



ART LINE GDAŃSK 2013 CONFERENCE: ART IN THE PUBLIC SPACE – FESTIVAL OR NOT?

Contexts, spaces and commissioning

Martin Schibli, *What Is It with Public Art that Makes It so Hard to Love It?*

Schibli will talk about the perspectives on public art when it comes to a specific context of history, culture and location, and how these things connect to establish a dialogue with the audience. Departing from the Swedish context, Schibli will also bring forward important differences in cultural contexts between some countries as well as discuss the difference between works made on official commission and those emerging bottom-up. It seems that it is often the non-commissioned public artwork that becomes the most popular with the audience.

Dominik Lejman, *The Right to Space*

My lecture will be based above all on my own experience with activities in the public space and my understanding of the artist's role to be contrasted with the omnipresent commercial content. I'm interested in the artist's right to be 'superficial' and not to sell anything by means of a message, even their own truth about life, publicist commentary or philosophy, which makes their work stand out among the commercial buzz of the public space.

Michał Bieniek, *Curator-Orderer: from the Context and Medium to a Curatorial and Organisational 'Failure'*

I am going to present one of the roles of a curator (who also organises a project/action/event) – that of an 'orderer' in projects carried out in public space / non-institutional settings. I will describe the importance of context in such actions, with examples including selected works made for subsequent editions of the SURVIVAL Art Review in Wrocław. I will then contrast these works with examples of projects submitted for the SURVIVAL Art Review that had been rejected. Thus, I intend to outline the criteria and reasoning behind the decisions. I will also mention curatorial and organisational failures, and elaborate on the context of some accidents, some of which may have been predicted (and prevented), others – definitely not. I will give examples of more or less planned provocations and discuss the extent to which art was present (or absent) in them.

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Lead partner: Blekinge museum. **Partners:** Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Kunsthalle Rostock, Art Centre Gallery EL, Gdańsk City Gallery, Baltic Sea Cultural Centre, Kulturcentrum Ronneby, Karlskrona Konsthall, Blekinge Tekniska Högskola, Nida Art Colony, Kalmar konstmuseum, Baltic Branch NCCA & NGO ArtMission Kaliningrad, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Stena Line Scandinavia, Region Blekinge.





Economy, funding and institutions

Kuba Szreder, *The Political Economy of Public Art Projects*

In my presentation, I will analyse the structure of public art projects by utilising the perspective of expanded political economy. From this position I will investigate the apparatus of project making underpinning the majority of artistic enterprises in public realm. I will place it in the wider social and economic context, in the relations of (symbolic) production characteristic for 'new spirit of capitalism'. In this economic mode the project and the network play vital role as means of creating connections, linking agents, pooling resources and utilising opportunities. I will question the relations between globalised art circuit, commissioning institution, invited artists, localised art scene, engaged public and wider constituencies. I will dissect the division of (symbolic, technical, administrative, emotional) labour, track the flow of resources and map the reputational hierarchies underlying the commissioning process. I will especially focus on the rift between mobile and immobile (people, communities, producers) as quintessential for the reproduction of injustice embedded in the networked mode of artistic production. I will pay special attention to the peculiarities, risks and challenges imbued in commissioning public art at the (semi-)peripheries of global capitalism.

Michaela Crimmin, *Art for All? Observation, Participation, Collaboration and Opposition in Contemporary Art Practice*

'Art for All' has become a rallying call across the world. Arts Council England's strap line is 'Great Art for Everyone'. At face value a laudable ambition from the UK Government's main public arts funder, but in reality how meaningful is this intention given the cultural diversity, and the wide economic, educational and other differences of people who traverse and use so-called 'public space'?

Taking a number of different, high profile examples – including the Fourth Plinth series in London's Trafalgar Square; Jeremy Deller's *It is What it Is, Conversations about Iraq*; Joanna Rajkowska's commission for the UK city of Peterborough; and the '48 Degrees Celcius' festival that took place in Delhi – this talk will interrogate artistic practices that have employed diverse means of encouraging participation in artistic practices in the public domain. Each of these examples have benefited from institutional support. Have artists been free to follow their interests in instigating open dialogue and engagement, and to what extent has their 'public' had a meaningful experience? Success, and any degree of compromise, can only be evaluated on a case by case basis, but in bringing diverse examples together, the aim in this account is to illustrate a range of values that art in the public domain bring if not to everyone, then to a significant combined public.



Dialogue, conflict, site-specificity and the role of an artist

Julia Draganović, *Notes on Time Based Public Art*

Departing from her experience with the International Award for Participatory Art in Bologna, Italy, Draganović will speak about advantages, limits and risks of temporary interventions in the public domain. Study cases will include research and process based art projects in the public space as well as temporary installations. The goal to produce site specific works (understood as works that reflect not only the physical, architectural and geographical aspects of a site, but include social situation of people that inhabit a place and its surroundings as well), is a challenge that local artists face with different benefits and handicaps than guest artists who enter a scene as strangers or even as intruders. Criteria to evaluate the success and, even more ambitiously, the sustainability of impermanent pieces and time based interventions are hard to define, but represent a request on which no funder for public art will easily renounce.

Julita Wójcik, *Daily Life of a Festival*

Wójcik carries out projects in broadly understood public space. Since June 2012, Warsaw's Zbawiciela Sq. has provided the location for her work 'Rainbow', which has already been set on fire a number of times. It continues to stir a debate on the actual sense of this form of art in the city and its impact on the viewers. Also last year, the artist alongside Jacek Niegoda promoted the idea of building a 'Mound of an Unknown Artist' under the Krakus Mound in Cracow. The mound came into being, however, much to the protest of the councillors of the area of Podgórze, the mound's location, who led to its demolition three months later...

Agnieszka Wołodźko, *Discuss, not Decorate!*

My talk marks an attempt at grasping art in the public space from the perspective of a tactic determined by Suzanne Lacy as *new genre public art*. The practice in question stipulates a radically new role of the artist. Their goal is no longer to aesthetise the urban space, but to reclaim its character of the public sphere – space of debates, disputes and exchange of ideas. Given such grasp, the artist is no longer a producer of works of art, but a 'public intellectual', who comes up with counter-proposals for the society amid consumerist madness. I illustrate my reflection with examples of activities by artists from the Tri-City since the 1990s as well as my own projects.



Festivals, regionalisation and the public

Torun Ekstrand, *What and where is art in the public domain?*

In the international project Art Line we investigate and challenge the concept and boundaries of art in public space. Art in the public domain can be a bronze sculpture on the Main Square in a city, but can temporary art projects or digital art works on the internet be called public art works? The art institutions and academies involved in Art Line have been working with different methods to examine questions revolving around the public sphere.

Art Line is a three year-long project between fourteen partner institutions in Poland, Sweden, Russia, Lithuania and Germany. Artists show art projects on the public institutions of our partners, but also on the sea, on the ferries shuttling between Sweden and Poland, as interactive art works on the internet, in housing areas, in city centres and as experiments in technological laboratories. Art in the public domain has different traditions and histories in our regions and countries – what can we learn from one another? Who has the power over the public or semi-public spaces in a city?

Bettina Pelz, *Visual Seismographs*

Temporary exhibition formats in public space have a long standing tradition in the arts and the ever growing number of festivals worldwide indicates that no alternative format has been found yet. The plethora of festivals can be evaluated as a seismograph of sociocultural activity in the public domain responding to new spatial flows, cross-cultural and transnational relationships which are dissolving any simple equivalence between democratic culture, citizenship and the public sphere. Many of the present festivals include a diversity of spaces in the public sphere to stage art works. The conceptual focus on artistic practice in interchange with space and its formal, social and metaphorical connotations corresponds with the contemporary necessities of urban development, ecological awareness and community engagement as much as with an ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue between the arts, sciences and technological advances. The present festival formats act as an ephemeral meeting point linking various domains having a share in the public sphere. In their ubiquity they are influencing the co-constitutional process of public sphere, public values and public practice. Temporary co-operation, variable set of partners, changeable focus, flexible approaches and the limited duration all seem to respond to the need for open spaces away from the institutional conventions and accommodate the potential to reflect the state of the art as well as its cultural relevance.