

Please
Speak
Out
Loud

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An exhibition is a place, a temporal limited territory, where notions, ideas, statements and concepts interact, work together or against each other, fight, make love and so on. As any other limited territory, the borders to its exteriority have gradually shifted in order to facilitate flow of desirable elements and simultaneously preventing undesirable elements from infiltration. An exhibition has no longer got four walls, a sovereign state no continuous outline.

In November 2012 I held my bachelor exhibition at Galleri Konstfack, Stockholm. This text deals with the implications of that exhibition – the desirable or undesirable elements that infiltrated or exfiltrated the exhibition – and is based on comments from colleagues and teachers, official and unofficial conversations, private and public arguments that came as a direct or indirect results of, or that in some way or another could be set in connection with, the exhibition. It has taken the shape of a dialogue between disembodied characters, if they happen to be two or several, or one single character arguing with her/himself. Please speak out loud.





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10.





- Art theory discourse does constantly have to reinvent itself. I'm not sure if I agree with the prevalent perception that art, through the last hundred years, increasingly have been approaching the realm of philosophy. I'd rather believe that the discourse, the verbal-based offspring of art production, is, and for that matter always have been, approaching philosophy, or that art theory discourse even is philosophy that simply is concerned with art.

- But by saying so you introduce a false distinction between *art* and its *discourse*. There is in fact no such distinction in contemporary art. And if one of the features of contemporary art is the lack of this distinctions, and if art theory discourse is, as you say, philosophy concerned with art, then contemporary art has indeed been approaching philosophy in the process of its formation during the last hundred years.

- So what you are saying is that the inseparability of art and its discourse is a recent phenomenon?

- I suggest this as a distinctive feature of contemporary art, yes.

- Well, as a feature of 'contemporary art', if we are using it as a term and understand it as a layer or stratum of art praxis of the contemporary, distinct from other layers or strata of art praxis, I have to disagree with you. But as a phenomenon in recent art praxis, in our case including 'contemporary art' but also a whole range of others, I agree with you in the way that recent art have not yet had the time to be remembered. When it has we will be remembered as painters or sculptor or writers or critics or curators or not at all, and not as 'contemporary art practitioners'. The record of history only has room for that much.

- So you are suggesting that the present only look different to the past because it has not yet become history? And that we cannot compare the present with the past until it has become past itself?

- Not strictly. I do not believe in an opposition between past and present. We are rather in need of a sliding pa-

rameter where the contemporary is situated between the *recent* past and the *near* future. And eventually we arrive at my point about reinvention; art theory discourse is situated in this exact point between the recent past and the near future, on the threshold in between two states. Only the past and the future have their own resident with a defined set of conditions. The present – the contemporary – is homeless, and this relationship, between the settled past and future and the homeless present, is a traumatic one for the present, obviously. That is what makes it so easy to be a historian or utopian. In the case of the present art theory discourse the trauma has only escalated according to the flow of information and the increasing number of entrants and material and virtual recourses. And as *philosophy that is concerned with art* it is obligated to the philosophical tradition of *parrhesia* – to speak truth even in the face of death – which in combination with this escalation leaves it with the impossible task of speaking truth (even in the face of death) in a situation where what sounds like truth today seems like farce tomorrow, for so to be convicted of speaking bullshit and spreading lies tomorrow for what sounded truthful today – a conviction that is given too soon and that eventually will work preventive against any true *parrhesia*.

13.

——— Are you now not making the same mistake of comparing the present with the past?

——— (*About to respond*)

——— But rather than to continue on this time-based dynamic I would like to introduce an alternative one. Should we project the classical distinction of cultural elite, -bourgeoisie and -proletariat on the contemporary art theory discourse the disjunction would not find its primary place in between the “then” and the “now”, but rather in between the “us” and the “them”. In the same way as Slavoj Žižek interpret the feature *Titanic* as a an algorithm of the upper-class availing the lower-class to recharge their (erotic) batteries, for them so to be disposed, the art elite hunt the -proletariat for intellectual pray; the proletariat produce the raw-material to be refined by the elite. I think this projection of the class-society onto singular cultural contexts is still relevant, and maybe more so than

onto the whole of our contemporary society in general.

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- Though the function of applying the class-structure onto a certain system is, first and foremost, to name a specific space where to anticipate the *revolution*; assigning a set of properties is not an act of definition, but a strategy to activate a process leading towards change of the area assigned those properties. Marx's class-structure has been applied onto the politics of material and virtual production in order to anticipate the revolution in the sector of monetary distribution, because that is where it was needed. Your suggestion implies that a revolution is needed in the sector of contemporary art theory discourse, but I'm not so sure it is, everyone involved is too satisfied with the situation right now. It is, still, centres of power within monetary distribution that needs to be shifted and shattered, even those within art discourse itself.

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- There is the fail-video of a supermarket employee who clumsily trigger a whole rack of wine bottles to tip over and shatter across the floor, there is the malicious kids in the music video of Justice's *Stress* who vandalise a bar and its patrons, there is agent Cooper who through his technique involving throwing rocks at bottles is lead to clues in his pursuit of Laura Palmer's murder. Cooper has one bottle, and when he eventually hits it follows this single clue. He should've had more bottles. The *deductive technique involving mind-body coordination operating hand in hand with the deepest level of intuition* should in this case not be *deductive* but *inductive*, introducing more clues into the investigation, as there is never any excess of possible explanations, only lack. In front of us we have 28 bottles, 28 clues at our disposal.

14.

- No, I disagree, 28 clues are not at our disposal, and if they were it would still not be sufficient. Please try accounting for 28 clues, it will effectively not be more than a single suggested direction. If agent Cooper had 28 broken bottles, or 28 000 bottles for that sake, it wouldn't suggest a number of clues but a unity dependant on its exteriority according to its segmented parts.

- Or rather, the bottles are *many*, not 28, and have nothing to do with single broken bottles here and there, even how many they add up to, neither within contemporary art nor popular culture. We should ask where did 'many' or 'a lot' of bottles get broken.

- And we should also ask why there are no mirrors. The patrons can no longer have a look over their shoulder without turning their head, the bartender cannot keep an eye on their patrons with their back turned to the room. Also, the architectural element of the bar that divides patrons from staff is missing. I think this suggest a dissolution of the distinction between the role of the bartender and the patron. This can further be applied onto the sector of cultural production and into the debate of intellectual property and immaterial ownership. The lack of the mirror and the bar consequently suggests an environment where there is no distinction between producer and consumer and instead of exchanging services by monetary means we serve each other. These gestures suggest a new architecture of the serving house, a different organisational structure for production and exchange.

- Not only for production and exchange. Only the internal relationships of the serving house have yet been mentioned. Obviously this exhibition is primarily concerned with its *external* relationships, and therefore also resistance and subversion – a different organisational structure of *resistance*. In that way I have the opinion that the installation have partially failed in its presentation. A threatened serving house would indeed get rid of its bar and mirror, but also its bottle stand, which is still present in the exhibition. It would maybe place the bottles in the floor, presumably in boxes ready for escape, or better in the trunk of a car with a running engine, and they would definitely not bear the etiquette of its content, the content would be re-filled onto plastic bottles. The best scenario would obviously be that one would realise it was alcohol at all if they didn't know in advance. That we are discussing alcohol at all right now proves my point, a successful presentation would show no sign of this at all. One time I organised a public event where we sold alcohol illegally. We had to hid away most of it and go get more when

we ran out upstairs. When the police came a few of our guys took all the alcohol in a hurry and left the premises. We could continue our business when the police left. Another time when the police showed up, this time undercover, it was not possible to move the alcohol, so we directed their attention towards drugs and they completely ignored the alcohol. One of us got arrested but released as soon he pissed clean for them.

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- Of course, but then the bottles would never be glued back together neither. An exhibition is a place where to talk about what went wrong, not a place to do right what was done wrong. The act of presenting the bottles on the stand is a gesture of restoration, it signals a humble attitude of picking up the pieces, putting them back together and placing them where they ones was. It's about *getting along* with changing times.

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- The speakeasy is if not the opposition, then a conflicting mode to that of *parrhesia*. Where *parrhesia* speaks truth, the speakeasy is quiet, where *parrhesia* is a martyr, speakeasy survives.
- And living, I would say, the speakeasy is living the truth without talking about it. Anyway there is a sliding transition between them, and one doesn't exclude the other, but rather complement each other.
- I think that the two terms were constituted in extremely different times, *parrhesia* in ancient Greece, where only free men were allowed to speak and use *parrhesia*. Women, children and slaves didn't have any other option than speakeasy. Ironically by the time of the historical speakeasy women achieved the right to speak for themselves, and even partially because of the speakeasy.
- The other day I was confronted with the dilemma of gentrification. Cultural workers such as our selves are often consciously used in this process to attach certain glamour to and achieve a level of cultural capital in a specific area. This will attract other businesses and increase rent.

As an artist working in an area where this is a strategy I'm in conflict with my own role in the situation. Can I just go on and ignore the consequences of this role, or do I have to move or even quit my praxis completely? I could also choose to implement this subject in my praxis as a kind of critique from the inside. That would maybe be the parrhesian strategy. Or, I thought, we, the residents of this area, could continue with what we do, may it be art production, music, running an small publishing house or simply living there satisfied and peacefully, but behind a veil of crime and vice. We could organise lectures, we could make exhibitions, we could set up performances and continue to work in our studios during the day, but in secret, and during the night we could rob our selves, break into our own apartment, shatter the windows at our shopping malls and report that we have been assault raped. The crime rate would make it impossible to increase rent and businesses would be deterred from establishing anywhere near.

——— And what am I suppose to do with your fucking art!! Damn fucking art, and you dear fucking calling it that! You're only making shit anyway! It's shit what you make, fucking shit, you hear me? Shit!!!! I make art much fucking better than this myself! Damn you, who the fuck are you? You kidding me? The kind of crap you showing me is no goddamn art!! You out for trouble?! You fucking out for trouble!!! Because I am you little retarded fucking 'artist', I'll make you some real trouble! Something you are not used to maybe. Trouble is maybe something you don't know about. What do you think you are! All you students here at this fucked up school! All you tiny spoiled self-righteous pricks of fuck-ups!! You think you'll get to learn what art is? Fucking hell!!! Fucking hell ""ART""!!! Don't you know art is everyfuckingwhere?!?! I'm making art for the people you know, art is for the people! You're not making art here, not art anyone would appreciate, you're just making bullshit, you just sitting here doing ugly meaningless stuff nobody cares the fucking shit about! What you think you are doing with your art? You're not doing art!!! You 're wasting your meaningless life! Make

art that people can see, that they care about. Spray some colour on the wall you're passing every day, spread some love. Some don't like it immediately but that's their opinion you know. I don't care about them. Most people actually like it, that's what I care about. That's fucking what I care about when real people like what I do. I'm just spraying on my way to the gym or whatever and they like it. It's about colouring the city, everyone likes colour instead of grey walls you know! I'm a fucking legend already, half of Scandinavia know about me and have seen my work. On their way to their job or whatever. How fucking many have seen your work? Outside of your incest fucking school environment? You better keep up with the real world damn infertile moron!! This fucking school, it's repressing true creativity. What do you think true creativity is? Ha!? It's to truly express oneself and living the artistic life. You are not fucking living the artist life! I have real problems you know, you fucking middle class brats, you have no fucking problems like me! Do you have experience with drugs on a daily basis maybe? Or does any of you have no contact with your family at all?!? You cannot be a fucking artist and still have a fucking good relationship to your fucking family, bourgeois and shit!! I'll be fucking famous one day, what about you?! I don't fucking hear about one single fucking art student after they graduate, what they fucking do! You fucking tell me!!! What's the fucking point of being an artist if no one fucking hear about you?!?!? This fucking school of retarded fucking idiots. What you learn here anyway? How to analyse society? Go on fucking analyse society, I'll go on making art. Seems like you have no idea about what art is. I haven't seen a single painting or drawing at your exhibition in years! There's always lots of stuff all over the place, like weird shit like fucking weird boxes and fucking sounds and fucking ridiculous video and goddamn digital prints of pictures and texts suppose to explain whatever bullshit but they never do. Make a goddamn art I say!!! Fucking hell I have experience with drugs! I've seen you're movies and they are fucking bullshit movies!! The education here is fucking bullshit!!! You learn what?!? To fucking put up a TV to show a bullshit movie? Fucking hell, congratulations!!! You just learn how to install a TV!! No one here know how to make true art, they only wait for the right opportunity to get on, but it never gets here, can't you

see how many get stuck!?! I'd show you fucking retarded bullshitting fuckups how it's done, I'm not fucking in the school even and I'll learn you fuck-ups and hospitalised retards how it's done. I'm not even turned eighteen and I'm fucking legend, I'd guess my fucking salary I'm more famous than you, you'll get forgotten in the dumpster of your fucking school, they fucking dump you as soon they have got your money, goddamn moron they'll ditch you immediately, they'll never look back and won't give shit for you. They're bastards those bullshits!! I'll be the only one left to love you you're bullshitting shit! I'll fucking be the only one fucking fucking you past you're 40! Don't dear leaving me you looser and retard of a fucking fucker, just fucking stay and fucking don't stop loving me!!!

Documentation of the exhibition *Prohibition & Habitations* including pdf version of *The Pit* is available at:
<http://www.jonvogtengeland.com/works/prohibition--habitations/>

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