed performance event, while it was, in actuality, nothing like a typical conference. This made it even more experimental, and in the end, as you called it, “awkward.” This wasn't an assignment but something we chose to do collectively, and in my mind, rather than forcing people to *take* positions publicly, there was, as you said, the opportunity to have the presentation act as an attempt to negotiate one's position—to question it, to stake it out, to falter, to attempt to have none, or to address the contradictions that each of us might inhabit in relation to questions of the class, or to push back against them altogether.

**MD:** I think what you are pointing to here is important, that we made a conference, an event. There is a primacy placed upon individual studios at CalArts. That is where we make our work, where we have our studio visits. To this end, and perhaps with the end of semester exhibition, a certain notion of an exhibition is assumed: individual artworks hung and placed next to each other. I often had a difficult time with this, as you know.

Especially given what we said earlier, of having a larger practice and asking how we function in the world, these kinds of exhibitions can implicitly assume certain kinds of practices, certain kinds of work. But how do we allow for other practices to develop? For instance Social Practice?

**AH:** The Prison Class event was based in part upon a model that some of us had concocted together for the end of the “Collaboration” class the semester before: a circuit of simultaneous performances and interactions that revolved around a small geometry of classroom tables (ones you all had relocated from our classroom to the lawn, if I remember correctly!). It was an organizational form that allowed smaller collaborative groupings to bring their ideas into a shared and connected temporality and authorship-space.

While the Prison Class event was certainly different from this, for me they both held the possibility of articulating a different mode of production than the mode you're pointing to as the privileged one: the *individual studio*, and the *solo exhibition*, as well as the group exhibition in which singular works are held at a distance, their individual authorship(s) always clearly and stably clarified.

This scratches interestingly at the notion of *practice* that we started with, where practices are, in part, characterized by their mode of

production. Where, for example, despite a work's intention to be critical of capitalism, it might reproduce it nonetheless through its mode of production—valorizing individualist production, obscuring non-capitalist community and value, producing the same fetishisms, alienations and atomizations that the cultural reproduction of capitalism relies upon, despite what Walter Benjamin would call its “correct tendency.”

A perfect example of this, which you brought up, is the common approach we see right now to describing “Social Practice.” Social Practice is too often being seen as a new medium or a genre, often in ways that still preserve stable individual authorship. Moreover, Social Practice is rarely taken up as a form of practice—*praxis*—one that privileges modes of production *other than* what these disciplinary understandings can reflect; modes that are in contradistinction to conventional structures of authorship and spectatorship. The focus is so much on translating them into art historical and museological purposes that their historical modalities are altogether obscured—modalities rooted in the political and philosophical questions of the social, and the contexts of revolution and radicality from which they have historically emerged.

Clearly, this raises the stakes of our notion of a *practice*, and with that in mind, can I turn the starting question around? Instead of asking what it means to say *one's teaching is a part of their practice as an artist*, since you're a student at the moment, do you consider being a student as part of your practice as an artist?

**MD:** Yes, I do. And when I finish school, I will need to consider how to continue my practice. At school you are in a place where you are challenged by being amongst other students and faculty. When earlier I talked about how it requires time to develop one's positions, to stake them out, develop a practice and a language around it, all of this is done in the setting of the school, through having ongoing conversations. In pursuing this curatorial degree now, perhaps, I'm trying to find ways to stay in this setting of ongoing conversations with their occasional manifestations as publications, symposiums, exhibitions, projects and so forth.

**AH:** So do we both look to what happens in school as a part of a practice that bleeds beyond the school's boundaries and is porous to the world? Such that the politics of that learning space—the politics of teacher-student relationships, the architectures of learning and assessment, classrooms versus galleries versus individual studios versus collective workspaces versus learning in the field, and its temporalities—are continuous with the same politics in the larger world?

**MD:** YES!

**AH:** I feel that a primary way in which we exercise that is by building temporary communities together, and that in itself is a practice—a social practice—in which we produce the “we” you mentioned at the beginning. However, then the temporary location of that practice (our school) must not be the point or else, as an institution, our purposes are reduced to our own narcissistic, institutional self-reproduction. The point has to be the practices people leave with, what goes into the world.

But this takes me to why I wanted to have this conversation with you. I felt you were always very self-reflective upon the conditions of our learning—the kind of space and relationships we were drawing up, and that you were always a strong advocate for the quality of learning in the class. You asserted the need to dig deeper into things, to push ourselves and our understandings and I always appreciated the enthusiasm you brought to our classes.

With this in mind, I have questions about how all of this led to *Classroom Case Study*, the collaboration that Heather M. O'Brien and you began together your final year, as well as your choice to follow your MFA in the Photography and Media program with a Curatorial Studies program?

**MD:** I came to CalArts from the department of one of your collaborators, in the setting of the Art Academy in Copenhagen, Denmark. So perhaps I had assumptions that you as a teacher and artist might share similar interests, approaches and so forth with her. In this way you were familiar to what I knew, and to a practice and teacher whom I admired and shared interests with.

In our first class together, “Shootout in the Guggenheim,” you centered the class around, to put it simply, the question of *where we are left with institutional critique and the agency of the artist within the museum*. I remember thinking that I had to adjust my listening, that the context from which my peers were speaking was fundamentally different from what I knew from Denmark's state-funded museums. This very simply demanded all of us to be able to hear those differences together and think through what they might mean in this shared landscape.

I actually think this shift of schools and contexts has been very important for me. It has made me think about *how you enter rooms*, what you assume, how you adjust, how you communicate within a group of people that may not share your experiences or understand the context from which you are speaking. I think we are all challenged in this way in classroom settings. I became interested in how we can allow for those differences and nuances to be explored more within the framework of the classroom.

As a second year graduate student at CalArts, you are meant to do a thesis show. At that point I was working through what a feminist practice might be, how these have been historicized and so forth. Again I enjoyed a new look onto what I, from a Scandinavian context, I had learned a feminist practice to be, through understanding the feminist histories and practices tied to Southern California and CalArts.

But the thesis actually grew out of another collaboration started with my fellow first year graduate student, who you mentioned, Heather M. O'Brien. We would nerd out talking about notions of Social Practice; I would share my two cents from the educational setting at the Art Academy in Denmark, and Heather would talk about her experiences coming from a non-traditional art background, and working with community and non-profit organizations in New Orleans and New York City. I think we came to a point where we wanted to think through what such a project might look like in the context of my upcoming mandatory thesis (usually a solo exhibition in one of the galleries at CalArts). Pushing up against the finality that can be felt when you pursue these exhibitions, their celebrated individualized nature, and the

ART

Proposal and/or action and/or object, plus discourse.

While this is an inadequate explanation of art, it might be necessary to refrain from a definition since art, by definition, might be that which resists definition.

Arthur Danto makes the argument that art is defined through a theoretical model; he gives the example of the impossibility of regarding Impressionism as art until a dominant theoretical model defining art as primarily

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a mimetic practice was changed. Until that change, Impressionist works could only be considered as inept, hoaxes or the result of madness. A theoretical understanding of art had to shift from art imitating reality, to art creating reality through new forms.

realities of finishing school, how could we, as collaborators, extend the conversation we were the most interested in, while also utilizing this allocated time and space for something productive for us and our peers? Or to go back to the *Shootout in the Guggenheim*: how can we use and transform the institutional settings we are within and make a ‘space’ to think through and develop the questions we have together. This is very much tied to a feminist practice, in my mind.

We decided to invite our peers to have conversations with us in the gallery space over the course of one week (the time span of a thesis show). We made six round tables, painted with chalkboard paint, and gave people chalk pens to take notes with during the conversations. Afterwards the tables would remain, leaving a record within the gallery. CalArts is a large art school with many departments. We wanted to develop a conversation specific to the art school, and invited both undergraduate and graduate students. We would introduce the project in our email invite. We would begin each conversation by talking about the importance of listening, and that we thought of the chalk pens as ways of remembering your thoughts until it was your turn to speak.

I think we both felt that at the heart of the project were these conversations, along with how we introduced and framed them. We were interested in creating a space where we could talk about and reflect on how we had come to CalArts, what art practice was, how our educational setting played into this and how we understood ourselves as students and practitioners. It produced a space where we actually privileged this conversation and took it seriously, instead of just informally talking about these things amongst our close friends.

**AH:** This seems like a place in which your role as both student and artist found a knot that you can't untangle, offering something that was specific to the school context, but providing much more than just a mere extra-curricular supplement to the school. Instead it seemed to provide a space to step back, to step outside, to defamiliarize and open up the space, to question its terms and conditions, while using its conventions (the graduation exhibition, the school's time, the language of institutional critique and the tools of the classroom) in an unexpected way.

**MD:** It ended up making a lot of sense to me—the approach, strategy and focus of that project. Heather and I think about it as an ongoing project, but we have yet to determine how to proceed. I think this collaboration, combined with my research practice at CalArts, actually led me to shift gears a bit, to now be studying in the context of a Curatorial Studies program. It allowed me to think about my practice differently.

I remember an interesting point you brought up in a studio visit with Heather and me. We were talking about an upcoming critique and how we would deal with it, especially anticipating questions like, “Would this be art, what are the boundaries,” etc. Your strategy for those questions was “well, how is it not art?” Again opening up *what, how* and *why* we designate something to be art and using the framework of the critique to grapple with these constructed boundaries.

In the same way I'm now often asked if I'm an artist or a curator. I ask, “do they have to be all that different?”

**AH:** Yes, “is this art” can be the most predictable question, missing the point of the work altogether if the point is not “to be art” per se; but then again, at the right time, it can be the most useful to have to answer, so long as it's to analyze by, not to discipline one's work into being more conventionally “arty.”

Similarly, I think of the ‘artist-curator’ question with both limitations and possibility—on one hand it disciplines (why does it matter whether a cultural producer calls themselves an artist or curator at one moment or another?). On the other hand, it's a powerful thing to be able to switch between one modality of production to another, summoning the powers of one in order to surpass the limitations of another. To masquerade, to infiltrate, to productively pollute.

**MD:** I guess I'm proposing—through answering “do they have to be all that different”—to have other types of relationships, other forms of collaboration than you might assume between artists and curators.

**AH:** I accept that proposal! And I think it highlights really well the stakes of *practice*, as we've been discussing here—not in how one is reproducing the discipline, but how one applies it. How, through one or more modes of production, are we acting as shapers of the world. In that sense, identifying as either an “artist” or “curator” might be useful, but either may be limiting as well, so that we need to forge new positions, new distributions of authorship, new capabilities and powers, new modes of honesty and subterfuge, and as you say, forms of collaboration that defy the neat categories that “artist” and “curator” presume.

And now I'm thinking of your previous question, about “*how you enter rooms*.” We discussed seeing the politics of the school as continuous with—rather than separate from—the politics of the larger world. In that way, do you think that, whatever role(s) you inhabit will give you paths to continue opening rooms, reflecting upon how we enter into them and making better rooms for us to inhabit beyond the confines of school?

**MD:** I will try to! The notion of *practice* we have developed in this conversation strikes me—at this very moment of developing a “curatorial thesis proposal”—as something that is so very important in how we think about institutions, exhibition-making and collaboration. It will be the very challenge of insisting that *practice* changes how we think of processes, of viewers, of exhibitions, each as participants in conversations, and to this end, never as entirely resolved. How do we maintain community and conversations? That I see as a core attribute of the setting of school, going into the world with peers that I share practices with and holding them open for others to enter as we move beyond the confines of school. And to this end always insisting that our practice extends beyond the imagined limits and boundaries of the art world.

# Marjetica Potrč, Amanda Eicher, Ryo Yonami, Nuriye Tohermes & Mai Shirato

# Learning by Doing, Performing, Exchanging, Communicating

*In the autumn of 2012, Marjetica Potrč and her “Design for the Living World” class from the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg (HFBK) went to the Stockholm suburb of Fittja, where they worked with Amanda Eicher and OPENrestaurant from San Francisco and Kultivator, a Swedish collective of artists and farmers, on the project The Common Roof Kitchen. The HFBK students designed and constructed a roof, tables, and benches in front of the Botkyrka Artist’s Residence for the Open Café. There, OPENrestaurant prepared food to exchange for recipes, stories, and ideas from the residents of Fittja’s largely immigrant community. The students also collected local breads and recipes to create The Bread Library. The goal was to stimulate discussions among local residents about a new identity for Fittja – to envision a sustainable future based on traditional knowledge and urban agriculture. The following conversation took place in Hamburg on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012.*

**MP:** We have fifteen to twenty minutes, no? Any ideas? You have a lot of ideas.

**AE:** Well, I’ve been thinking about you a lot, Marjetica, ever since you said some time in October when we were together, “I never go anywhere without my students.” Which is probably not completely true, but I felt kind of the same. When I went back to the United States, I got a call saying, “So you’ll come back to Sweden in December?” And I thought, “Oh no! How am I going to do this by myself?” Then I realized I had a really beautiful group of students around me. I told them, “If any of you have the means and the time to come with me, it would be wonderful to have you.” And that’s how Ryo is here. So it was really you! [Laughs.] It was your way that inspired me.

**MP:** Back in October, I remember, you said your students weren’t allowed to work with institutions outside your university. Did I get that wrong?

**AE:** There are rules that prevent students from working in the real world. So unless they have special permission, a student’s work has to remain within the University. Which is nice in a way; it gives them a white box to experiment in. You know you’re not designing a house that someone will live in, but rather designing something or thinking about something in an abstract space where you can dream to the fullest extent of your abilities. But we are really trying hard to break down those walls and work in the real world.

**MP:** Ryo, did you have to get permission to come to Sweden?

**RY:** No, I didn’t. I just needed to have my passport.

**AE:** But I’m sure that if someone found out I was travelling with a student, and off school property, I’d probably be held responsible for all of Ryo’s cuts and scratches and things like that. [Laughter.]

**RY:** Yeah! Be sure you don’t cause them! [Laughter.]

**MP:** You know, when we worked together in Fittja, I was impressed by how minimal—nearly invisible—your actions were. In our class, we are interested in what we call *relational objects*. We are not into physical objects. We think that art or design is about *relational objects*. For instance, when my students Julia [Suwalski] and William [Schwartz] did a project about Fittja’s breads—*The Bread Library*—they created a whole system. But you were just exchanging something: you cooked and exchanged stories for food. It was a very extreme, nearly invisible performative action.

**AE:** Everything just went away at the end. I mean, in a way education is the medium, because I’m learning to cook recipes and learning about everything that goes with a recipe. You know, the culture that comes from the conditions you’re cooking under, how taste works in a different context. The people who collaborated with us were also learning about the [Botkyrka] residency and Konsthall and about the shift in their community. And I think everyone involved was starting to dream about what this relationship could do.

**NT:** So the performative part of your work is important?

**AE:** Yes. I mean, I don’t think about it as a performance, but I always do think, well, if we do something, and there are resources like food or ideas or human abilities, and they’re going to move from one place to another, there has to be some currency of exchange. It could be money— that’s really easy—but in this case it was fun to think about what else could serve as currency.

I think in the Fittja project the medium of exchange was performance, more than even the food or recipes. We took the recipes and on the last weekend made a big meal at the Botkyrka Konsthall. Elmas, a Turkish woman who had been working with us the whole time, did a performance just by moving her normal everyday life in Fittja to the gallery. What she normally does is sell little things—soap, razors, stockings or slippers. She brought everything to the gallery on the day of the meal and set up a table to sell things, just like we were setting up a table of food. And she was living her normal life, more or less, as a performance in the gallery. And we were doing our performance, which was trying to cook recipes from Fittja.

Do you ever feel like you're performing something? Or that maybe that is the medium you are working in?

**NT:** Yes, I think so. What we do is sometimes very normal and basic; it's just about how people live together and try to solve problems. I think it's beautiful to think of it as a performative act, because when you do a performance as an artwork then you have to think about every detail. I think it's the normal way we deal with situations; it's maybe not *normal* for everyone, but for us it's kind of normal—talking to people and then thinking of this also as part of a performative act. That gives value to the little details, which we like and which would seem unimportant if looked at without the glasses of an artist.

**MP:** Communication with people becomes one with the work; talking with people is just as important as the objects.

**NT:** Yes.

**MP:** As artists, we're agents of the process—mediators.

**AE:** Also, Marjetica, what you said makes me think of one of my amazing teachers, Anna Halprin. I used to attend her performance class. At one point I think someone was frozen in a stance with their hand held out facing downward and she turned the person's hand over and said: "Now isn't that interesting?" And the whole pose came to life and became the cornerstone for the choreography we were working on. I think the details of how you go about doing things really inform a project like the one you did in St. Lambrecht. Or how we worked together in Fittja. Some of it's natural and some of it we can talk about in words, but the way we work with people—the way we approach groups of people or individuals—is really very important in how the final feeling of the piece comes out. I think that's probably why it was so exciting for us all to come together in that apartment in Fittja in October. It seemed so easy to talk about the way we do things, and we didn't need to talk about it very much because we have similar approaches.

Marjetica, what do you think about that? About the ways you approach projects or even how your students approach projects?

**MP:** That's a good question. Through our involvement in participatory projects with local residents in different localities, the students and I realized that we are similar to what Germans called the *wandergeselle*. This was a wandering journeyman who gained experience in his craft by travelling from town to town. It's a traditional way of learning by doing. On the other hand, I am aware that we are now interested in local and traditional knowledge because we see it as a potential basis for a twenty-first century post-neoliberal way of living.

**AE:** I was thinking of my classroom at the University of California and how much the walls are really part of the education there. You have your studio and you stay in it. I was wondering how it was for you this semester, Ryo, to be going outside the classroom almost every day, taking our mobile classroom to different parts of the University. We went outside to look for answers to certain questions probably once a week, with big photo scrim and a blackboard and charrette cards sometimes, or with food, or something else, to create a space where we could talk to people. So I wonder, what that was like for you?

**RY:** I think it's very much based on the topic you're presenting in the classroom. So I don't think going outside the classroom would be valuable in other types of classes. However, in this particular class we were trying to figure out the future vision of universities in the United States. A lot of the time, we were outside interacting with students who happened to be walking by at that time, and they would interact with us. They didn't necessarily join in the conversation, but they would stop and listen to it.

At the very beginning, we only had some big screen stands with a series of photos taken by Ansel Adams. Most of time, students would just stop and look at the screens. They might have been listening to the conversation too, I don't know.

After we did that maybe twice, people started observing what we were doing – not really behind the screen but listening to our conversation a little bit. Then they would walk away. At a later stage, we *tried* to interact with students and faculty members. We set up a cupcake table and some blackboards and then would stop people and offer them free cupcakes or soup, and in exchange we asked people to tell us about their vision for the university—our University, to be more specific. Personally, it was relatively new to learn about our subject in a way that gave us a chance to interact with people from other classes or just people on the street.

**AE:** I also think that the word "exchange" is a little bit right and a little bit wrong here. Because in a way it's also a guess that this kind of exchange might already be happening. So if you put a cupcake or a question mark or something else there, things might flow in a way that we could write down, observe, or look at more closely. But each time it's a guess that maybe these ideas are already out there and we just haven't accessed them yet. And so I wonder, Marjetica, what questions you are thinking about now? Because you're beginning a new project

in Norway and I'm sure you probably have other projects that are generating questions for you.

**MP:** Every project we do together is different. Take the St. Lambrecht project, where we practiced making decisions by consensus, which was amazing because we agreed together as a group on every detail. Consensus is not like democracy, where your vote can cancel mine out. In consensus, a decision is only taken when everyone agrees. But after the St. Lambrecht project we stopped using consensus as a way of working.

Now we are preparing a project in Tromsø, Norway, where we are thinking about exercises, or performative actions. There are eight of them, from gathering around a rocket stove someplace in the open air, to dumpster diving. But what is important is that each of these actions comes with a certain kind of knowledge, such as revisiting the concept of *the commons*, or pushing ourselves to realize that we live in the Anthropocene Era. We have looked at the idea of exchange—the exchange of food, the exchange economy—and what participation means. We are currently reading texts by Markus Miessen, Claire Bishop, and others in order to understand more about participation. As outsiders, can we think and work with a local community to bring change? Or will we be instrumentalized? We are building an open source library around this kind of knowledge; it will serve as our foundation of knowledge for this year.

**AE:** And is this new for your group? You haven't used this kind of open source library for projects in the past.

**NT:** Actually, it's like this: in the St. Lambrecht and Fittja projects we were one united group. Okay, I have to add one thing; we are a mixed group and we all speak different languages. So at one point we sort of made up our own language. [Laughter.] Which was very beautiful, but of course it wasn't possible for outsiders to understand what we meant. If I said, "The stewardship of the land is such-and-such in Austria," then Marjetica would know exactly what I meant but someone else maybe wouldn't. Our knowledge was something very much within our group; it came and grew through talking. So this is why it's so necessary for us now to have a universal framework around our work. I don't know if this answers your question, but until now we didn't make this knowledge understandable for everyone. [Laughter.]

**MP:** I think the projects also serve as a link. For me, it's interesting that we somehow had an urge to do this because traditional studies of design don't do this. But what's important, actually, are all those issues that come before the project-like ethics and what your position is with regard to nature or in civilization—which have suddenly become very instrumental for what we do. So we also have to be aware of our position in the world.

**NT:** And this very much comes back to our group. I would say that what you did this year, Amanda—putting your class outside—I think this is also a little bit like what we are doing at the moment; maybe it's not different at all. The difference is for the others to be able to talk to you, but there is also the difference to you that you be heard by others. So you cannot talk your own language; you have to talk in a way that is understandable.

**AE:** Yes, you have to grow into the project. In a way, I'm still living my own life in the project but there's a certain point when I realize, "Oh, I'm living the project's life now." I think for us, by the time Friday came last week, it felt like, we're living in a sort of combined life of working together in Fittja. And at a certain point for our class this semester, we felt like we could speak as a group together.

**RY:** Yeah, I think the class did a good job trying to figure out the living style of an artist. A lot of people, including me, were expecting to make a sculpture or a painting, or something like that, in an art class called "New Genres." But it was nothing like that really. During the semester, people came to realize that art is about keeping the mind working and working. Everyone was thinking about how we could translate the vision of the university into an art piece. It's just very difficult for most of us traditional artists, who make paintings or sculptures. We were all trying to figure out how we could make a *thing*. I was trapped in the thought of making an object while ignoring the fact that there were different forms of presenting art pieces, like Amanda's work and OPENrestaurant.

We did some events and projects, such as the cupcake event and a movie night, and we were on campus trying to get people to pay attention and participate. So we were constantly thinking about projects and how to transfer our idea to the crowd. That was a new habit for us, I think: to realize that we were in an upper-level art class and should be generating ideas outside the classroom or during our break. And that was good because that is how we should be as artists, in my opinion.

**NT:** And did you find a way to attract people and get them involved?

**RY:** My part in this whole project was to make advertisements. We had two main events. I made invitations with my own hands and sent them out to people. For the first one, I tore sketching paper into small pieces, stuck on a little chrysanthemum, and wrote the event information down in pencil. For the second big event, I used chocolate kisses, you know, the candy. I tied them with a ribbon on which the event information was printed. I think that worked pretty well; people were more willing to accept it than fliers.

**NT:** The experience we had was that it's all about doing things personally. And best, of course, is eye-to-eye contact.

**RT:** Yes, yes.

**MS:** What's a good way to contact people? One can say, "OK, they live there, and we're visiting." But beyond visitors and residents, what we have in common are three big elements in life—food, clothing, and shelter. That's it: food, clothes, house. That's the beginning of all life.

During the St. Lambrecht project, William [Schwartz] and I collected recipes for traditional dishes. That was the beginning of building a relationship with the local community. We were strangers knocking on people's doors without an appointment [laughter] and asking them, "Could you tell me your family recipes?" It was hard, but slowly they started to talk about themselves—not only about their recipes, but also about issues around food. Collecting recipes was a successful way to understand the local knowledge.

**MP:** Yes, that's true. Amanda, what can you tell us about your exchange of food for knowledge in Fittja? You went back to Fittja half a year after your performative act. What has remained from the project?

**AE:** What has remained in Fittja? Well, I think one of the really interesting things I found was that this time when we first arrived, in December, knowledge of the project was really present. The day we arrived it was already dark out and nothing was really happening, but people saw the light on and came knocking on the door—and it wasn't people who were just passing by, it was people who had been involved in the project. They said, "When we saw your light on, we thought there must be something happening." And so the idea of that space as *a space for them* was still there. People were actually thinking, "Oh, if they're in there we must be able to visit and go inside." I think this might be troublesome to the other artists who go there, but the sense of that artist residency as a space to which neighbourhood people can come, is genuine and real. And then I think the idea of using a public space the way that we did is also still very present. So other people might be able to make experiments like that more easily. I don't know if they would do it by themselves, but the curiosity is there.

People's own interest in their recipes and ideas is also still present. We had come in with the idea of making five different recipes we had been given. And we ended up with a table full of different types of food, because people kept telling us about more dishes. So I think that exchange is very much alive. I don't know what happens when we're not there. I think in a way it might be dormant, but we just don't know. If it is, the feeling remains that it could be activated again.

Then there were other things: For example, Erik, the Slovenian neighbor, mentioned that he'd been thinking of us, so when he saw that things were happening in the apartment, he came to the opening at the Konsthall. He wanted to make sure we got the message to you, Marjetica, that he says hello. He said he always checks to see what's happening.

The Iranian photographer who hung out with us for many days became friends a little with Elmas, the older Turkish woman. He checks in on her now, and they have a relationship of solidarity in the community. So you know, even though those things are happening on a hyper-personal level, I think that it quite often takes an individual's leadership, a leadership voice, to develop larger changes within a community. And that sense of leadership is there—even if it's just being willing to knock on the door—this is really important.

**MP:** Would you agree that the artist's or designer's role in the process is to be a mediator? Do you think that's a good description?

**AE:** Yes, or sometimes an instigator. Also, sometimes I think of what William said when we were all talking together in October: "Sometimes we're the ones who do something in a silly way that allows other people to do it in their everyday lives." I think sometimes that's our role

**AUTHENTIC/ITY** (see also *Aura*; *Honest/y*)

Except for issues of provenance (whether art historical, commercial or anthropological), this is of limited use for assessing art despite how frequently it is used. One assumption made is that a copy is automatically a lesser version of an "original." Art, especially contemporary art, may deliberately oppose presumptions of originality and authorship, and may instead propose the copy, the simulacrum, the ready-made, the plagiarized, the pastiche and the multiple. Each of these needs to be assessed on its own, different terms.

Authenticity is also used to mean "authenticity of expression," as though the artist has revealed some interior essence in an unmediated way. The making of an artwork, whether conceptual or "expressive," entails an amalgam of learned behavior, invention and translation into form, all of which are complex, highly mediated processes. Authenticity may be used in relation to one's "core" being, as evidenced by the popular phrase, "being true to oneself," or even "keeping it real." These are almost truisms among artists, or at least those who comment upon or promote artists, and are seen as being the ultimate qualities for the making of art—qualities that claim to transcend the market, yet representing an artist's prime marketability.