

Performance Arts in the Realm of Creativity

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Abstract

This essay deals with the confused space of the arts in a society where everyone creates. It proposes an analysis of the creative role of the public, where it came from and how the public developed as a individual conscious of its multiplicity and of its desire for creation. The essay shows how performance arts supported this evolution in the last 30 years and where it encountered obstacles. In fact, we can observe that the public's creativity is mostly practiced in the sphere of Internet and new technologies, where arts are still too poorly represented.

The notion of the artist transformed along with the one of the public. The artist evolved from being a divine objective precursor to a composer of pre-existing materials. This transformation though has not been followed by systems of postproduction and protection of artworks, which seem at times to be obstacles for the artists to access the public sphere. This essay presents artists who chose to develop new medias structure of accessibility and speed as praxis and reception as an artistic form, proposing radical, fertile and never finished artworks.

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Introduction

Last autumn 2010, the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Education published a report that proved the feasibility of the arts economy. The minister and a part of the artistic community acknowledged this publication as a giant step for the arts toward a more stable status in Icelandic society. For another part of the community, this was the first step towards a commercialised standardisation of the artistic fauna. The artistic will for freedom is being shaken between the fear of privatisation and the always failing public financing system. It is therefore tempting to wish that the arts would be feasible because feasibility gives arts an indisputable space in society. The arts make money, therefore they have a right to exist, no one will discuss it. In the defense of the public funding for arts the perennial problem is one of necessity. When there is little money in the public coffers, then what is said to be necessary is what is paid for. Usually this necessity is what is at the heart of the discussions. The question of the financing of the arts concerns, then the relationship between the arts and the public.

In “*Sceaming Masterpiece!*”, Haukur Már Helgason explains that one of the characteristics of post-capitalist society is the replacement of the word work by enjoy and create.¹ When creativity becomes a production, it is logical that art becomes an economy. Haukur Már quotes Andri Snær Magnasson who says that “... *you feel the whip on your back – Create! Create! Be something! – that you think that perhaps the most natural revolt would be to do nothing.*”.² This article shows how creativity, which used to be the special province of the artist, is a concept that has replaced the notion of production. The worker, does not produces, he creates and is encouraged to do so. What is then the role of the artist? The differences between the artist and the public, in post-capitalist society are blurred and it is easier to understand why the place for arts in society is always compromised.

This essay is an attempt to collect information to define the roles of the public and of the artist today in the realm of creativity. It will deal with the adaptability of these two concepts in performance arts as one privileged viewer-response practice and take one example of a visual artist whose practice is relevant for this study. The essay will be focused first on an analysis of the public in terms of individuality, diversity and participation.

¹ Haukur Már Helgason, “Screaming “Masterpiece”?”, *Gjá*, ed. by Kári Páll Óskarsson, Reykjavík, Nýhil, 2011, p. 79.

² Ibid, p. 79.

The concept of the individual as a creator is not only an invention of the market to enhance consumerism but it is also linked to the development of the idea of the public as a multitude of individuals who are responsible, active and diverse. Apropos of the arts, this means that the public's reception is considered as an important part of the making of a piece of art. In this light, performance arts can be seen as a privileged practice as they foreground live interaction. A few examples of such privileged practices will be analysed in order to illustrate how they have reacted to and supported these new aspects of the public. Attention will be then given then to the development of new medias such as internet and new technologies. New medias are the sphere of action perfectly adapted to the creative individual. The reception of an artwork becomes active and productive. Of course this technological and cultural development in post-capitalist societies has not spared artists from a transformation of their function, of their relation with society itself and with the artwork they are producing. Despite such profound change, the artist's image seems though more resistant to mutability. In various ways and under various guises, the last century tried to find a way to lay to rest the notion of the artist as an enlightened, transcendent super human, a genius of Praxis, someone who is privy to a special kind of knowledge. The post-modernist artist takes instead the role of a composer of different elements that pre-exist the work of art, elements from which, according to Foucault, the artist should make fertile pieces of arts that provoke discussion.³

In the light of these developments, it would appear that the two entities of the public and the artist are in some degree of conflict vis-à-vis each other's space in society. It is interesting to see that, at times, the structure of production and the protection of the arts (e.g. copyright) seems a hinderance to a larger space taking of the arts in the spread out realm of communications. Artistic communities have two problems: money and accessibility. They realise that new medias, so easily embodied by the public, have characteristics that can be used in an artistic practice and might render arts accessible for the public. The last chapter of this essay will look at examples of different artists who make attempts in this direction and will be concerned with the adaptability of the performance arts, which tend to encounter more obstacles than other art forms as a result of their live character. To underscore the importance of perceiving the performance arts as both interdisciplinary and versatile, one visual artist will be presented and her radical attempts to use the structures of new medias as an artistic praxis.

³ Michel Foucault, *Qu'est ce qu'un Auteur?* Lecture at the Société Française de Philosophie, 1969, Bulletin de la S.F.P., July-September 1969, p. 12.

The Public

The notion of public that will be dealt with here includes both the audience, the people who come to shows in museums or theatres and the public, who are the yet-to-be-reached audience.

In Ancient Greek culture where the concept of public was first introduced, there was a difference between the private individual at home or at work, and the public individual one who came to the Agora. The private individual became a public individual through its contact with the others and out of his life of necessity. Public life in this sense takes on a very noble quality, one that makes one human and is synonymous with the capacity to organize together in order to project thoughts out of the sphere of necessity. If we go through the history very generally though, between antiquity and 18th century, the world is mainly ruled by nobles, church and kings who used the public space to impose their powers. We can observe that in these times any public event was organised by the ruling institutions, for example the carnival, morality and mystery plays by the church or the terrorising entertainment of executions performed by the monarchs. We can consider that it is only in the 18th century with a wave of nationalist revolutions that European societies experience in majority a more democratically managed public space. It would be overblown to say that there was no public space in between this very long period of time, but it was strongly controlled and repressed by the powers in charge. In the 18th century, the bourgeois abolished the monarchies and individual experience the need need to meet each other in order to discuss and organise, creating what Jürgen HabermasHabermas calls the “Bourgeois culture”.⁴

Habermas understands the salon events of the 18th century as a development of the Greek Agora.⁵ The “Bourgeois culture” takes place this time in the privacy of someone's home in order to enable women to take part. People gather in private houses to debate “democratically” on political or cultural affairs. In every private home, a space is made public to welcome these activities. Later on, those discussions will take place in other private spaces such as coffee houses. The public is no longer detached from its status or

⁴ Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitík*, Reykjavík, Nýhil, 2011, p. 33.

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of The Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence, 2nd edition, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991, p. 160.

his belongings as it had been in Ancient Greece. Habermas comments that these public platforms were the ideal space where everyone could take part and discuss democratically the creative production of mankind.⁶

It seems that the Greek definition of a public space as something essentially apart from daily life is an illusion that has followed the world of ideas. Whether it is concerning art, politics or philosophy, according to this belief, the public is supposed to give it time only when not concerned by the rest of its life. This amounts to saying that public affairs only concern persons of independent means. Furthermore, Habermas understands the bourgeois culture of the *salons* as a place where one can talk objectively and equally, where struggles of power do not influence discussions and where one can speak out of his own being. Though Habermas recognises that the arts and life are not separated, he nevertheless thinks of the public as one receiving entity. It seems that in both the bourgeois and Greek definition of public space there is a problem with accepting ideas in the real and concrete world of daily life, with its inequities and diversities. In the heir of these cultures, we can understand how the notion of art as a public property has been criticised. The meaning of the word public in relation to art has to be nuanced. Art is in fact addressing everyone but it is addressing the individual and the diversity of his own reception.

The Public as Conscious of its Individuality

In *Íslensk menningarpólitik*, Bjarki Valtýsson introduces the theories of Thorvald Sirnes on the difference between culture and the arts. Sirnes maintains that there is often a misunderstanding concerning “public arts” and that it lies in the definition of public as mass. He adds that the difference of definition for public and mass helps to understand the difference between culture and the arts. He defines culture as a form that has an objective for the group. It can be for example a political or moralistic objective. Culture is one message with a specific meaning addressed to the mass. This form addresses the rational being, as opposed to the arts which affect the sensitive being. The arts’ objective is not to render a thought universal; it is rather to transform thought into sensitive material. As a result, the artist cannot control the outcome of the transformation process. The reception of the piece alone but also, and to a large extent, on who receives it, where it is received and how it is received.⁷

Sirnes theory is interesting because it places reception at the core of the definition

⁶ Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitik*, p. 33.

⁷ Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitik*, p. 22.

of art. Art can be considered as different from other cultural practices in that its reception is as much a part of the process as the artistic object itself. If the content of the art piece is as much in the reception as in the piece itself, it follows that the art piece is always changing. The artwork depends on the phenomenon of the meeting. Each time there is a new viewer, the piece of art is transformed. To consider the reception of the audience as the condition of realisation of the arts gives the audience a much more important role. A member of the audience becomes conscious that his reception is important, that he is responsible for this last and is therefore an active participant in the process, not a passive receiver of the work of art.

The public as Conscious of its Diversity-Inequalities

The public plays a key role in the making of the arts because of the individuality of his reception. However this individuality contains diversity and consequently inequalities. Pierre Bourdieu worked on furthering our understanding of how these inequalities are organised in culture and education and what exactly is what he called “the cultural capital” of the individual.⁸ According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is embodied, objectified or institutionalised. It is an acquired capital and results from a conscious action to improve one's mind. Bourdieu explains that embodied cultural capital concerns the individual, then. This capital builds itself inside family walls and with the objects, rituals collected in this private space and is dependent on the social time spent in the family home. This social time gives space to the transformation of these objects into cultural capital. One of the most obvious forms of embodied cultural capital is language. Bourdieu discerns a second factor of inequality in the objectified capital. This capital permeates the objects of cultural production: books, paintings, machines. Such objects are economic capital if they are only sold but can be embodied if, for example, one receives an explanation of what the painting is about. Bourdieu asserts that the educational system is cultural capital in its institutionalised form. It is intimately linked to the economy capital as it educates the workers needed on the labour market. Cultural capital is therefore far from being equal; it is not uniformised and creates inequalities.⁹

Bourdieu distinguishes three sources of differences in cultural capital that lead to a

⁸ Bourdieu Pierre, “Les trois états du capital culturel”, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol.30, november 1979. p3-6. Doi:10.3406/arss.1979.2654 –URL: http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/arss_0335_5322_1979_num_30_1_2654 Accessed 10.02.2011

⁹ Ibid.

diverse reception of art production. These three states are crucial in understanding the role of the audience, because they consider the individual simultaneously in three contexts: the family, the school and the economy. The individual, before he decides by virtue of some kind of an enlightenment to be interested in the arts, is the product of those three modelling structures. This theory also demonstrates that the reception of the arts can not be analysed in groups: rather it concerns individuals who have multiple identities. The individual's reception of a piece of art might itself be inherently diverse. Discussions on the arts often revolve around the audience wanting to be sure that it understands the artwork correctly and that its members all share this understanding. In *Theatre and Audience*, Helen Freshwater illustrates that this is still a commonplace idea by virtue of the fact that even art critics often refer to the audience as "it" or even worse as "we", making a general rule out of their own reception of the piece.¹⁰ But we can see that, in the light of Bourdieu's work, even one individual can have many interpretations.

Empowerment and Accessibility of the Art Piece

Attempts on empowerment of the audience in performance making

The importance of reception is often taken as the definition of performance art. as Peter Brook observed in *The Empty Space*, as soon as there is a live meeting between a viewer and a doer, there is performance.¹¹ The act of performance is defined as much by the action as by its reception. This particular aspect of performance was researched as well in other art forms, under the name of reader-response theory. During the 21th century, artists have been growing conscious of reception specificities. In performance arts, the awareness of the reception was visible in the re-thinking of the architecture and space of the theatre. The so-called 4th wall was deinstitutionalised, being accused of interfering with the communication between the audience and the stage. The architecture of theatres changed; in 1974 Peter Brook installs his company in the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, in Paris. The theatre is old and in a really bad shape. Brook decides not to restore the great architecture of the theatre as doing so would not be in the favor of his works.¹² The

¹⁰ Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience*, Theatre &, Ed. by Jen Harvie and Dan Rebellato, place of publication unknown, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 8.

¹¹ Peter Brook. *L'espace vide: Ecrits sur le théâtre*, 2nd edition, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1977, p. 25.

¹² Peter Brook, 1974. Extraxts of Geneviève Latour and Florence Claval, *les Théâtres de Paris*, ed. by the Délégation à l' Action Artistique de la ville de Paris, 1991. URL: http://www.bouffesdunord.com/etheatre_historique.cfm Accessed 28.02.2011.

space of theatre is raw, with looming cement walls as background and the stage is noninexistent. The theatre architecture changes in order to give more possibilities to experiment with this relationship. Following changes in the architecture of the building itself, the traditional spaces of the audience and the performers changes. Theatre invests public area, the Living theatre invests as much demonstrations as theatres, taking part for example in the demonstration in 1968 when the theatre Odeon in Paris was invested. Demonstrators came out of the theatre with costumes and got back in the streets.¹³ In the last 30 years, the space of the audience becomes more than a tool to get the audience physically involved in the performance. Reception is an artistic concept in itself. In the piece *Crystall* performed for Reykjavík Dance festival in 2005, reception can become an artistic material. Alice Chauchat and Alix Eynaudi invite the audience to stay on stage in a moving fog while Alix wanders around the stage sometimes visible, sometimes not. The audience takes part in the performance just by being there and receiving the work. The audience becomes conscious that its reception is a creative product of its own, as the spectators are the gaze of others as much as the performer herself.

The interest of artistic communities in reception issues, led them to consider the audience as active. Therefore more than changing its space, the audience can participate in the theatrical actions. It is pushed to become part of the process not only by making sense but by making choices, by actively participating in the meeting of the performance. In the piece *Rythm 0* (Studio Morra, Naples, 1974), Marina Abramovitch just stood close to a table where the audience could find objects to be used on the performer as they wished. Among those objects were perfums, chains, scissors and a loaded gun.¹⁴ In this piece Abramovitch provoked the museum-goer into thinking of himself as a polymorphous entity, the member of the audience was forced to think about himself not only as part of a respectful art audience but also as an individual with its dark side. Art addresses the plurality of the individual's reception, not only to its rational self. Artists as Abramovitch attempt to erase the difference between the artists and the audience and to show how art belongs to concrete reality. We can see that all those strategies make the audience more conscious about its reception but to push this idea a little further would be to empower the audience of the artistic material out of the artistic structure. In fact if it would be a logical development of those theories if the audience could really use the

¹³ Daniel B. Yates, *The theatre of Protest*, Culture wars, 2011. URL: http://www.culturewars.org.uk/index.php/site/article/the_theatre_of_protest/ Accessed 28.02.2011.

¹⁴ Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience*, p. 62.

artistic material housed in museums and theatres. We could imagine that such an empowerment could also lead to the arts acquiring a more stable status in the society. The arts would just be part of society and stop being reserved for special areas.¹⁵

Some theatre groups make vigorous efforts to erase the barrier between life and performance. For example, the Blast Theory group based in London for example with its production: *Uncle Roy All Around You*, made in 2003, planned a performance that took place simultaneously on the web and on the streets of London. Participants on the streets followed orders partially given by the virtual participants of the game. The winners of the game were asked to help other participants in a next game. In this performance, the Blast Theory used life as the framework for the performance.¹⁶ The company bases its experiences on theories developed by Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst on the specific nature of the audience. They consider that the audience is “diffused”¹⁷. In fact they believe that with the development of media and communication technologies, everyone is always already an audience. Being an audience has become a defining feature of everyday life, reception is not anymore conscious and it is not reserved for a special event. With *Uncle Roy All Around You*, Blast Theory intends to make the audience conscious of its performativity in daily life and to stress the limitations this performativity is framed in by making the audience experience this restricted participation. I would say that in this case, Blast Theory brought life into its performance.¹⁸

Pro-sumers and Remix-culture

In our digitalised and mediatised society, performance has become a phenomenon of daily life. As Abercrombie and Longhurst assert, this condition of performativity in daily life is developed through media and communicative technologies.¹⁹ This performative state refers to the showing of an action to others. The individual participates, creates some source that is to be seen by others. We can recognise this kind of creative empowerment in the participation of the public on Internet. Internet is the space where the virtual takes place in reality. Facebook is the clearer example of this phenomon. Virtual communications have become undoubtedly a part of real life of the individual. Internet is a space through which the public practices communication, it is a public space.

¹⁵ Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* , p. 68.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 69.

¹⁹ Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* , p. 69.

Of course, Facebook is not the most evolved public space we know of, as it is market driven and kept under the control of a few corporations, but it is anyway a virtual space that the individual empowers easily and integrates as its reality. It is worth taking as a reference of complete empowerment of the public and of the acceptance of a virtual space as part of real life.

New medias propose tools suiting the evolution of the role of public: Internet and new technologies are directed to the individual, the material proposed is infinitely diverse. Furthermore it proposes a structure that is fast, easy and for the most free of access. The Internet consumer is proposed a diversity of informations and this reflects on his own individual diversity. Internet's user can choose what he looks at and which are the nets of communication he prefers to refer to, creating his own structure of action and reception. In *Íslensk menningarpólitík*, Bjarki Valtýsson makes clear that this freedom is however relative. In fact Internet's links are programmed by someone else, they are arranged to serve the best the interest of the big Internet corporations. He adds that it is important to acknowledge that not everyone gets the same technical accessibility, that the speed and capacity of using new medias' tools depends on financial issues.²⁰ A public space with these limitations mostly controlled by financial parameters is obviously not an ideal space of actions for arts which seek to meet its audience on a stable ground. However, there is a public empowerment of the Internet's materials. According to frequent debates on copyright laws in Internet sharing bases of music or movies, the public goes further in this empowerment than the big corporations would like it to. The public does not only use the new medias, it invades it and changes it to its need. The public is in this way showing to the arts how to use new medias' structure instead of ignoring it.

In parallel of the Internet developed the digital technologies, which enables its users to transform material they get access to. These technologies are also made to be integrated to the net structure, where one can find material to transform and also where technologies are easily accessible. The user is not only given the responsibility of his choices, but also given tools to produce by himself. Stian Grøgaard explains in his essay *Publicness: The site-Specificity of a Concept*, that art's practice has been democratised by the easiness to access digital technologies. He asserts that the public in the last decades accessed tools that permit to realise an object, to produce without needing to be educated in any practice. The public is therefore a producer and uses the internet to render his products accessible as well, participating in the

²⁰Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitík*, p. 246.

elaboration of an infinite data of creative material accessible for everyone. Stian Grøgaard makes clear though, that the creativity he talks about concerns any kind of products: artistic or not.²¹ Creativity in this sense is just the ability to transform material into another material. It is the result from the man's desire for productivity. A kind of new pride of the worker, in the marxist understanding of this term.

Bjarki Valtýsson mentions that this practice is a new form of culture, the Remix-culture.²² Of course the idea of remix as already been present in the arts and without the help of technologies. The technic of making art with pre-existing material is not new and had a large impact on the arts world, earlier in the last century, with for example the dadaist movement and the technic of collages. However, in the case of internet sharing, the accessibility places the remix culture at the use of the public and out of the artistic institutions.²³ Bjarki Valtýsson uses the word of pro-sumer to describe this individual who is simultaneously a consumer and a producer.²⁴ According to him the art community is facing the challenge to accept to use the accessibility that new technologies propose: “*Að mínu mati er því eitt helsta menningarpólitíska keppikefli 21. aldarinnar að búa til opið og skapandi netsamfélag í stað þeirrar „leyfismenningar“ sem markaðsvæn höfundalög renna stoðum undir*”.²⁵ He acknowledges that the participation of the pro-sumer is productive but that the material that he used is controlled and that if art community would participate in the sharing, The material would be more rich and diverse. The reasons for this shiness from the artistic communities is on one hand economical, this method of full accessibility goes in fact against the well established system of the copyrights. On the other hand the arts communities fear that by making arts more accessible, or by saying that everyone can try to use artistic material, the arts will disappear in a mediocre popular practice, where the artist will have no space. The role of the artist therefore has to be reconsidered in the light of the public's evolution as a productive and creative entity.

²¹ Stian Grøgaard, “Publicness: The Site-Specificity of a Concept.”, *What Does Public Mean? Art as a Participant in the Public Arena*, ed. by Tone Hansen, Oslo, Torpedo press, 2006, p. 36.

²² Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitík*, p. 244.

²³ Dmytri Kleiner, “A Contribution to the Critique of Free-Culture” *The Telekommunist Manifesto*, ed. by Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer, Amsterdam, Network Notebooks n°3, 2010, p. 32.

²⁴ Bjarki Valtýsson, *Access Culture - The Remixable Culture of Prosumers and the Cultural Policy of the European Union*. PHD Thesis, 2008, p. 1. URL: http://rudar.ruc.dk/bitstream/1800/3999/1/AccessCulture_Pressemeddelelse.pdf. Accessed 16.02.2011.

²⁵ Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitík*, p. 243.

The Artist-Composer

In *The social Production of Art*, Janet Wolff studies how the concepts of art and artist transformed in relation with the rest of society. She explains that the artist's status as marginalised from society developed since Renaissance and is still anchored in the concept of the artist today. She adds that this marginalisation comes from the Renaissance's idea of the artist as a genius.²⁶ The genius artist fits to the visions of the public through the Greeks and Habermas great ideals, because it separates arts and the artist, from the common life of necessities and inequalities. As in these theories of the ideal of a public space, the artist whom Janet Wolff writes about, is a kind of super human who manages to live outside of his society and to bring from his retreat some kind of pure reflection on society. Janett Wolff analyses that this notion of the artist as an illuminated genius is "*one particular form of an historical figure (that) is transformed into a universal definition.*"²⁷

She writes that at the same time was created a distinction between the noble or "high arts" and the lesser. In the post-capitalist context of culture, the equivalence would be to name it the arts versus pop-culture. She argues that the rise of individualism and the changes in the means of production, as happened in capitalist development, widened the gap between work and arts. The less noble arts are related to the work sphere, they are arts that produce items with a utility, like handcrafts. Wether the noble ones; the arts are not related with work and neither with utility. Janet Wolff adds that work and art grew away from each other because work lost its creative value. As art lost its place in the market and therefore in the social structure, creativity became the monopole of arts.²⁸ The worker could not create, except from a classified less noble range of arts, and the artist could not work. According to this concept of the artist as standing on the side of society, art can be neither political, nor social or even commercial. Art is therefore an unspoiled production of human being. We can perceive the affect of these historical changes ending with the division of work and arts in our post-capitalist society. As I said in the last chapter, in our society the individual is encouraged to create on his social time out of the work. His creativity is only using material of a less noble kind called pop-culture that

²⁶ Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 2nd edition, London, Macmillan Press, 1993, p. 17.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

is rendered accessible by Internet's corporations. On the other side, according to this theory, the artist is only noble if he works for art's sake, his freedom is none if he does financially or politically motivated art work.

No Divine Standpoint

Bert O. States writes about the Phenomenologicals attitude in the realm of art making and theatre more specifically. He recalls that for phenomenologists there is no such thing as a "Divine Standpoint". It is demonstrated with the example of the perception of a mailbox. From wherever we look at the box, we can never see every side of it, anyway, we are able to describe the box or to visualise it entirely in our mind. Phenomenologists comment that to complete our perception of the world, there is always a part of the process called "apperception", that is a creation of our mind to complete the perception of material objects. As a consequence, the individual can not really be detached as an independant entity from his perception of the rest of the world.²⁹ Phenomenology compromises the myth of the artist as standing on the side of the society with an objective point of view. The artist's work is rather then the creative re-production of his own individual perception of the world. Moreover this reinforces the idea that there is no collective perception and that reception is also individual. According to phenomenology, the art piece is as much a creation of the audience than of the artist. The artist can therefore not expect to apply the schema of sender-message – receiver, in its strictest frame but he needs to consider his own art as the produce of his being in the world.

This theory reveals the creative potential of every individual. It gives credit to the public as creator of his own reality as a daily practice. Art becomes then as a second level of apperception. Sartre says world is a theatre, and in fact we can see the similarity of the phenomenon of perception of the world and of a theatre play.³⁰ However the theatre is maybe the only place where the audience practices "apperception" in a conscious way. The audience knows that what he sees, stands for something he needs to mentally create, an abstraction. Performance is then the game of re-presentation of the phenomenon of the meeting between the individual and its world. In other words during a performance is the only moment when we are consciously doing the process of de-coding.

²⁹ Bert O. States, "The Phenomenological attitude", *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. by J.G. Reinelt and J. R. Roach, The university of Michigan Press, 2007, p. 371.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 372.

What is the Author's Role?

The post-structuralist movement broached this subject from another point of view, considering the author is rather a producer-composer than a creator. Post-structuralism as structuralism, from which it developed, propose to analyse the world as a structure, and culture as a part of this structure. They consider this structure to be abstract, a creation of the mind in relation with its environment. Post-structuralists this time contrary to structuralists do not think that it is possible to analyse this structure scientifically. They propose for example to look at culture as composed of more incoherent systems.³¹ The structure is pictured as a big net of communications. The artist like anyone else is both a receiver and a producer of information of this always changing net but according to this theory is not able to understand it scientifically. consequently the role of the author as a message delivery man is at stake. The author can at the best, compose within the materials of this structure. In the lecture Foucault addressed in 1969 titled “*What is an author?*” he attempts to explain what is, in this philosophical context, the role of the author.

In order to get closer to what is the act of making art, Foucault analyses the name of author, its meaning and the way it is used. He asserts that the author is not a physical entity. The name of the author is a multiple name, it is not only the person, but his time and society, his status in society, his bibliography, etc.³² Foucault argues that the author, as it is analysed in literature studies as an individual in relation to his private and public environment, should not participate in the interpretation process. References to the society or the name of the author are sometimes on the way of a more total perception of the piece for the reader. Sartre said about Paul Valéry: “*Valéry is an intellectual bourgeois but not every intellectual bourgeois is Valéry.*”³³ Instead of taking away the role of the author, this sentence gives him a bigger role than just a historical reference. It accords to the phenomenologists' point of view that the artist-author is not only a product of his time, rather a producer of his time. It is in the way he re-produces the net of communication that matters, not the fact that he refers to it.

Foucault asserts though, that the author is necessary because without an author there

³¹ Mark Fortier, *theory/theatre: an introduction*, 2nd edition, place of publication unknown, Routledge, 2002, p. 58.

³² Michel Foucault, *Qu'est ce qu'un Auteur?*, p. 11.

³³ Alexander Riley, *Crisis, habitus, and intellectual trajectory*, *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, XLII-129, 2004. URL : <http://ress.revues.org/433> Accessed 21.02.2011.

is no art work. The author is the one to decide whether the work will be art or not.³⁴ This assertion seems like a commonsense idea but it establishes the essence of arts. It means that the piece itself is not a special phenomenon, reserved to the artist as specially skilled. Foucault insists to present the author as a non-original entity.³⁵ At the contrary, the author should seek to be re-produced. Foucault assures that the author's role is to create a "fertile" art. He adds that art does have a role only if it provokes communication, discussion with its audience. The piece is fertile in the sense that it will be re-produced in other works as a continuity of the thoughts. In this sense the author is not only the author of his own piece but of many others too.³⁶

Intellectual Property

According to Foucault, the author is not even responsible for his writing. However he is not really deprived from his right over his writings rather he acquires rights over others writings. He is responsible for the development of a collective thought. At the end of his essay "*What is an author?*" Foucault mentions the possibility of a world without authorship, where art's affect might be more constructive because it would raise questions based on the work itself, give space to the art piece.³⁷ In Foucault's work the author is necessary as a fictitious entity and as the producer of the work but he is not the owner of the development of his ideas. The artist's ideas, his art has no importance unless somebody else empowers it and develops it further. The anarchist theories which consider any kind of ownership as a fraud of course agrees with Foucault's theory, Dmytri Kleiner in *The Télékommunist Manifesto* gives a very simple but efficient illustration of the paradox of the ideas of intellectual or material property: "*If your land is stolen, you cannot use it anymore, except on the conditions set by its new private owner.[...] But if your idea is used by others, you have not lost your ability to use it, so what is really stolen?*".³⁸

According to the role given to the author in the last chapter, the laws protecting intellectual property only have an economic role. By not copyrighting arts, the artist can allow the arts to be explored from a much more life related point of view, just as Bjarki

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *Qu'est ce qu'un Auteur?*, p. 8.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 23.

³⁸ Dmytri Kleiner, "A Contribution to the Critique of Free-Culture", p. 28.

Valtýsson suggested (cf. p.13).³⁹ As Foucault said, the only necessary art is art that is fertile, that brings a response. It seems though difficult to completely refuse intellectual property as it is anchored in the values of the individual in our society.⁴⁰

³⁹ Bjarki Valtýsson, *Íslensk menningarpólitík*, p. 243.

⁴⁰ Maider Zilbeti interviews Cornelia Solfrank, ZEHAR #63, Arteleku, August 2008. URL: <http://www.artwarez.org/69.0.html>, Accessed 10.2.2011.

New Medias Praxis

The evolution of the roles of audience and public in the making of the arts is now confronted to obstacles coming from the artistic production structure. For many artists authorship is much more of an obstacle to the productivity of the art scene than a supporter, as the money generated by copyright laws often end in a few producers more than in the artist's coffers.⁴¹ It seems that there is always a tension between the notions of accessibility and financing, two elements that are though necessary to the arts. Artistic communities often question copyright because it illustrates the paradox in the management of art and society. It seems like we do not know how to get away from the following equations: Low culture = industry + accessibility + rich + private and High culture = freedom + protected access + poor + public.

Noticing how much art is influenced by intellectual property and by the myth of the genius artist, questions the freedom of artists. It is difficult to acknowledge because the limit to this freedom is caused by what is perceived as a protective and supporting structure. For example, the difference of taxes between the old and the new art works influences the concert hall's programming and push them to have limited contemporary repertoire. Concerning performance, in an interview on the french radio, Isabelle Barbéris, theatre academist, pointed at a problem that illustrates how anchored this concept is in the institutions undersanding of arts. She studied the theatre seasons of all the national scenes in France and figured that collective independant theatre companies had difficulties getting to play on national stages. She explains that the figure of the artist: "The author" is still an important figure in the scene of the performing arts. She adds that institutions do not seem to be able to adapt very fast to new ways of creating.⁴² The already criticised music hall Harpa, rising its magnificent achitecture in the center of Reykjavík, can also be taken seen as a sign of this still very present form of divine authorship, especially when at the same time the music schools suffer an important budget cut.⁴³ Even with financial difficulties, Harpa will stand while schools expect to have to close their doors.

⁴¹ Dmytri Kleiner, "A Contribution to the Critique of Free-Culture", p. 33.

⁴² *Les mercredis du théâtre: Le jeune Théâtre peut-il être indépendant de l'institution?* Interview by Joëlle Gayot for France Culture radio. URL: <http://www.franceculture.com/emission-les-mercredis-du-theatre-le-jeune-theatre-peut-il-etre-independent-de-l-institution-2011-0-0>. Accessed 26.01.2010

⁴³ R.U.V, *Skóða þurfi niðurskurð betur*, 05 February 2010. URL: <http://www.ruv.is/frett/skoda-thurfi-nidurskurd-betur>. Accessed 03.03.2011

The artistic production structure, as show those examples, are far from the ideal public structure we described of the new medias. As a general rule, the arts are not accessible, neither fast or free, they are also protected against transformations both by laws and by the deeply rooted culture of a divine respect for the art piece. However some attempts are made to change these characteristics. Those choices are perceived as radical or idealistic, because they are often illegal and also because they are often produced without a clear financing plan. The performances that figured as examples earlier in this essay attempted to bring life into performance in order to give the audience consciousness of the real aspect of the arts. In the next chapter the examples will concern artists who try to use the concepts of the new medias culture in their art making. This means to be able to consider digitality as a praxis, to try to adapt the concepts of speed, accessibility and re-production without losing the characteristics inherent to arts forms. Those artists decided to try to use this characteristics in their art making in the hope for making art part of public life in the same way as medias are part of it.

Using the Digital Realm as Praxis - Artistic Hacking: Cornelia Solfrank

Cornelia Solfrank defines herself as a hacker, cyber feminist, conceptual and net. artist. She is currently studying a PHD in Scotland investigating *"the conflicting relationship of copyright and art"*. Her artistic practice is a radical and often illegal effort to consider artistic practice away from the concept of originality and individualism. Most of her works can fall under the name of generative art.⁴⁴ Philip Galanter wrote a definition of the term:

"Generative art" is an art practice where the artist creates a process, such as a set of natural language rules, a computer game, a machine, or other mechanism, which is then set into motion with some degree of autonomy contributing to or resulting in a completed work of art. Philip Galanter.⁴⁵

Cornelia Solfrank's project *Net-Art Generator* is a program that one can access on Internet. This program is set to create an artwork, from network material according to rules and structures that the artist-producer decided. There is always a certain degree of autonomy left for the artificial intelligence of the program itself. In an essay she wrote in relation with the piece,

⁴⁴ Cornelia Solfrank, CV. URL: <http://www.artwarez.org/cv.0.html>

⁴⁵ Philip Galanter, *Generative art and rules-based art*, Vague Terrain, 2011, p. 1. URL: http://66.49.250.143/content/archives/journal03/galanter01.html#_edn1 Accessed 01.03.2011.

Sarah Cook analyses that the produce is not as random as it looks like. In fact even if it looks unexpected for the participant, one can expect the final product when one knows the structure.⁴⁶ Anyway, this piece tries to give a practical meaning to how common thought can be used, without the artist giving a specific product or meaning to the piece. In fact the important moment of this work is the moment when the creator is confronted to the piece he and that the rest of the wide net connection produced.

Solfrank's piece "*Improved Tele-vision*", made between 1899 and 2002, deals with the notion of authorship and of masterpiece. It is based on "*Verklärte Nacht*" that Schönberg composed in 1899. In the 1970's Nam June Paik recorded a vinyl with the piece slowed down to 25% of the speed and Cunningham made choreography on it. Diether Roth in a protective reaction answered two years later with a vinyl recording of Paik's version played four times faster. Roth's version was similar but not identical to Schönberg's version. Solfrank created a page on Internet where the audience could choose the speed of the music. Then she played a remix of all the different versions of the piece as a back sound for her exhibition composed of the paintings of the four artists-producers and of some texts about the artists.⁴⁷ In this work, Solfrank exposes the diverse entities, which compose the art piece; that is the artists' entities but a much bigger diversity of entities in the piece of music itself. Each change in the speed corresponds to one producer. With this piece she reinforces the idea that creativity is not only a skill of the artist but that the artist is a mediator of this common creativity. The audience of the exhibitions could experience the multiplicity of the creative entities of the piece. The concept of the collectivity of creation is rendered here artistic material as it addresses the sensible chord of the audience.

Cornelia Solfrank's works attack also a big pillar of our cultural understanding of art, which is the question on the "Praxis", the skill, which arts schools have for mission to develop and protect. With the use of materials made by someone else and the computer to decide of the rest, the praxis disappears. Artists have their own fears. In fact many artists are afraid that an absolutely accessible and remixable art would lead to the disparition of arts under the dominance of amateuristic practice. In the case of photography, a recent example of this fear was given by the Icelandic Photographers

⁴⁶ Sarah Cook, *What would artificial intelligent find aesthetically pleasant?* URL: http://net.art-generator.com/src/cook_eng.html. Accessed 01.03.20011.

⁴⁷ Maider Zilbeti interviews Cornelia Solfrank, ZEHAR #63. Link to the work *Improved Tele-vision*: <http://artwarez.org/projects/improvedTV/index.html>

Association who sued an amateur for selling his pictures. The association was supported by a law that forbids the commerce of pictures unless the photographer have passed a recognised diploma. Until very soon, only one school in Reykjavík was able to give this diploma. In fact we can observe that this association was standing for the institution they all had been studying in. In a interview made by Solfrank of another hacking artist, Jenny Marketou, this last answer to a question on digital art as a non- praxis:

The computer underworld is populated with young men and (almost no women) who live out their fantasies of power and glory on a keyboard. Of course, computer hacking requires technical skills, compulsive digital virtuosity and addiction.
Jenny Marketou.⁴⁸

Solfrank's art would be called according to art analyses, a conceptual art, which means concerning the concept and not the object, the form. The artist interviewed here seem to understand the net and digital technologies as a form, a praxis that can inspire the work in itself as painting or sculpture or music could do. In Solfrank's work we could say that even collective creativity becomes praxis.

Eternal Masters Pieces - Collective Playwright: Charles Mee

We can consider that performance is the ideal form of interactivity with the audience. It is a live art that does not take place unless there is an audience. But it is dealing with the challenge of it accessibility. Charles Mee is the only resident playwright for the SITI theatre of Ann Bogart. He also has the special characteristic of offering his plays to download for free on his website: "*the (re)making project*". The user is encouraged to use the plays as a ressource for his own work:

...don't just make some cuts or rewrite a few passages or re-arrange them or put in a few texts that you like better, but pillage the plays as I have pillaged the structures and contents of the plays of Euripides and Brecht and stuff out of Soap Opera Digest and the evening news and the internet, and build your own, entirely new, piece--and then, please, put your own name to the work that results. Charles Mee.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Cornelia Solfrank, *Hacking Seductions*, interview with Jenny Marketou , Hamburg, 25 July 2000, URL: <http://www.artwarez.org/109.0.html> Accessed 23.02.2011.

⁴⁹ Charles Mee , *The (re) – making project*. URL: <http://www.panix.com/userdirs/meejr/indexf.html>. Accessed 10.2.2011.

His project brings in the spotlight the question of the time in the artwork. In this case, these diverse times are: the different times of the plays or sources he uses, the time of his writing- collage making of the play, the time of the performance of his version and the time of the remixing of his plays and their performance as well. What is the piece of the Charles Mee? The collage? Its performance by the SITI theatre? Or further, the re-mix of his play? Or just all of them and more to come? According to the notion of author-composer, the life of the artwork is not contained in the frame of an individual work. The piece of art develops outside of the control of the author. The piece is not complete before its audience has been re-creating from it. With this concept in mind the time of the piece is absolutely changed. The piece needs a different timing than the one of process-product- piece saddled by authorship. The piece is never complete or finished.

Fast Reaction Time - Áhugaleikhús Atvinnumanna

The French theatre company *Les Chiens de Navarre* was invited along with Isabelle Barbéris (cf p.19) on the radio show about the relations between institutions and young theatre companies. They shared their concerns about the post-production structures of theatre and their needs as theatre of the present time. In fact, the delays between the moment companies sell their work and the moment it is played are often so long, that some companies, like *les Chiens de Navarre*, decide to change parts of it. The theatre makers are conscious of their piece as an evolving material. The institutions have problems to face this changes. Artistic directors want to show the same content as the one they bought originally.⁵⁰ In this case we can eventually question whether the post-production structure is not an obstacle to the development of arts.

This example shows that this theatre group thinks its performances in the context of the time where it is played and received by the audience. The audience's context has changed and therefore the performance must transform. This fast time reaction is one of the elements characteristic of the success of participation on the digital sphere. The Icelandic theatre company Áhugaleikhús Atvinnumanna took the challenge to adopt further this characteristic for theatre. Theatre is a form that is usually practiced in a long time; it is a quite heavy form as it is composed of many individuals, a build structure, text, etc... However, the group researched a form of theatre that could react fast to its

⁵⁰ *Les mercredis du théâtre: Le jeune Théâtre peut-il être indépendant de l'institution?* Interview by Joëlle Gayot for France Culture radio.

inspiration and then transmit the performance to the audience almost simultaneously.⁵¹ They decided to create one piece a month during one year; these last were performed each time by a few actors in the raw space of an abandoned fish factory and with very little costumes. The audience was invited to come to the factory to see it or to watch it live on their website. As Una Þórleifsdóttir wrote in the book published by the company about their work, the group here decided to transform the material of the socio-political context as a material for the theatre without taking time to maybe rationally understand it or be able to understand it its global image.⁵² Rather the group used theatre with the same spontaneity as one would use Photoshop program and Internet's images database to transform any influent politician in a clownish character. It is a dangerous theatre because by it is not taking the time to digest. The performer cannot say they absolutely have control on what they mediate. This theatrical action is a proposition on how to make theatre more of a public space, as it does try to understand in the same time as its audience, without taking a few months to formulate ideas organize them and be very intelligent and intelligible. The performer transforms his reception of the world around him into artistic material. It is also a very honest theatre as it stages reception itself.

Archiving Performance - A creative way to make performance accessible

It is reassuring to think the lifetime of the artwork as a never-ending process because then every piece becomes as eternal as the masterpieces. It is interesting then to consider another time of the piece that is the time of the archiving of the performance. In fact if on one hand we can find ways to use the digital communications attributes in performance itself, on the other hand it is interesting to think about how performances could be accessible on the net and become a widely spread source of inspiration for others. Performers are very conscious of the Internet being a tool for promoting their work, but a few minutes of a show on "You tube" is not enough to render the experience of the performance and to help the public understand it. Because that is what it is about: the performance happens when there is a public in front of him, not behind a computer screen. It is in the essence of performance to be a live event, where audience and performer are in the same space and time. How can the new medias and Internet give a complete accessibility to the performance work? Video recording, even of the full event,

⁵¹ Áhugaleikhús atvinnumanna, 2010, *Lárétt rannsókn*, Reykjavík, Áhugaleikhús Listamanna, 2010, p. 6.

⁵² Una Þórleifsdóttir, "Hugleiðing um leiklist og samfélagið. Um örverk Áhugaleikhúss Atvinnumanna." 2010, *Lárétt rannsókn*, Reykjavík, Áhugaleikhús Listamanna, 2010, p. 35.

is not complete enough as it does not take in consideration the live element of the performance.

Matthew Reason in his essay *Archive or Memory? The Detritus of live performance* reports the notes made by Forced Entertainment on the performance of *Emmanuelle Enchanted* as a great attempt on archiving performance. In this notes Tim Etchells and Richard Lowdon report the performance by focusing on its reception not on the real action. They do not offer an objective description of what happens rather do they describe what it was to be there, what they thought of, what were the feelings they experienced and other types of subjective assessments. According to Matthew Reason, this is an honest way to archive performance as it focuses on the reception of the piece.⁵³ The reader can then understand at least how the piece been perceive, being conscious that his own reception would make the work different and therefore that it would add to his experience to go and see the play. Reading someone else's experience of a performance seems a great way to get familiar with the performance's phenomenon and therefore a potential medium for rendering accessible plays. It also has an educational value, in the sense that by reading someone else's reception of an art piece, one can give up the idea that a rational analysis of art is the way to understand it. By reading the words of a sensation, the audience might become more familiar with poetry and with the creative process of reception of a piece.

⁵³ Matthew Reason, *Archive or Memory? The Detritus of Live Performance* , p. 87. URL: <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/methods/reason.pdf> Accessed 25.02.11

Conclusion

When the medias deal with the relation between public and art, it is often in the restricted scope of art's finances. Our study shows that the relationship holds more complex and deeper rooted misunderstandings about the roles of the public and the artist. This relationship is confused by the fear that the development of one might be shadow to the evolution of the other. The public has become active and creative, more than corporations would like to and also more than artists would want to. Very early on, artistic forms have tried to wake up the active role in their audience but it is now practiced in the sphere of Internet that is too lightly invested by arts and artists. The artist on his side has evolved in thinking the public as part of his creation and therefore had to get down from the pedestals of divine objective entity. It might sound like a little effort but it actually established a relation of dependancy much more important between the public and the arts. When the artist is not except in relation to his work and the work nothing without an audience, the question of visibility of the arts becomes crucial. Internet has proved to be an excellent sphere for communication and is already used for promotion of the arts but still too little as a praxis in itself. Artists who are often said to be precursors, people who think ahead of their time have their own conservatism. Artistic communities, that is artists and their production structures, seem to have problems responding to the creativity of the public in a way that keeps the arts evolving in form and content. One of the obstacle is the artist himself and another is its faithfulness to its institutions. Now the question is whether artists are able to enable their praxis to change and evolve. There is a difference between the artist and the public and we tried to define it in the chapter of the author but what is the praxis, can no longer be defined by the institutions. Every artist has its own way to develop, artistic praxis will always develop faster than its institutions. Therefore we can add that the arts should get back not only to the hands public but also to the hands of artists.

Performance arts are probably able to enhance the different qualities of new medias in order to respect the creative identity of its public, as the examples of Solfrank, Charles Mee, Áhugaleikhús Atvinnumanna and Forced Entertainment show. Of course it is not about praising this kind of projects as a replacement for a more time and money spending form of contemporary performance. However this kind of theatre because of its

characteristics is not accessible. It seems that theatre will not manage to be accepted by the public as necessary and therefore be accepted as something that needs financial support, unless the public gets familiar with its material from a more accessible structure. The companies and individual artists we took as examples in the last chapter of this essay propose an alternative to the popularisation or financial solutions often proposed to resolve artistic structural problems. The popularisation solution would be to make every artwork entertaining and easy to understand and the financial one, to have it all free. Instead these artists approach accessibility from a structural angle and from the essence of the act of making art. They are using the structures of new medias in order to give the public the possibility to create meaning by manipulating ideas. Artist or intellectuals do the same; they take some material, play with it and make an individual sense out of it. They are the ones who feel responsible for its evolution because they make it exist. It would be a great idea to think this responsibility becomes the public's, ones it gets the tools for it. This responsibility does not unfortunately bring money in the system, we can see that even if the public "pro-sumes" music in the sphere of Internet with the help of new medias, the fundings for music do also get smaller. I still believe that it is worth exploring in this direction for three reasons, one is that it seems like a "natural" development, a practical suite of what the roles of public and artists have been developed into. Two because it is a theory that makes the structure of the arts evolve, it changes its form and not only its content. Three because it is a structure that does not oppose capitalist system rather uses its tools in order to resist it better and in this way is a positive action.

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