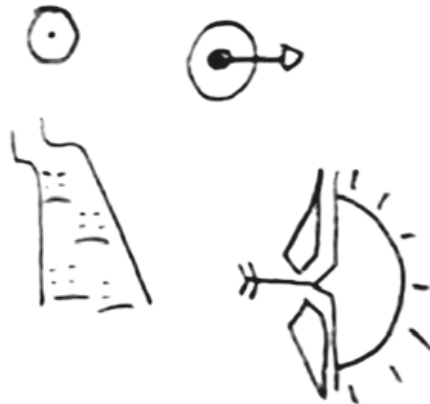
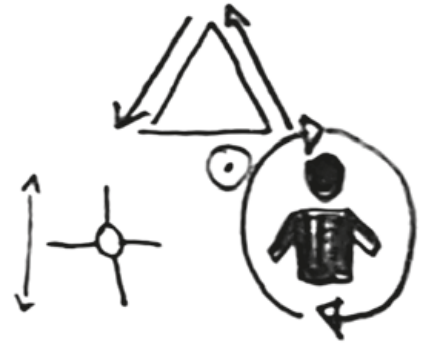
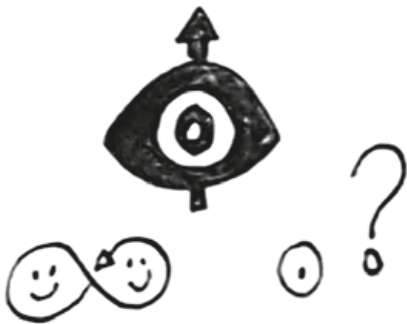


¿Creative Villages?



CONTENTS

› Introduction - The Removal of the Context: A Methodological Statement?	
Benoit Antille	3
› Tactical Invisibility	
Leigh Markopoulos	8
› From the Margins	
Elizabeth Thomas	10
› Creative Thoughts	
Dan Cassidy	13
› Regionalia and Public (art)work: Considering the margins and the middle	
MK Meador	15
› In Remembrance of Things Past: Tending to Time and Place at Furkart	
Amanda Nudelman	17
› In Defense of Plop Art	
Rosa Tyhurst	20
› Dear J	
Hanne Van Dyck	22

Annexes

› Survey Answers	
facilitated by Dan Cassidy and Rosa Tyhurst	25
› Program	
“Curating the Alps” A curatorial workshop between CCA and ECAV	28
› Ovronnaz – Leytron (part 2)	
François Dey	28
› Authors	34
› Impressum	35



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THE REMOVAL OF THE CONTEXT: A METHODOLOGICAL STATEMENT?

BENOIT ANTILLE

Between October 8th and 16th, 2016, Creative Villages invited four curatorial practice MA students from the California College of the Arts (CCA) – accompanied by their Chair and a senior lecturer – and four students from the Master of Art in Public Spheres at the State Art School of the Valais (ECAV), to take part in a workshop in this region, in the midst of the Swiss Alps. Hosted in Sierre at the *Villa Ruffieux residency program* in the framework of a student exchange with ECAV, an alumni of Sint Lucas Antwerpen joined the group last minute.¹ This workshop, titled *Curating the Alps – In search of alternative models*,² focused on the topic of public art in rural or mountainous areas.

Including research trips, talks on case studies, and group discussions, the workshop was preceded by a short description that was sent to the participants. Drafted by Creative Villages, this document presented two main goals: on the one hand, the workshop sought to question the dynamics of site-specificity when used as a tool of the creative economy, and on the other, to explore alternative curatorial/artistic models through taking the territory of the Valais as a testing ground. An ambitious and vague assignment at the same time, the second goal was made almost impossible by the fact that no presentations contextualizing this territory were organized (on the territory of Leytron in particular), and no time was planned to get familiar with it. In other words, the *context* (the *testing ground*) was not addressed by the work-

¹ CCA: Leigh Markopoulos (chair of the Curatorial Practice MA Program), Elizabeth Thomas (senior lecturer), Amanda Nudelman, MK Meador, Rosa Tyhurst, Dan Cassidy; ECAV: Jasmine Bakalarz, Javier Juan Andrés Gonzalez, Phumulani Ntuli, Chrisantha Chetty; Sint Lucas: Hanne van Dyck.

² This title refers to an essay written by William L. Fox, director of the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art, in the context of *Ars Contemporaneus Alpinus*, a related research project of ECAV.

shop. This contradiction was perceived as disorientating by the participants during their stay in the Valais, and even here in the third issue of Creative Villages' journal, which serves as a platform for their feedback. As Dan Cassidy, one of the CCA students, writes: "*Going into the Creative Villages seminar, I was unsure of exactly what it was. After attending the seminar, I left more confused than when I'd started.*"

Such feelings could be the result of mere organizational issues or misleading formulations. And it would be better not to underline this in the introduction. But, it is a revealing slip, betraying a methodological standpoint: it highlights Creative Villages' endeavour to challenge production modes proper to project work.³ My belief is that the confusion created amongst the participants by "the removal of the context" doesn't only stem from the loss of a concrete objective (students were not primarily there to find "solutions" for Creative Villages). It also stems from something deeper, related to curator's and artist's working modalities.

Both a research project and a cultural program based in a rural area, Creative Villages addresses the role of contemporary art in society at a time when creativity can be perceived as "fundamentalism."⁴ The golden era of project management, our epoch is witnessing an increasing number of artistic projects of all sorts implemented towards specific objectives: be they economic, political, communicational, or touristic. Now, as American art historian Miwon Kwon well demonstrated,⁵ site-specific approaches represents a formidable tool for achieving such agendas. That's why Creative Villages critically questions curatorial and artistic methodologies, protocols, or strategies taking a given "context" as the framework of a problem to solve or address.

³ Addressed in its early stage by American artist Andrea Fraser and German critic Helmut Draxler (see: *Services: The Conditions and Relations of Service Provision in Contemporary Project Oriented Artistic Practice*, 1994–97), the economy of project work basically consists in commissioning artists to develop and realize projects tailored for specific contexts and expectations, such as those formulated by the creative economy (which includes increasing the visibility of a given place/institution, or attracting larger audiences including tourists).

⁴ See: Pascal Gielen, *Creativity and other Fundamentalisms*, Mondrian Fund, 2013.

⁵ See: Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press, 2004.

It is ironic indeed, however critical or engaged site-specific approaches intended to be in their inception, they often turn out to be the service or skill artists and curators are expected to perform by nowadays' creative economy. Operating within frameworks that are increasingly professionalized and managerial, they might fill the role of *problem-solvers* or *experts* (pseudo-ethnologists, social-workers, or managers⁶), highly appreciated for their ability to activate networks of people from different fields or backgrounds and make them collaborate around projects oriented towards quantifiable outcomes. This partly explains the fantastic comeback of the activity of art commissioning, which goes together with the development of new funding schemes, residency programs, and calls for project.

As a standpoint meant to challenge such dynamics, the removal of the context didn't allow for working protocols, proper to site-specific approaches, to be applied during the workshop. The substituted goal has been to take advantage of the week spent together to question our own practices and positions as artists and curators: In which conditions do we work, and in which frameworks? What type of practices or concepts do we choose to implement and why? What are we expecting from an art project and what is expected from us by the commissioners, the local communities, or the funders? Do these expectations match our own, or are they antagonistic? Which concessions are we ready to make? Which public are we really addressing? What is a meaningful art project in this context?

The workshop provided the participants with an overview of public art projects realized in the Valais, which resonated with other examples from the United States, England, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland. All of these projects, and their respective sets of issues, served as a common ground and starting point for the participants to position themselves towards Creative Villages' research

orientations. On another level, following up on the work realized by the research project *Ars Contemporaneus Alpinus* (ECAV, 2013–15), this workshop sought to contribute to the production of a critical discourse on public art in the Valais and to acknowledge it on an international level. Ultimately, this experience will help Creative Villages elaborate a meaningful curatorial proposal for the community of Leytron by the end of the pilot phase, in May, 2017 (thus achieving the second goal of the workshop's initial statement).

The Valais offers an interesting panorama of projects in terms of curatorial models, artistic approaches, sites, audiences, and agendas.⁷ Midway between a certain idea of Land Art and urban Plop Art, some curatorial projects rely on monumental sculpture or installations dialoguing with the landscape. If Air&Art Foundation adopts a quite patronizing attitude by commissioning works by big name artists at the scale of the Canton (the first one being by American artist Michael Heizer) others, such as Verbier-3D Sculpture Park and Residency, combine culture with outdoor recreation. Located up in the mountain – which is one of the Valais' main economies, and its brand – these curatorial projects seek to develop a cultural offering that embodies the characteristics of the region: a kind of cultural AOC destined for a great part in the tourism economy.

In the same spirit, but primarily based in the valley, the *Triennial* of Label'Art association⁸ takes over a well know model of the creative economy – the “biennial” model, popularized by success stories such as the Venice Biennale or documenta in Kassel. Organized all over the Canton, this event seeks to simultaneously draw attention to

⁷ Beside R&Art, this overview includes the projects which have been seen by participants of the workshop or presented to them. But there are other public art projects in the Valais, such as those organized by the Ecole cantonale d'art du Valais.

⁸ This association regroups the main institutions working in the field of visual arts in the region; most of them are located in the plain.

⁶ See for instance: Miwon Kwon op. cit; Hal Foster, “The Artist as Ethnographer,” in *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1996; Clair Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” *Artforum*, Feb. 2006; or Jennifer Roche, *Socially Engaged Art, Critics and Discontents: An Interview with Claire Bishop*, Community Arts Network Reading Room, July 2006, see: <http://fr.scribd.com/doc/45545670/an-Interview-With-Claire-Bishop#scribd>

I. Michael Heizer, *Tangential Circular Negative Line 1968–2012*, 2012, commissioned by Air&Art © Robert Hofer
II. Kiki Thompson, *Samsara*, 2012, Verbier 3D sculpture park © Benoit Antille
III. Sabine Zaalene, *Dort ist ein Mann* (Here is a Man), Turtmann, 2014, in the context of Label'Art's Triennial © Sabine Zaalene
IV. Les Frères Chapuisat, *Résidence secondaire*, 2012, commissioned by R&Art © Benoit Antille



the national art scene, and make the region a destination for cultural tourism.

Such model, which don't always deliver on its promises, can be considered a bit predictable. But others, such as the site-specific installations commissioned each summer by the R&Art association for the village of Vercorin, look more engaged and curatorially challenging. Taking the village as its site, and employing temporary, site-specific interventions, this project requires a long-term collaboration with the community. The organizer, Jean-Maurice Varone (who also launched Air&Art), sets up several meetings with the villagers to present the project, secure their approval, and get them involved.



Acknowledged by German art historian Brita Polzer in her book *Kunst und Dorf* (Art and Village), R&Art is emblematic of a true phenomenon in rural areas, which consists of taking villages and their communities, rather than the landscape, as the context for site-specific practices. In this regard, the Valais hosts another example, less visible than R&Art but even more engaged with local communities. For decades, between the village of Leuk and the high altitude pasture of Galm, and with no concern for publicity, documentation, and artistic brands (such “participatory art” or “community-based art”), a duo of artists/activists born in this region – Carlo Schmidt and Pascal Seiler – have realized hundreds of projects based on the same philosophy: by using creativity in the service of the community, the two artists want to help solve local issues (such as unemployment or depopulation), and develop more meaningful approaches to tourism or territorial development.



Contrary to the previous examples, research-based projects such as *Matza-Aletsch*, organized on the Aletsch glacier by artist and curator Séverin Guelpa, and the museum dedicated to Johnny Depp in a high-altitude cow-shed close to Crans-Montana, are not primarily meant to build large audiences or involve local communities. A residency program and on-site experiment involving artists and scientists, *Matza-Aletsch* is part of a wider curatorial project that addresses global issues such as water or climate change. Anchored in remote areas, this project reaches a public through exhibitions organized on-site and



V



VI

in urban contexts, catalogues, talks, and websites. *Who did eat Johnny Depp?* by artist Berclaz de Sierre, is a project in progress. It started in 2008, as a survey on the life and genealogy of a bull named after the Hollywood star. Taking various forms, including a mock-institution, a website, an archive, and artworks, this project addresses issues of food production, industrial agriculture, the genetic control of livestock, as well as the changing functions of the countryside. For the moment, this museum can be visited by invitation only.

If the projects realized by Seiler & Schmidt caught a great deal of the participant's attention as unexpected, meaningful and engaged examples of "community-based art" happening under the radar of the artworld, Furkart and the Institute Furkablick literally fascinated all of them. Launched in 1983 by Swiss gallerist Marc Hostettler, Furkart took place until 1999 in the Hotel Furkablick and the surrounding area on the Furka pass. For sixteen years, this remote site, which sits at an altitude of 2,436m, and is accessible only during four months of the year, served as residency for an avant-garde of artists⁹ who benefited from the unique conditions by using them to meet and work (many works are still on-site).



VII

Run by Janis Osolin, the Institute has taken over Furkart's legacy as well as the memory of the entire "Furka-zone" (as Osolin calls it), which includes the hotel, a former military facility, and their area. Over years of commitment, he managed to impose his rules and style with regard to taking care of these heritages, reflecting profound thought, and analysing any decision taken. Thanks to characters such as Hostettler and Osolin, the Furka-zone presents the precious opportunity to think in total opposition to the current obsession with visibility, accessibility, and return on investment. The chance to experience this place, and its intertwined histories, is available to an



VIII

⁹ Such as James Lee Bayer, Marina Abramović & Ulay, Daniel Buren, Terry Fox, Jenny Holzer, Richard Long, Lawrence Weiner, Panamarenko, and Rémy Zaugg among others...

V, VI. Project of Carlo Schmidt and Pascal Seiler © the artists
 VII, VIII. Matza-Aletsch, 2016 © Séverin Guelpa
 XIX. The Furka-zone © Janis Osolin
 X, XI. Berclaz de Sierre, Johnny Depp Museum © Robert Hofer



audience, but at the cost of some effort: first, one has to be aware of its existence (there are almost no visible signs of the Institute on-site and online), and has to travel up to the pass, which is quite remote.

As shown by the texts published here, the trip to the Furka, and the encounter with Janis Osolin have been very inspiring for the workshop's participants: Amanda Nudelman gives an account of this experience, which lead her to reflect on notions of *time* and *preservation*; Hanne van Dyck elaborated a proposal for a residency at the pass in order to follow up the discussions she started with Osolin and question her position as an artist living across various contexts; and Leigh Markopoulos elaborates a reflection on what "truly context responsive art" and its audiences could be, based on Furkart and the projects organized by Seiler & Schmidt.

From other perspectives, Rosa Tyhurst defies academic or cultural snobbism towards public art that takes the form of site-specific sculpture, through undertaking a strong advocacy *In Defense of Plop Art*; MK Meador proposes a personal reading of the notion of *marginalia* in order to highlight the specificities of the periphery; and Elizabeth Thomas wrote spontaneous notes and thoughts relative to readings and the visits/discussions. As for Dan Cassidy, he chose to propose a series of concrete solutions to increase the attraction and visibility of Creative Villages in Leytron, which could be applied in other contexts.

Taken together, these texts show a number of precious reflections and ideas, which will help to elaborate a thorough project for the community of Leytron by the end of Creative Villages' pilot phase.



TACTICAL INVISIBILITY

LEIGH MARKOPOULOS

Sublime are those landscapes or geographical features – the yawning rocky ravine, the towering Alpine range, the monstrous waterfall – where one, traditionally understood, has a significant chance of sensing the awesome presence of God, and by extension one’s own relative insignificance.

To be experienced as a terrible yet invigorating sensation, the sublime was first theorized by the eighteenth-century British philosopher Edmund Burke. Added to by Immanuel Kant, and others, his argument inflected nineteenth-century Romantic literary and artistic expressions to quite some degree, as is evident in the paintings of, say, Caspar David Friedrich, or the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. While there were many who might not experience the sublime at first hand, there were few who could fail to recognize its artistic manifestation, or who did not feel the power of depictions of vast forests bathed in moonlight, or rivers churning through endless valleys.

These days, however, the banal and the second-rate seem to be the order of the day whenever art and wilderness meet. The Alpine region in particular offers Landscape with a capital L, as well as numerous case studies from which to draw conclusions about the efficacy or desirability of inserting art into nature, and the kinds of vested interests that are at stake. Here we find mountains and valleys garnished with culture plus sport, for example, in the form of a sculpture park at Verbier ski resort, or commerce, in the shape of Label’Art’s 2017 Triennial at the highly profitable Relais du Saint-Bernard service stop. And we find these situations justified with a number of statistics that attest to their benefits. This kind of art, or art experience, is useful. It’s lucrative. Generative even (where local economies are concerned). But is it any good? And if not, why not? And what would be better? And for whom?

These are some of the questions that may arise when faced with the incongruity – or brilliance,

depending on your viewpoint – of, for example, a large Michael Heizer sculpture situated in close proximity to the Mauvoisin Dam. The American artist, an early proponent of Land Art with a string of imposing earthworks to his name, is known for his use of landscape as medium. In the canton of the Valais, he has recessed huge concentric rings of steel into a plateau at the foot of the eighth-highest hydro-electric generator in the world. Although unlikely companions, both dam and artwork are similarly confounding in one way – their questionable relationship to the landscape.

Ironically, Land Art was born out of a number of impulses that operated against precisely those ambitions that brought *Tangential Circular Negative Line* (1968–2012) to bear. The movement countered the art world’s lust for money and dominion by complicating access, refusing ownership, and withdrawing to the hinterlands. This particular sculpture, however, was commissioned by the very institution its forebears sought to critique: a lavishly funded organization intent on situating art in nature. Furthermore, Heizer never inspected the site.



Instead he was handsomely paid for a sketch that – as the dates of the work suggest – was anything but a specific response to the context. Hardly surprising, then, that it has not been rap- turously received either by locals or visitors.

So, if we accept that taking art out of the gal- lery space and inserting it into the landscape is a worthwhile ambition, it's worth considering more closely how one might productively and sensitively go about this task. And how one de- fines the criteria of success, and for whom. Two interesting case studies in this connection are the Furkart residency, and the activities of Swiss artist Carlo Schmidt and his collaborator Pascal Seiler. The former models itself on an artist's residency set in a somewhat unexpected location, and the latter manifest as socially engaged, on-demand style projects based around traditional values.

Furkart was founded in 1983 by Swiss galler- ist Marc Hostettler in an abandoned hotel. Situated at just under 2,500 meters above sea level, in the Uri region of the Alps, the residency offers a rarified experience in terms of oxygen, access, and its roster of participants. Daniel Buren, Ulay and Marina Abramovic, Joseph Kosuth, James Lee Byars, Richard Long, Niele Toroni, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Olivier Mosset, Roman Signer, Panamarenko, and Jenny Holzer are just a few of the artists who passed through its doors during its first incarnation.

Hostettler moved on in the late 90s, but Furkart still operates, now managed by curator Janis Osolin and supported by a private foundation. The art-initiate may, from a distance recognize, the green/red and white striped wooden shut- ters enlivening its façade as a contribution by Daniel Buren, but otherwise there is no signage to give the game away. In fact the hotel, which is really a museum of sorts, is accessible only *via* an extremely discreet appointment system. It's a refreshing and critical policy, which extends to the ban on photography of the interiors.

Those lucky enough to make it inside will find relatively few works on view. Mainly because most of the sixty or so artists who participat- ed were, irrespective of their practice, lured by the spectacular surrounds into engaging with

the landscape. Thus Joseph Kosuth, normally the generator of an esoteric conceptual kind of gallery practice, was inspired to produce a large outdoor sculpture, which takes the form of a sentence (a citation by the German writer Johan Wolfgang Goethe) picked out in metal and hugging a nearby escarpment.

One could argue that the majority of the works that survive are too representative of each re- spective artist's practice – Toroni's squares, Mosset's crosses, or Kirkeby's brick tower – to constitute significant milestones in their respective oeuvres. And yet overall, the rather subtle statuary dotted over the landscape, much of it quite hard to locate, offers aesthet- ical and conceptual engagement aplenty to a destination visitor. To the unaware passerby, however, Kirkeby's bricks resemble a trash repository, while Max Bills's four marble slabs offer handy benches. Despite the frustrations of trying to assess the meaning, or legacy, of a project so determined to stay off the grid, the notion of resistance is appealingly rigorous. No mediation (other than that offered by Osolin), no ostentation. And after all what better way to see Richard Long's work than to stumble across it adorning the exterior of a ramshackle building wracked by the very winds it depicts?

Osolin embodies the profundity of Furkart's continued allure. A curator in the original care-taking sense of the word, he has devoted the last twenty or so years towards preserv- ing and in many cases resurrecting the often tattered remnants of the hotel and its residen- cies. Carlo Schmidt, an ebullient, gregarious, yet modest artist, of at least seventy years of age, has similarly dedicated a significant part of his life towards caring for the needs of a number of villages and their inhabitants throughout the Valais. Schmidt and his long- time collaborator, Pascal Seiler, form a sort of "artist on call" team dispensing art as therapy and succor, and along the way have perfected the art of channeling funds from civic agencies towards local populations. Their relational art works propose ways of rehabilitating trauma- tized immigrant children for example, or train- ing unemployed youth in traditional crafts, or community building around shared events such as concerts. Ephemeral in nature, their effects are enduring, and requests for their tailor-made projects continue to multiply.

XII. Workshop *Curating the Alps: Verbier* 3D sculpture park
XIII. Workshop *Curating the Alps: Hotel Furkablick*

FROM THE MARGINS

ELIZABETH THOMAS

Both Osolin and Schmidt/Seiler participate in a tight circuit of artists or arts professionals whose research methodologies and practice derive from their immediate contexts. Both are motivated by a pragmatic and programmatic approach towards the needs of their constituencies. Osolin is deeply knowledgeable about (the history of) Furkart, its participants, works, and the hotel's fabric and topographical surrounds, while Schmidt/Seiler are invested in the socio-political conditions of Alpine village communities. Whether restoring a text-based window installation by Mark Luyten, or training locals in the art of building stone walls, each offers an indigenous authenticity that is hard to replicate elsewhere.

This context-specificity translates into an appealing exclusivity, which is enhanced by a sense of the unexpected, insofar as both projects remain fairly invisible unless actively sought out. Firmly rooted in their surrounds, neither Osolin nor the Schmidt/Seiler partnership courts the art market or its attention economy. Accordingly, their audiences are restricted to invested participants, as well as specific art world visitors, or observers. For these reasons, they could equally be judged as unsuccessful in terms of profile building for the region. Nonetheless, despite, or perhaps even because of, their resistance to the self-promoting platforms offered by the Internet and social media, and the authenticity of their practices, they trade (whether rightly or wrongly is beyond the scope of this essay) on reputations that extend beyond the level of lore to near legendary status.

The lessons to be drawn, then, are heartening. Truly context responsive art does exist, and it does not need to compete with the landscape for visibility. It can be socially expedient and historically grounded. It can serve its intended communities both in an intellectual and practical sense. Granted that to the extent that Osolin/Furkart and Schmidt/Seiler deprive the experience industry of a sensational objects or divert touristic funding to their own ends, they make for poor contributions towards the creative economy. But in terms of addressing specific audiences and contexts in meaningful ways, they offer wildly successful contemporary art experiences worth traveling some distance for.

No, not those margins; although it's true that Leytron and the Valais are hardly at the center of any art world, but then again, neither is most every other place in the world. Landscape, remoteness, rurality, among other qualities, are things the region shares with lots of places...and one can think about art in these situations being a magnet – working with or against the magnetic fields around other activities, people, landmarks – drawing people close to it, from the area or from other places, and if it has the wrong polarity, occasionally repelling people away. Magnetic fields are invisible. They need to be experienced and felt, something we didn't have enough time to do, so it seems the best I can offer are my impressionistic and improvisational thoughts about the magnetism of artists and strategies in other places, hoping it might provide some possibilities. Noted mentally or dashed onto the margins of pages – books and photocopies read in preparation for our workshop, notes taken during presentations or after a day's adventures – I offer faithfully (more or less) my notations (and memories and circumstances, in some cases)...

GOSSIP?!?!?

* after an afternoon spent in Leytron, between the café next to the Coop, the church/gallery, and the pharmacy.

I'm from a fairly small city, with only one main grocery store, café, and local newspaper. The truth about any small city is that people talk – to each other, about each other – and notable happenings fly through these circuits like electrical current through wire, with nodes in the cafes, pharmacies, churches, sidewalks, and other spaces we share. Today, it may be that those conversations also happen in snapchat, on Facebook, in online comment sections, even with our neighbors down the street.

So why not give them something to talk about?



It made a beeping sound like this:

XIV

In 1979 the artist and inventor Theo Jansen made a flying saucer of simple plastic tubing, and a balloon propelled by helium. He released it over Delft, into a hazy sky so its blackness would flatten against the sky and render its form and materials all the more mysterious. His intention was to cause a bit of a spectacle, but in the end, it caused a near-riot and brought police, witnesses, and news crews unwittingly into its ruse. Police interviewed about the sighting suggested it was as large as a nuclear reactor (it was not much taller than a person), and witnesses described its otherworldly sounds (it was silent); it became a topic of conversation for everyone in town: skeptics and believers alike. The balloon conveniently disappeared on its own, and Jansen stayed silent for a while to let the myth perpetuate. He came clean eventually and also repeated the spectacle over Paris.

Ahmet Ögüt collected stories from 40 years of Turkish newspapers, sometimes overtly

political, and sometimes strangely surreal. Decontextualized from their original contexts and locations, Ögüt presented them (as a book and in installations) in the format of a regular newspaper column that stretched notions of “news” and the construction of truth, fiction, and history. In my mind, the project also serves to blur the line between life and art by pulling quotidian events or individual actions that are surprising, strange, remarkable, even amazing, into the realm of artistic practice or performance art to be displayed in art contexts. Beyond that, although Ögüt never went so far as to publish his selections in the newspaper, one could imagine a column that printed real and invented actions, producing interest and attention...without having to construct a UFO.

One can imagine all kinds of spectacles, tiny interventions and performed phenomena, with all kinds of characters and intents...absurd, sentimental, strange, ambiguous...inserted somehow into the daily spaces, patterns, and interactions, making myths in the present tense. And not just by outsiders and artists. Members of the community could be enlisted to create these sorts of experiences for each other.

(NOT THIS AGAIN)

*after driving by roundabouts dotted with pop-art sculptures and visiting the ski-park-cum-sculpture-park in Verbier.

Necdet Aktay had been working in the city of Van for 32 years as a car mechanic when he made a Ferrari by hand from photographic records. After seeing the 512 sport Ferrari for the first time in a car magazine, he could not stop dreaming about it. Having collected all the different parts of the car one by one, he completed his personal hand-made version after eight years.



Today in History *Tarihte Bugün*

XV



physical space rather than dropping in his own objects for contemplation. After his own research and travels in the state, Deller created a totally idiosyncratic (but functional) guidebook for California, mostly the rural parts. The book stands on its own – full of interviews, drawings, maps, history (in collaboration with Matthew Coolidge of the Center for Land Use Interpretation), and even music. But it is fully actualized when someone moves themselves along his paths, through the landscape – from roadside museums to prison gift shops to minor landmarks. Deller calls it a “treasure hunt” and has set things up so you’ll know not just the places, but more importantly, the names and stories of people you might encounter in these places...in a way, they’re expecting you to show up and talk to them (and sometimes they even have a little something to give you, from Deller himself).

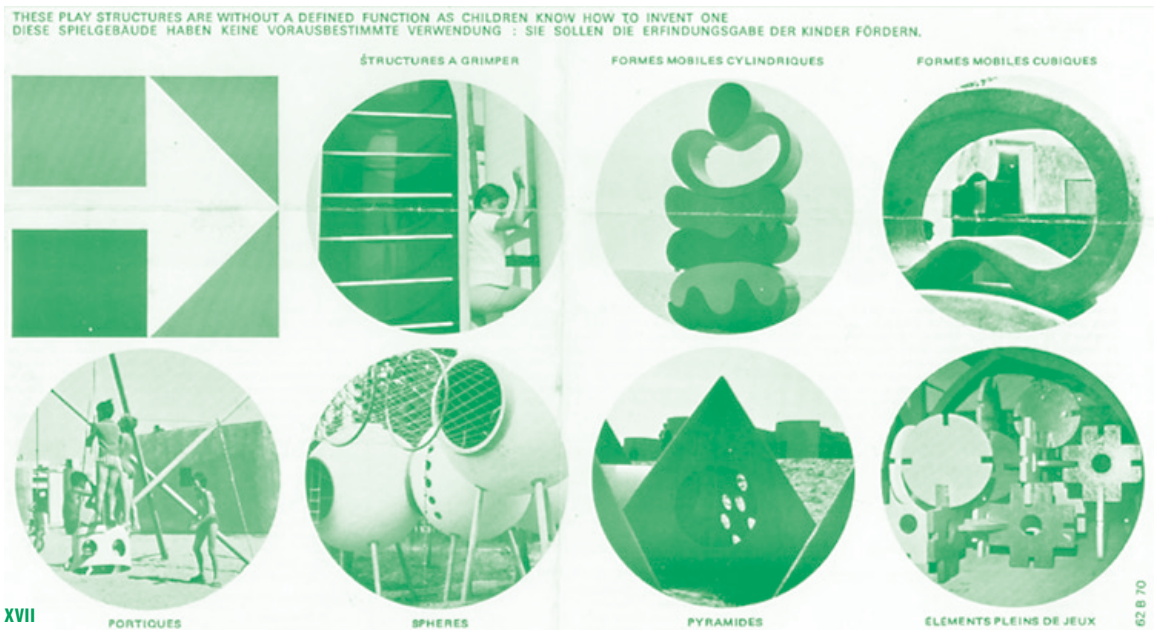
//HOMO LUDENS//

There are rare occasions when a sculpture park creates an experience that is more than the sum of its parts...most of the time we tromp around on paths seeking and looking for, if not treasure than at least something worth the journey (not infrequently the journey beats the art). In 2002 Jeremy Deller mapped a series of paths for seeking and looking, on a larger scale – leading us to things already occupying

In 1938 Johan Huizinga wrote about “play” as integral to the nature of humanity and to the production of culture (actually, he argued it comes before culture). Play is free, is in fact freedom.

01. Play is not “ordinary” or “real” life.

02. Play is distinct from “ordinary” life both as to locality and duration.



03. Play creates order, is order. Play demands order absolute and supreme.

04. Play is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it¹⁰.

Over the years theorists have been drawn to Huizinga's ideas for a myriad of reasons, from theories of knowledge production to experiments in childhood development to Situationist's revolutionary politics. In the design and implementation of playgrounds and play structures, radical urbanists, designers, and artists found, in Huizinga, a way to rethink the activation of public space, the insertion of creativity into everyday life, the renegotiation of social relations, the alternatives to capitalist production and consumerism. In the 60s and 70s, playgrounds became spaces of extreme experimentation – formally, aesthetically, and socially. From Carl Theodor Sorenson's Dutch "junk" playgrounds in the 1940s, to Group Ludic's French parks (above), to Isamu Noguchi's Japanese playscapes of the 1960s, these spaces encouraged more open types of play, the cultivation of aesthetics in everyday life, and used design to enact cutting edge psychological and neurological research.



Sharing the belief that play is integral to adults, and works to shape social relations, Whole Earth Catalogue founder Stewart Brand helped usher in the New Games movement in California in the late 1960s, as a modeling of non-violent competition and as an alternative

to protest (in this case, against the Vietnam War). Play could suit everyone's needs, be driven by simple rules and little equipment, and shift social relations. In their original form, the new games movement bore heavy traces of the free love psychedelic counterculture that birthed them, but over the years evolved to address all kinds of people and their desires. A principal tenet is the shifting roles of leader/participant and the ever-evolving gamebook – always open to new ideas – modeling a system of feedback and iteration that responds to all of the people participating.

CREATIVE THOUGHTS

DAN CASSIDY

Going into the Creative Villages seminar, I was unsure of exactly what it was. After attending the seminar, I left more confused than when I'd started. Below are my thoughts on a project idea that could hopefully make the project somewhat concrete. It's hard to grasp the exact nature of the Creative Villages project. We know it is, in part, an exploration of different approaches to the uses of contemporary art in the public sphere. Given that the starting point for this conceptual venture is the village of Leytron-Ovronnaz; which is intended as a case study, but also as a lab of sorts, to experiment with exportable solutions to the question of how to address specific community needs at the same time as commission viable art works; one of our tasks could be to devise projects that are at once site-specific, and portable enough to function in another village or town. It's an interesting challenge to make public art modular, while still enabling it to be specific to the site in which it was conceived. The challenge, of course, raises questions of movability, as well as shared interests across diverse communities. And it requires subscribing to a belief that contemporary art can benefit a community, be it by rendering something that has been a familiar, but not necessarily loved, part of the inhabitant's lives new and interesting; by at-

¹⁰ Huizinga, Johan (1944). *Homo Ludens*. Switzerland: Routledge, p.13.

XIV. Theo Jansen, still from *UFO Over Delft*, 1980.

XV. Page from *Today in History*, 2007.

XVI. Jeremy Deller, page from *After the Gold Rush*, 2002.

XVII. Group Ludic

tracting outsiders to share an experience; or by exploring what is special about a specific site, and giving it a refreshed significance to those that live there as well as to visitors.

The one tangible element of the Creative Villages is that a decommissioned church in Leytron now serves as the project's gallery and gathering space. Built in 1681, it, from the outside, looks much like any other small seventeenth-century church in any other Swiss village. Over the last 335 years, the village has grown around it, as has a circuit of thoroughfares; today the unassuming white building is marooned on a traffic island of sorts, and backed by a small car-park and newsstand. A billboard describes the building's current functions, but can only be read en route out of the village. There is little other visual stimulus to tempt anyone driving by to stop and explore the space. Should Creative Villages try to lure in passersby/tourists? Or can it be happy to be a gallery for the local villagers whether they attend or not? If attraction is the goal, then some thought needs to be given to the exterior of the building.

Leytron seems like just any other rather unassuming village, to the extent that it has nothing particular about it to distinguish it from other villages of similar size and make-up. It's partly for this reason that Creative Villages takes Leytron as its starting point, so we might want to start by addressing what – if anything – is possible in such a village, of which a harsh critic could say, as Gertrude Stein once did of Oakland, California, when describing a similar lack of attractions, "There is no there, there."

One obvious approach to enlivening the village, and highlighting the Creative Villages project, would be to alter the church's appearance for short periods of time. Take the example of the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, London. This plinth, which was supposed to be adorned by a statue, sat empty for over 150 years until the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) started the Fourth Plinth Project in 1999. Since then, contemporary artists have been commissioned annually to make sculptures for the site. The impermanence is part of the attraction, and renewed interest is generated by each new installation.

If we were to apply the model of temporary transformation to Leytron, we could consider altering the exterior of the church for short periods of time. Because of the age of the building, it would not be prudent to attempt anything too permanent or invasive: it is important for the villagers to know that their building can, and will, return to its original state. So, for example, all or part of the building could be shrouded in fabric. Christo may not be interested, but there are many knit-bomb crafters who do such projects. Water soluble pigments could be used on the roof, so the building changes appearance during rain or snow. Murals could be added with water based paints that could easily be removed. Projections on the exterior walls would bring art to the outside of the space. Works such as these would increase visibility and exposure of the church site, and focus attention on the church as an art space in Leytron.

Returning to the goal of to create a potentially adaptable model for other villages seeking to enhance their profile, we could use the church's cultural and historical significance as our starting point. Churches have many functions in a village: the obvious ritualistic ones, as a gathering place for community activities, and also a site of confession and consultation. Although the Protestant church does not subscribe to the rituals of the Catholic faith, the element of confession remains, and the church is a safe space for considering one's civic behavior. If we think about the Catholic confessional booth, but substitute artist and villager for priest and parishioner, we might be able to create a system of exchange. Only in this model, of course, the commodity would not be faith, but rather art. Perhaps in this way, we could arrive at a way to introduce contemporary art into a small community in a relatively non-invasive way.

This model also implies an element of duration, to build up a relationship between artist and parishioner. It might therefore make the most sense to found a residency, in order to embed the artist in the community. Some thought needs to be given to how the artist would be introduced to the villagers, who could then come to them with small domestic problems, or even larger concerns. Here, I am talking about things such as painting window shut-

REGIONALIA AND PUBLIC (ART) WORK: CONSIDERING THE MARGINS AND THE MIDDLE

ters, or a community mural, or improving a local park. This kind of service could generate a rapport, giving the artists insight into the contingencies of village life, and the participating villagers the double benefit of a service rendered, and an art experience. These individual acts could then become the seeds of a bigger project in the community, based on the artists will and creativity, and the villager's receptivity.

If we were to set up an office of creative commissions in the Leytron church, could we then export this task-based approach to other communities? A literal way of doing this would be to create a recognizable and modular design for the "bureau," or consultation kiosk. This could be built from local materials and installed where needed. Each kiosk could be loosely based on the structure of the church confessional booth – basically two small spaces, divided by a perforated wall of some sort. The kiosks should be big enough to seat two people on either side of a small table. We can eliminate the wall and window, since we need neither element of secrecy or religion involved in confession. This would be a way to secularize the structure, and keep the basic functionality: as a place to sit and interact with someone. The outside of the structure could furthermore function as a community message board, displaying projects or other local needs. By constructing these modules, and bringing them to communities, it might be possible to insert something new and unusual in the neighborhood, as well as a specific destination from which artistic projects can start. The structures could stay in the locales once the project is complete, to function in whatever way the people desire, be it as a shelter, meeting place, or for firewood.

Creative Villages is an interesting attempt to look at where the needs of local communities, civic authorities, and the art world might meet. It's interesting that a church, albeit a decommissioned one, has been chosen as its headquarters. One can make a virtue of this fact in thinking about public art, through assessing the church's role in a small community, even though this is less visible than it may have been in former times. The approaches I suggest above could raise the profile of the church and the Creative Village project, not just within Leytron, but across the Valais.

MK MEADOR

The Creative Villages workshop convened in October, 2016, near the town of Leytron-Ovronnaz, Switzerland. It was here that a diverse group of artists, curatorial students, academics, and institutional curators converged in the ground floor of an Alpine chalet to discuss the difficulties of developing what might constitute as good public arts programming. Over the seminar's nine days, the group traveled to many sites and listened to many propositions concerning the issues raised by art situated in public. Case studies included: Verbier sculpture park, social projects for public audiences (for example, those organized by Carlo Schmidt), installations in a courtyard and a graveyard, "Plop art," the Furkart residency, and even a visit to the proposed site of the upcoming 2017 L'abel Art Triennial.

In our tours across the Valais, it started to occur to me that the layout of this region recalls that of a book. If the body of the text is the book's focal point, then its edges are the margins. Similarly, the Valais is a body of sorts, flanked by mountains on either side. By extension, this relationship evoked the greater relationship of centers to margins, or peripheries. In a further extension of this analogy, it might be helpful to remember that the term for annotations and ideas shared in the margins of books is "marginalia." They may contain comments, or the seeds of a thought, and thus can bear witness to the germination of larger ideas. In arts communities, as in literature, artists and their work made outside the center is often consigned to the margins, where it can easily be overlooked. Perhaps a new term is needed to categorize this condition and clarify this kind of artistic practice? If so, I offer "regionalia" as a possible label that refers to work made outside a center, and would constitute the artistic, if marginal,

activities belonging to a particular city or region. The imperatives, budgets, and locations operating in the margins lead to different kinds of work. As such, the work is to be judged on its own merits rather than being made to compete against art made in the centers.

Some of the projects presented during the workshop are interesting to consider within this suggested framework. Many of the speakers had compelling points of view with regards to projects and initiatives operating along the margins, and a handful in particular supported the nomenclature of regionalia. For example, Adam Sutherland, Director of Grizedale Arts – which is located in the Lake District, a rural yet touristy part of northern England – shared the progression of his programming work in the village of Grizedale and its sculpture park. Taking full advantage of the storybook forest setting, Sutherland’s program verges as much on the practical as on the absurd: for one memorable project, he attempted to reinstate the eighteenth-century English tradition of employing self-confessed hermits to reside on the arts centers grounds and work the land. Sutherland is an instigator of situations, his curatorial strategies could be characterized as generative, and

they make good use of the remoteness of his setting as well as the context of a rural village. Yet while they are context-responsive, and sensitive to local issues, they have a validity beyond their immediate surrounds. This notion was reiterated by theoretician John Byrne who highlighted the fact that – historically – artworks were created and exported from cities to rural communities. Byrne argued for a reversal of this system, and urged the group to consider a new order for creative production: one through which the regionalia could inform and improve on art made in the city centers.

Among the many presentations during the week, there was one key artist/organizer who stood out.

Carlo Schmidt has made a career of challenging the assumptions relating to regionalia. His various projects, organized in collaboration with Pascal Seiler, might loosely be classified as social practice. As a highly active and agile public arts programmer, Schmidt works across sites in Switzerland and Europe, producing creative and engaging solutions for local problems. For one project, Schmidt organized and tasked a team with salvaging the local architecture of the Valais



IN REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST: TENDING TO TIME AND PLACE AT FURKART

region: specifically with conserving traditional Swiss chalet structures. By making use of local materials and skills, and tending to local communities, his work both serves and is generated by its intended audience. Yet, his research, and the activation strategies he employs, could be more widely applied to other contexts, whether at the center or periphery.

When asked about the motivation for his many involvements, Schmidt responded, “If someone with creativity doesn’t help, it’s a sin.” This urgency to help, or at the very least, to improve upon shared community spaces, is not shared by all curators and programmers of public art. As a curatorial imperative counter to Schmidt’s multifaceted and modest public engagement, Marianne Lanavère; Director of the Centre International D’Art et Du Paysage; spoke of the “pressure to present spectacular work,” at her sculpture park, which is located in an extremely remote area of central France. Although her program offers a thorough consideration of the surrounding landscape and natural environments, in many cases, the installations or interventions she organized, such as one artist’s painted shadows of electrical poles, were so minimal as to be almost completely invisible. While Schmidt’s approach is socially embedded, and Lanavère’s is subtle and socially detached, both embrace the complexity, and opportunity, of context.

But what works for one region doesn’t work for all. These case studies are distinct, and uniquely successful in their contexts as well as more broadly. Regionalia, while looking to provide a term that loosely groups the ways of working across different and remote regions, is not suggestive of any one approach. Rather, it is a term intended to provide more specificity for a certain dynamic set of creative working conditions. It should stand for the work done outside the middle, but within specific regional contexts. It should denote an impulse to take advantage of the margin’s resources, and the freedoms afforded by the periphery, such as the lack of a trend-conscious public. In these conditions, regionalia can blossom, and take the form of the subtle, the complex, and in very rare instances, the mythological. These nuanced qualities may be harder to view from afar, but can be found everywhere.

XVIII. Workshop Curating the Alps: Michael Heizer’s Tangential Circular Negative Line 1968–2014

AMANDA NUDELMAN

The Hotel Furkablick is a mausoleum of sorts. Four floors of once extravagant rooms remain virtually unchanged since its construction in 1903. Janis Osolin is the building’s caretaker, a curator in the traditional sense of the word: *a keeper or custodian*. His wards are the works of more than sixty artists who completed residencies there during an intense period of activity from 1983, to 1999, and then somewhat less frequently since then. Whether produced in the hotel, adorning the landscape, or existing as documentation, these works comprise Furkart: the legendary art residency you’ve never heard of.

Situated in the Swiss Alps at an altitude of 2,436 meters, the Hotel Furkablick hugs a turn on one of the highest mountain roads in Europe: the Furka Pass. Perhaps most well-known for its cameo in the iconic chase scene from the 1964, James Bond film *Goldfinger*, the steep winding pass connects the Rhône and Rhine Valleys, cutting through one of the snowiest regions in Switzerland. The fierce and unpredictable weather in the region leaves Furkablick accessible only 100 days per year to the handful of visitors intrepid enough to make the trek. The day I visit, with a group of artists, curators, and researchers in mid-October, will be the last day the pass is open in 2016 – already ten days since the tourist-serving steam train that runs from the Urseren Valley has stopped running.

Our first sight of the hotel reveals an iconic artwork. Across the otherwise stark, southwestern façade of Hotel Furkablick, are five pairs of closed shutters painted in vertical white and red stripes. Familiar to anyone with a basic knowledge of art history, the 3.4-inch stripes are unmistakably the work of French conceptual artist Daniel Buren. Below the shutters, centered at ground level, what seems to be a four-pane

window framed in silver metal extends from the building. In fact, this structure announces the entrance to the hotel's spare and unadorned restaurant. The entryway resembles the pleated bellows of a large format camera, fully expanded and forged in steel. Surprisingly, the minimal entrance, restaurant, kitchen, dining room, and viewing deck are the work of famed architect Rem Koolhaas. Designed in 1988, and finished three years later, these additions to the hotel constitute his smallest project and only building in Switzerland.

But these initial discoveries fade from notice, as the surrounding landscape quickly comes into focus. It is staggering and immense. Craggy peaks ensconce a deep and ragged gorge, splitting the range from east to west. One can imagine how they've emerged from the depths of the earth – crumpled – like a makeshift fan unfurling from an accordion of folded paper. The height and girth of the mountains block any view of the villages and valleys that lie beyond, filling one's view entirely with rocks and snow. But they still manage to appear boundless, crashing endlessly upward into the atmosphere. The monumental emptiness of the place is dizzying and awesome. It brings to mind Buzz Aldrin's spontaneous declaration as he stepped onto the surface of the moon: "Beautiful, beautiful. Magnificent desolation."

The spell breaks when Osolin leads us to a snow-covered plateau a few hundred yards from the entrance to the Furkablick Hotel. He looks down at his feet, as he waits for the rest of the group to straggle up the hill. He is a slight man at well under six-feet tall. Modestly dressed in a khaki jacket and forest green zip-up sweater, relaxed jeans, and sturdy brown boots, his easy movements and sparkling eyes conceal his age. His hair is buzzed short, and he wears round plastic glasses in tight conversation with thick curling eyebrows and a second-day beard. Bringing his arms close to the front of his body, he buries the fingers of one hand into the palm of the other, and begins: "The Furkazone is not only about space, but also time."

Osolin is clearly aware of the deep and immediate impact of the landscape. But the thing he wants us to pay attention to is something we cannot see: time. Time is an integral concern of the project; its forward march is inevitable

and unceasing. Though its passage is often imperceptible in the moment, the artwork – like the landscape itself – is unavoidably subject to its effects. The mountains surrounding the Furkazone are themselves the result of a turbulent history, tens of millions of years in the making. Osolin tells us the fierce convergence of African and Eurasian tectonic plates, upon which the hotel sits, contributes to a constantly shifting landscape, which can cause the mountains to rise, up to one millimeter per year. He pauses to let the information sink in, then adds, "The works are so related to the landscape that they don't have a frame, they have an environment."

He continues to recite Furka history without pause. There have been avalanches on both sides of the mountain. The crack formed by the plates is the only one that runs from east to west (most valleys are made by rivers running from north to south). The land occupied by the Furkazone was originally owned by the military. The pass was closed during both world wars. Since being established as a public hotel by the Andermatt family in the mid-1800s, the facility has, due to weather and world events, been open a total of only twelve years. In 1868, Queen Victoria stayed four days at Furkablick. Inspired by the view, she made several watercolor paintings. Her room, unequipped with heating, remained a frosty 4 degrees Celsius. Osolin comments, "She was a sturdy woman. She enjoyed it."

Even if Furka's history is more densely populated than its present, it seems that all of the zone's history is in Osolin's grasp. He is both a repository of public knowledge, and the guardian of private information relating to the residency, gathered over the course of twenty years of caring for its legacy. Although it was another enigmatic figure, Swiss gallerist Marc Hostettler, who in fact inaugurated the Furkart program in 1983, Osolin is the person who has extended its life. Although acknowledging the effects of time, he seems unburdened by them. Rather, the institution – understood through his activities – seems to have very different temporal imperatives from other art institutions. So gradual is the pace that Osolin keeps at Furka, that he is able to think carefully, across seasons, about each artwork and its relationship to the place. For example, he has spent the last three summers considering a work Canadian artist



Royden Rabinowitch made in 1987: three metal plates embedded in the earth near the hotel. His dilemma? Deciding whether to trim back the moss that has overgrown their edges.

But with an increasing amount of effort required to preserve the past, how does one embark on a path toward the future? Questions of time and preservation are not unusual in relation to art. Although, the complex systems we have developed to respond them (museums, conservation programs, collections, etc.) function in particular ways. Put simply: to provide the public access to artworks and to satisfy the market; both of which Furkart effectively exists outside of. The issue is further complicated by the fact that Osolin is currently the sole repository of Furkart's history, and seemingly the sole arbiter of its future. While he has thoroughly documented some of the works – a several-inch-thick conservator's document for *L'orangerie VI* (1990), Marc Luyten's subtle and powerful window stamps, for example – Osolin also insists that, as visitors, the majority of the works should live on in our memory (we're not allowed to take photos inside the hotel). But his memory is the one

of import at Furkart. When I leave Furkablick, I take with me a superficial, if vivid, impression. After Osolin's final summer, he takes with him decades worth of intimate knowledge. And leaves behind a corresponding void.

In one sense, the ideology of Furkart as an institution is very much in harmony with the art and artists it champions – one could even categorize the whole program as a conceptual art project (whose, is a different matter). But do these same qualities – a propensity for the inaccessible, dematerialized, and mythical – act in disservice to those who might never ascend to the Furka Pass? Perhaps my ambivalence stems from the fact that I begin to mourn my experience at Furkart before it's even over. As the group mills about, preparing to depart, I stand at the back of the restaurant with my face nearly pressed against the glass wall – some vain attempt to merge with the snowcapped mountains I may never see again. I think about something Osolin said of the sparsely decorated space, “By removing certain extra elements the topography of the whole thing changes. It brings the landscape inside.” Maybe this is how Furkart's legacy is supposed live on as well, inside each person who encounters it.

IN DEFENSE OF PLOP ART

ROSA TYHURST

Newport, South Wales, where I grew up, had a lot of public art; none of it seeming too precious to be touched, climbed upon, or otherwise interacted with. I called my mother to ask her what the first city sculpture I encountered was. She couldn't remember so, at the risk of a disappointing introductory anecdote, here are my memories of some of the works:

› My father once lifted me up so I could sit on Peter Fink's steel sculpture *Wave*, 1991. Once I was five feet up – wobbly, sitting at the bottom of the works giant red circular curl – I began screaming to be taken down. I must have been about four at the time.

› Originally produced for the Ebbw Vale Garden Festival, Andy Plant's *In the Nick of Time*, 1992, is a gigantic animatronic clock with flaps that open to reveal hidden moving characters every hour. It was situated just outside the library but even better it was near the best fish-and-chip shop in the city.

› My sister and I used to play in and around *Union, Prudence, Energy*, 1991, a figurative bronze sculpture, by Christopher Kelly. It was only a few years ago that I realized it depicts (amongst other things) the grim reaper and crushed bodies. I always thought they were fairies and children.

› Kenneth Budd's *Chartist Mural*, 1971, was situated in a dank underpass in the city center. Although far from understanding its subject – the last large-scale armed rebellion against authority in Great Britain¹¹ – even at a young age I think I understood the labor, and extreme detail, of the scene it depicted.

I was lucky to spend my formative years in a city that revealed bravery in its public commissions, and an insistence on celebrating its legacy of Chartistism¹². These public sculp-

¹¹ The mural depicted the Newport Uprising of 1839, when 10,000 Chartist sympathizers – led by John Frost – marched to the Westgate Hotel in Newport intent on liberating fellow Chartists who had been taken prisoner there.

¹² Chartistism was a working-class movement most active between 1838 and 1848. The aim of the Chartists was to gain political rights and influence for the working classes.

tures are one of the lasting memories that always come to mind when I think of Newport, they're part of the makeup of the City, just like the Transporter Bridge, the train station, the indoor produce market, and the perennial queues outside the passport office.

The term “Plop Art” (or “Plonk Art,” as it is sometimes known) is attributed to the architect James Wines in 1969. It's one of many derisive epithets used to categorize a certain form of public art first popularized in the 1950s and 1960s, in which “often-less-than-distinctive Modernist sculpture was sited in front of often-less-than-memorable Modernist buildings.”¹³ In the US, this is often situated outside government offices or NGO buildings, buildings that require 1% of their construction budget to be spent on a federally funded public artwork. The term suggests something abject, something thoughtless, formless, and senseless. Something ill-conceived, even. Plop also suggests something wet and heavy falling, squeezed out from the art world into the public realm with little care or attention to where it lands. Generally speaking, these works are of a certain ilk – big, shiny, and waterproof – and have little relationship to their immediate surroundings. The Urban Dictionary dictates that these works are large, geometric, and often red¹⁴. For an example, and case in point, the picture on the Wikipedia entry for Plop Art is Tony Rosenthal's *5 in 1*, 1973–1974 [fig. XX].

In the canton of the Valais, in Switzerland, there seems to be a propensity for large abstract “Plops” on roundabouts. During the *Creative Villages* workshop we must have travelled past hundreds. On our short seventeen-kilometer journey from Martigny to Leytron we passed four alone. That's almost one every four kilometers. Our tendency might be to dismiss and disregard them as expelled detritus, selected and funded by the “non-experts” at local councils. At the risk of appearing completely contrary however, I want to state that I think Plop Art is great. These works may not always be pretty, they may not entirely make sense in terms of their environment and locale, but I do

¹³ Eccles, Tom, *PLOP*. New York & London: Merrell, 2004, p.8.

¹⁴ Definition for Plop Art. UrbanDictionary.com <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=plop%20art> (accessed November 17, 2016)

believe that they can have positive and lasting effects. What follows is an incomplete list of these effects; a case for the defense, if you will.

Firstly, these works reach huge audiences, and can thereby create a communal experience that is in some way akin to films or popular music in its accessibility. They are inherently brave, and strong, as they open themselves up to scrutiny from anyone that passes by. Everybody can have an opinion, be it good or bad. And that opinion can change. As history reveals, art can outlive animosity, and more often than not once people get used to a giant blue cockerel,¹⁵ for example, they can even come to love it. It's worth remembering that when the Eiffel Tower was being built it was described as useless and monstrous, a ridiculous tower dominating Paris like a gigantic black smokestack. Now, of course, it is possibly more emblematic than the Tricolour.

Secondly, these sculptures are open all hours, and don't shut up shop for the weekend or the holidays. You don't need special access, like you do to get to the art beyond the hallowed walls of a gallery or museum. And there's no discrimination when you're looking at work outside – there's nobody shushing you, or telling you to step back. Where else could you scream at the top of your lungs alongside a priceless object? What other piece of public furniture could you stomp over, eat your lunch on, and play with? These works are in this way at the same level as quotidian bollards, post boxes, and street signs – totally accessible and inclusive. For example, Jeppe Hein's *Modified Social Benches*, 2015, recently shown in New York City as part of his citywide exhibition, *Please Touch the Art*, appeared as angled, curved, twisted, and bent common park benches [fig. XXI]. They surprised and delighted some visitors, whilst others used them, as they would a "regular" bench. Like much Plop Art, they lowered the boundaries for art, physically and metaphorically.

¹⁵ *Hahn/Cock*, 2013, by Katarina Fritsch was installed on the vacant fourth plinth on London's Trafalgar Square from July 2013 to February 2015

XX. Tony Rosenthal, *5 in 1*, 1973–1974, Painted corten steel, 25×28×42 Feet. One Police Plaza, New York. © Tony Rosenthal/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

XXI. Jeppe Hein, *Modified Social Bench NY No.02*, 2015, Powder-coated galvanised steel, Dimensions Variable. Photo © James Ewing for the Public Art Fund, New York, NY



Not least, Plop Art works can act as focal points, or meeting places before a night out, for example, or in an if-we-get-separated-let's-meet-here kind of way. They share in a collective identity and often gain a special kind of collective ownership from the residents nearby. These sculptures, no matter their subject or deemed "quality" become engrained in the social makeup of the places in which they're installed. In Amsterdam in 1965, Provo-founder Robert Jasper Grootveld utilized Carel Kneulman's statue *Het Lieverdje*, 1959, as a site for playful protests, meetings, and happenings. In this way, it was transformed from a modest bronze sculpture of a boy sponsored by a cigarette company, to the site of political action and, now, a memorial to the Dutch counter-culture movement. Since the 1980s, the statue of the Duke of Wellington by Carlo Marochetti in Glasgow, Scotland has been customized by an orange plastic traffic cone, set directly on the statesman's head. Placed there by many a drunken reveler, this illegal activity has become a venerable city tradition. When the council proposed to spend £65,000 on raising the plinth six feet, to deter tampering, the people of Glasgow leapt to

action, organizing a rally and online petition that quickly gained 10,000 signatures, and compelled the council to back down. These kinds of illegal, unpermitted interactions with public art, seem only to enhance their appeal. The last time I saw Wellington, he was proudly wearing a gold cone in order to celebrate the return of Glasgow's successful athletes from the Rio Olympics.

To return to Newport, only two of the four works I mentioned remain in situ. After seven years in storage due to the city center Friars Walk development plans, Plant's *In the Nick of Time* now resides, Valais-style, on a roundabout near a new housing development in Llanwern. The Chartist Mural did not have such a happy ending – it was tragically demolished in 2013 despite substantial opposition and protest (including a full-page open letter in the *South Wales Argus* newspaper, written by Newport-born actor Michael Sheen). A new work was commissioned in its stead: a work in iron that also doubles-up as a wall for a new car park.

The remaining two however, I'll visit next time I'm there and greet like old friends.

DEAR J,

HANNE VAN DYCK

We met each other at the site of Furkart on October 10. Along with the students from ECAV and CCA, I participated in the workshop "Curating the Alps," organized by Benoît Antille. During the week, we saw various curatorial models and artistic approaches that have been applied in the Valais and elsewhere. As a result of the workshop, we were asked to formulate a possible proposal for a curatorial model/artistic practice in the Alps, based on our experience. Before leaving I asked you if it was possible for us to come back and you said it is. Of course, we didn't talk about the circumstances of this return, but ever since I have been daydreaming about returning to Furkart, and staying in the house of Panamarenko.

Right behind the house you can see a steep mountain slope and in front of it a road. The bus stops

just outside the house. It's neither big nor small. The roof is dark grey with flat roof tiles. Three windows rise up out of the roof, each one just the same size and a little bit more to the right. The windows look like little houses themselves: each has its own tiny roof. The windows are divided in six even parts and have white frames. Each roof carries a bit of snow. Water glides towards the gutter as it melts. A little chimney sits on top of the roof on the right side. The front of the house is rectangular, proportioned like two squares next to one another. It's mostly beige with some darker spots here and there, especially at the bottom and on the left. Just below the roof are five more windows, hiding behind five shutters, from left to right: one orange, two green, one orange, one green. Thirty-five white dots are painted underneath the leftmost orange shutter, stopping just before the next shutter starts. There are three rows: the top and bottom ones each have twelve dots in the same places; the one in the middle has eleven. Each dot has been placed in the middle of the dots in the other rows. Next to this you can see a sign painted in purple; the letters in yet darker purple are unreadable. To the right, 'auto-garage' is painted on the wall in capital letters – just legible – with a wooden garage door beneath it. The green paint on the door has peeled off, mostly visible at the bottom. The planks have been placed horizontally. The front door is just left of the garage door: between the third and fourth windows. Two steps lead up to a dark wooden door. The door is decorated with wooden carving, and in the middle, there is a circle. On the left of the door something is painted in little red letters: not legible anymore. More to the left, another wooden portal: just as dark as the front door.



This door is wider, but lower, than the garage door. The bottom of the door – one third of its height – consists of vertical planks, and the rest of edgewise planks. Next to this, under the first orange window, is another window that's been shut with a wooden plank. Between the front door and the door to the left are five holes in the wall. Three in a row, underneath the other two. On the far-left side is the bus schedule, mounted on the house, as well as a sign that signals for the bus to stop. On the left of the house a semi-circular structure has been built just as high as the bus sign. It's made of cement with plexy-glass windows. The window that's visible from the road is rectangular, except for the upper side which is bent. Out of the structure protrudes a stairway, which goes up at an angle and leads to a half glass, half metal structure that has been built on top of the roof. To the right of the house a very low and little wall has been built, with stones, from the house to the road: about a meter or two. Snow lies on both sides of the house.

As I may have told you, I recently moved back to Antwerp, where Panamarenko, Mark Luyten, Ria Pacquée, Luc Deleu, Filip Francis, and Guillaume Bijl live, or used to live. I moved here in May, and have since spent five months in the Swiss and Chinese mountains. Today I arrived back home and am ready to explain to you why I want to come to Furkart. The visit to Furkart inspired me in many ways, not only because of the history and location but also because of the discussions we had. We talked about the conservation of the artworks in Furkart, about living in the city and the countryside, about growing older as an artist, and about the differences between conceptual and physical labor.

I would like to come to a better understanding of my position in this world – as both an artist and a human being – by further examining the overlaps and discrepancies of the different worlds I live in... The city; the landscape; being somewhere else while traveling, visiting or living; being young and getting old; the artworld, the process of making art, the work of art itself, and their interrelations...

There is so much going on at Furkart that seems relevant for my generation: how to grow old as an artist, and how to take care of your work/world, or of someone else's work/world. You told us about Furkart and Furka pass; the Alps which are constantly moving; the influence of tourism, industrial, scientific and military usage of the mountains; and the rich history of hotel Furkablick.

In my work, I research the relationship between human beings and nature. I try to look at things how they really are, function, and perform, by reconstructing them and seeing how many elements come together in – for example – a mountain, a city and how many parts are needed to sustain its existence. My practice is a balancing act of applying myself to an environment or a landscape, and making poetic deductions from that application. It represents an attempt to render myself – as well as the viewer or visitor – sensitive to, and conscious of, everything from an environment to one's place in an ecology of things and interrelations. I examine how this placement both shapes the relations between things and entities, which then come to shape us. Through my work, I introduce several templates – translated from fieldwork – into a new patchwork of signifi-



cations and meanings, in the form of text, mixed media installations, video, and photography.

I had the chance to work in the mountains for the past five months, by traveling in China and doing an artist's residency there as well as in Sierre. I am now back in Antwerp. For this project, I would like to study, contemplate, and compare these two places – Antwerp and Furkart – as symbolic places/spaces which juxtapose one another in many ways, yet bring different worlds together. A city in a “plat pays,” the second biggest harbor of Europe, a culturally vibrant city; and Furkart – a place of discovery, a hidden treasure with a rich history. I would like to conduct this research through Psychogeography, defined by Guy Debord and members of Situationist International as, “The study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.”

This research will start in Antwerp, by getting in contact with the artists who have been in Furkart as well as wander around the city to get a new understanding of it. And use this research as a base to explore, observe and wander the site of Furkart. Panamarenko's house will play a role in this but also my house, a 700m² warehouse in the city centre, without central heating or hot water, overlooking the Schelde, a very important international transport route.

Sixteen windows are overlooking the Schelde. In winter, we can live only in a few secluded spaces, so for the moment: six hot and ten very cold windows overlook the Schelde. My desk stands under the second, third and fourth windows from the left. The night slowly starts to fall. The air is baby blue, and purple-grey clouds are lying low on the horizon. One cloud comes out of a chimney hidden behind the trees. The cloud becomes bigger and bigger – white, grey and light yellow – and disappears behind the apartment building on my left. I can see ten big apartment buildings on the other side of the river. Only a few places have their lights turned on. There are trees everywhere, all about the same size. They're planted rather scarcely, and arouse my pity. On the other side of the water is a big marina. The boat masts are about as high as the trees. In the middle, stands a big building that looks like a boat. With my binoculars, I can see that it's a yacht club. Behind the trees there is an industrial

zone. There are high constructions, cranes, and lots of steam. Light brown reeds stand at the river side. The Schelde makes a ninety degree turn to the left. A little white bridge leads to a cement landing in the middle of the turn. On the other side of the water – as far as I can see from here – are more trees, dark green and much more tree-like: not lonely anymore. Far away, in between the trees, I can see windmills, and to the right a few cranes. Somewhere on the other side we swim in the summer. Five ducks are flying by. A little ship goes by; a black hull and a car on deck; probably a houseboat. Right in front of me, on this side of the water, there is the quay and a parking lot. Forty-one cars are parked there now; the working day is almost over; most people have already left. Then there are two blue containers, and a lot of colored objects that I can't identify. Three streetlights. People are jogging and cycling past. On the right, a house with two pointed roofs and one flat roof; next to that a long but low building. A low wall with words painted on it, in 1991, “POEZIE IN UITV”. It's the beginning of a poem that follows the quay from north to south and connects both sides of the river. A motorway lies between the parking lot and my building; between the parking lot and the motorway a bicycle path; between the bicycle path and the motorway are roadworks, a tramway, and the driveway to an underground garage. All the lights are turning on: the streetlights, those on the bridge over the water. A few people in the apartment blocks have also turned on their lights; the cars are becoming lights. Advertisement panels tell me it's five degrees outside, to buy perfume, and about the chance to receive a smartphone with a new subscription. A boat, six cars, and a jogger, are moving; one car switches on its lights, the rest of the view seems to be standing still.

I see this proposal as an intentional act – that includes an openness towards new things and encounters – as a learning situation that can result in research, collaborations, or new work. I would like to ask for your approval to come to Furkart next summer and spend some time there: possibly in Panamarenko's house, to ponder all the above-mentioned questions and interests.

I hope you enjoy the holidays.

All my best and hoping to hear from you soon (or later).

SURVEY ANSWERS

FACILITATED BY DAN CASSIDY
AND ROSA TYHURST

Participants of the Creative Village seminar were polled in an effort to substantiate the breadth and focus of some of the discussions around public art that took place during the week of October 10–17th, 2016. Below is an amalgamation of their answers:

What can remain from a temporary public art project?

Nothing, or everything.

A living, sustainable activity initiated by the art project, but with its own momentum.

Many things can remain and on various levels. The most obvious remnant – which is consistent with the activity of project-making – is documentation (photographs, texts, publications, websites, movies, etc...). On another level, a temporary public art project can persist as a shared experience in the memory of an audience, a community, and the people who took part in it. To give an example, the exhibition *Repères*, organized in 1986, all over the Valais in the public space, by curator Bernard Fibicher, created a stir. Thirty years later, people are still talking about this project, which serves as a milestone for the development of contemporary art in the region. In this way, projects such as *Repères* are still “active” today.

Aside from physical ephemera, there are the memories and experiences of those who participated in and/or viewed the project. These experiences can be the seeds of new works in the future.

Questions and feelings. Memories and myths.

Scandal and outrage, consideration of a pressing issue, community building, publicity, policy, change. I’m thinking of Christoph Schlingensieff’s *Ausländer raus – Bitte liebt Österreich*, 2000 (Foreigners out – Please love Austria).

Artworks, memories, conversations, friendship, marriage, anger, money, frustration, practical issues, other projects, garbage, burn-out...

When making, or experiencing site-specific art, what comes first for you, the place or the idea?

Place.

Place.

Place.

Both. The place can influence the idea and the idea can be modified by the place, it should be a collaboration between the two.

That totally depends on the project. When you see the site that you are going to work in, you do dip into your archive of ideas to see what could be done there, but the idea needs to work with the site in some way. If you have an idea about a project addressing waterboarding and the site is a children’s playground, it probably won’t work.

Given that the very specificity of site-specific approaches consists in merging an “idea,” – meaning an artistic concept – with a “place,” this question is contradictory. That being said, many times, when it comes to site-specificity, the dialectical relationship between a site and a work proves questionable.

Should a public art project address a community or build a community?

The two are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps we should begin by asking whether we are talking about community art, here understood as art that is characterized by interaction or dialogue with a community? If so, then the parameters are clear. It’s when the parameters are fuzzy that the work suffers.

It should address a community; the people who will have to live with a work on a daily basis should not loathe what has been added to their world. I am not saying that we should pander to the majority: a healthy discourse is always welcomed. On the other hand, if you blatantly upset the community you probably will not be invited to do other projects.

Public art should address a community by interacting with it, creating an understanding, and a passion for it. Building a community through public art comes later, when the community identifies itself with the work.

Build.

As per Hal Foster (see: *The Artist as Ethnographer*, 1995) or Jeroen Boomgaard (see: *Creative Villages Journal*, n°2), artistic approaches which endeavor to “address” a given community can be problematic or ambiguous. It’s more interesting to try building a community or an audience around a project.

Not necessarily either.

Who is your audience?

Anyone paying attention, or willing to pay attention.

Many different people on many different levels. Anyone who encounters the work. Those that live with the work—a more important demographic, though maybe not the primary audience in the sense of evaluating the work. The people who financed the project, though artistic freedom should be more important than art to order.

Both a research-project led by an art school (the Ecole cantonale d’art du Valais), and an art program based in a village, Creative Villages is a multi-layer project made for different audiences, who might or might not experience it side by side. Basically, there are three main “tiers”: **1.** the local community, **2.** the regional art scene, **3.** an international audience of artists, curators, and researchers. But let’s put it differently. Since Creative Villages seeks to critically address the economy of project work (which consists in commissioning artists to realize projects responding to specific demands such as those formulated by the creative economy), its targeted audiences are all the actors involved in this economy: artists, curators, visual art officers, politicians, commissioners, funders, mediators, local communities... and so on, who are all invited to question their role and expectations within such a production chain. Inspired by projects such as Furkart, I would also say that there is a “postponed” audience, which Creative Villages hopes to reach. I hope that the questions this project is proposing are going to stay active in some way, through our journal, movies, other types of documents, and shared experiences...

Public art, by definition, is for everyone who happens upon the work. The audience is everyone.

Everyone.

No one.

Should art be useful?

No.

Yes.

Sometimes.

Some of it. We are in the midst of political shifts to the right all around the world. Social safety nets are disappearing fast and a donation-based society is unsustainable. Art that serves a function in a community is a way to divert art funding – also diminishing – to assist communities

It will always be useful to someone, but it depends on how you define ‘usefulness.’ A painting is useful to the artist who made it.

Art can be useful in the sense that it can ask the viewer to think about certain topics. Useful in a practical sense...no. But even aesthetic public art can provoke thoughts on a location and thus be useful.

We would not dedicate so much energy to art projects if we thought they were useless. The question is how to define “usefulness.” It can apply on an immaterial, symbolic, intellectual, conceptual, and/or spiritual level. But in terms of art having a tangible use value for a community, such as – let’s say – the projects made by Grizedale Arts, this question in some ways addresses a set of practices known as participative, community based, or socially engaged. Some good projects are being realized under this umbrella – such as those of Grizedale Arts. Many others are questionable. A new attempt to realize the avant-garde’s dream of merging art with everyday life, and regenerating society from inside... but at the time of the service economy and global governance, such practices can be very instrumental. In the end, who is the most useful to whom? The artists to the community? Or the community to the artist?

Does every site need public art?

Absolutely not. But if you consider unconstructed, vacant lots where things are allowed to grow and are accessible to a public – as

public art – then yes. Every city should have publically accessible “blank space.”

Definitely not. Some sites are not noble enough for public art. Public art should have a “conversation” with its surroundings, this can even be an “argument,” but if the place is already in conflict on its own, it will be difficult to find the space for a public piece.

Not at all, though it’s nice when you encounter it in unusual situations.

No.

No.

No. And, it’s quite troubling how contemporary art is becoming ubiquitous nowadays. In some ways, there are way too many art projects everywhere...

What problems are there when the local becomes the global?

Are you addressing the issue of globalization? If so, it’s a complex topic carrying lots of fantasies, in particular about the “local.” A paragraph would be too short. Now, if your question suggests that local communities should predominantly receive art works specifically tailored for them, addressing notions such as local identities or authenticity (however ambiguous they are), then I disagree with you. Of course, it is an efficient strategy or marketing tool to manufacture the consent of an audience. But it can be misleading in many ways. Especially when artists or curators jumping from one context to another, project after project, put themselves in the role of experts, ethnographers, social mediators...

I suppose in a broad sense the main problem is identity. In a ski resort this is less of a problem, as it is already very cosmopolitan.

Formulas commodify: they simplify too much.

Where the voice begins and where it ends. Does the intention remain?

What questions did the seminar raise and/or answer for you?

The question of quality. What is it that really constitutes a good public art work, and why?

Questions about defining a public – those questions remain.

What should art in the public sphere *be*? The seminar offered many different approaches to the question and the realization that it is always a work in progress.

The idea of towns/villages having a USP (unique selling point) and being marketed. Locations as commodities. Should artists produce works/objects? Ideas around visibility and transparency...

The seminar raised many questions about artistic practices, site-specificity, public art, and contemporary culture in peripheral or rural contexts... But on a deeper level, it sought to address the very “necessity” of realizing an art project, or culture’s role in contemporary society, at a time when art projects and institutions proliferate. Now that contemporary art as a field or discipline is indeed being so overtly professionalized, specialized, infused by managerial logicism, and solicited for economic, political, or communicational purposes, one can wonder whether artistic practices are not on the verge of becoming mere methodologies, protocols, or tricks in problem-solving processes. That being said, like the Slovak artist Július Koller, who used the question mark as a kind of signature, the seminar sought no answers.

How many children does Johnny Depp have? (see the exhibition – *Qui a mangé Johnny Depp?* by Berclaz de Sierre)

Vache Depp has a ton of kids.

How long is a piece of string?

We are all Johnny Depp’s children and will spread his (conceptual) seeds far and wide.

Since calves are still being “produced” with Johnny Depp’s sperm – despite the fact that he got killed in 2008 – it depends on which day you are raising the question.

Haha.

Anything else you’d like to say...

Must we always strive for authenticity?

“CURATING THE ALPS”

A CURATORIAL WORKSHOP BETWEEN CCA AND ECAV

PROGRAM

Sunday 9th, Verbier, and Ovronnaz

- › 11h, Michael Heizer’s *Tangential Circular Negative Line 1968–2014*, with Bertrand Deslarzes
- › 14h, *Verbier 3D sculpture Park and Residency*, with Kiki Thompson
- › 17h–19h, Students’ presentations, in Ovronnaz

Monday 10th, Furka pass

- › 13h–15h, Janis Osolin: presentation of *Furkart* and the *Institute Furkablück*

Tuesday 11th, Ovronnaz

- › 9h–9h45, Benoit Antille: presentation of Creative Villages
- › 10h–12h, Adam Sutherland: presentation of Grizedale Arts (UK)
- › 14h–16h, Leigh Markopoulos: collaboration between the CCA and the Center for Land Use Interpretation (USA)
- › 16h15–18h15, Elizabeth Thomas: recent curatorial projects
- › 19h–20h, Group discussion

Wednesday 12th, Ovronnaz, and Relais du Saint-Bernard

- › 9h–12h, Seminar with Adam Sutherland
- › 14h–17h, Simon Lamunière: presentation of the *Triennial 2017*, at the Relais du Saint Bernard
- › 18h–20h, Group discussion

Thursday 13th, Leytron

- › 9h–13h, John Byrne: presentation of *Arte Utile/Useful Art*
- › 14h–16h, Group Discussion
- › 16h30–18h00, Séverin Guelpa: presentation of *Matza-Amboy/Matza-Aletsch*

Friday 14th, Sierre (ECAV), Leytron, and Sion

- › 10h–13h, Sibylle Omlin: on artistic research
- › 14h–15h30, Carlo Schmidt: creativity at the heart of villages between Loèche and Galm
- › 16h–18h, Natalia Huser: *Manifesta 2016*, Zürich
- › 18h30, Opening at the Art Museum in Sion: *To Look at the Landscape from a Different Perspective*
- › 19h30, Presentation of the Cultural Center *Ferme-Asile*, and dinner with the resident artists

Saturday 15th, Sierre, and Comogne

- › 10h–12h, Jeroen Boomgaard: *Participating Places*, public art in the Netherlands
- › 13h–15h, Marianne Lanavère: presentation of the International Center of Art and Landscape at Vassivière (FR)
- › 15h30–17h, Visit Berclaz de Sierre’s: *Who did eat Johnny Depp?* at Comogne
- › 17h30–19h30, Group discussion with Jeroen Boomgaard and Marianne Lanavère
- › 19h, Raclette party at the *Villa Ruffieux*

OVRONNAZ – LEYTRON (PART 2)

FRANÇOIS DEY

My friend Xavier had just arrived for a visit. He asked us if we wanted to have our morning coffee at the local café, Chez Jacky. I later turned that into a habit of mine, going there in the mornings. That day I noticed the display vitrines, full of antique technical apparel: phones, radios, and photo cameras. Some days earlier I had driven by the Emmaüs shop looking for stuff. At the time, I was buying a second copy of the same disk I had found earlier in Sion, in the Cash Converter. It was of Aldo Defabiani, a blind Italian singer who sang together with the Musical Space Orchestra, giving a modern touch of synthesizer to his remarkable voice. He could beautifully switch from a perfect local accent to having a sudden touch of Italian in his French, singing classics like *Les feuilles mortes* from Jacques Brel, or *Plaisir d’amour* from Elvis Presley. The album looked sort of amateur, but in a good way.

No information whatsoever could be found on it about the date it was pressed, or even the credits of any songs. It felt like local music production. Earlier in Sierre, I had bought a random book at some other second-hand shop, perhaps because of the title or simply its cover and the funny portrait of its author holding a toad in hand while smoking a pipe: “Worries of a biologist, Jean Rostand”. I had fanaticized that this could be the start of a new work. The book contained hundreds of one-liners, most often with a moral undercurrent, taking on things and people, and with a rather pessimistic view on the present perspectives in contemporary life. Often one or two sentences had this quality of contrasting themselves, like paradoxes do, or simply being polarized.

“Never did we speak so much about the future since we’re not sure if there will be any.”

I could recognize myself thus speaking more and more about my project to everyone around me. Usually we say this is a way to listen back to yourself, the other merely mirroring yourself, perhaps as well as to believe that what one does, actually, already exist.

“The researcher should allow himself to recognize the little he has found and also dare to claim the immense importance of it.”

This gave me the hope that I was actually really busy with something. The fact that it was possible that “little” meant something. In Saint-Pierre-de-Clages, the “book” village right next to Leytron, I found the same book once again on the discount shelves outside of a bookstore. The same day I exchanged a few words with the German lady, the owner, wondering if she was well integrated here in Valais. We agreed that it was difficult to penetrate the surface, perhaps it would take years, but once that was done the doors would be open for a lifetime. I bought another book, Ludwig Hohl, “Youth Diary,” and we headed back with the Audi. Later that same day I ran into a Bolex projector in another shop. I needed to be sure about what I had in my hands. I opened the case and verified that it was really a 16mm. I looked again and again, I measured it, and told myself this one should cost four times the written price. I must take it right a way.

So back to the café with Xavier and Renata, it was now all making sense. I had this newly bought projector and I didn’t know what to do with it, but now there was the possibility of finding a 16mm camera with which to perhaps film my project, this group gathering, or collective action. I wanted to put something together, but wasn’t really sure what.



Once home, I took the phone and called the number I’d noted from the collector who used the vitrines. The man was welcoming on the line. He wasn’t that surprised that I was calling. I started explaining to him, “I work here as an artist, I’m interested in old technology.” I said I felt it had a sort of implication. Once it was shot, it was shot. No way back. It made any preparations a decisive moment. One had to know what they were doing, because the material was costly. One had to accept – maybe I was talking about destiny – not to postpone any decision but instead achieve a state of acceptance. He understood what I was explaining and said he didn’t have any 16mm camera, but perhaps he could contact a friend of his. He then thought he might have one double 8mm camera with a sort of cassette, that contained two 8mm films. It was then split in two. I imagined possibilities. I could make two shots of two stories, and project them together. One

of them would be upside down. I sensed there could be a meeting point in the middle, where the two films would encounter one another. I stopped for a while and we agreed to see each other at the café Chez Jacky in the coming week.



I was excited something was moving forward, but I wasn't sure what exactly. It seemed like I was putting the cart before the horse. Would the newly found form give me input regarding the content I should film? I wasn't sure what was happening but it felt comfortable following this newly put together puzzle, piece by piece. We met and sat at the same table where I'd had tea with Xavier. He wore thick rings and seemed very friendly. It felt like I was having a blind date or something. I always get a rush of goose bumps on my skin when I think too much about the situation and wonder, "What am I doing now?". He took me through the story of his collection and explained to me that his brother had a similar collection of objects. He had often been approached by other collectors asking him to sell part of his assortment, and it seemed as if a very complex emotional relation existed between these objects and himself. On the one hand, he loved them, repaired them, and was happy to have found a place to exhibit them. On the other, he spoke of the constant propositions to sell part of it and how he had to be on the top of his transactions.

I still cannot figure out what drives connect objects and people. Perhaps it's something about their function and their beauty, processing them maybe, or being part of their history? I was getting a little bored as we went through the list, but I showed respect and nodded with "Yes," "Oh," and "Ah". It was clear I just wanted one thing. I was trying to borrow one of his double 8mm cameras for my project. He was fine with it, but we had agreed I would visit him at his house in the valley. He would take the chance to show me the rest of his assortment, stored in the attic of his home. We then moved from the café, and I remember wondering if he would pay the drink or if I would do it. I noticed that value or money was very clean terrain, and no doubt was to be projected there. We each paid for our own drink and remained on neutral grounds. Before we parted, he told me how he lost his job a few years before going onto pension, and how he had then just grabbed the first one that came along: driving trucks. He didn't care that it paid way less, he enjoyed keeping being busy and encountering new people. I didn't call him as I said I would during the next week. A few weeks later I called him and he didn't answer, but he called me the day after and I also didn't feel it was the moment to talk to him. My plan was once again hanging in the air; I just wasn't sure what to tell him.

Later that day I called Mr. Zuber, the priest of the St-Martin church. I told him about the problems I had encountered with the organ, but mostly I wanted to ask him if we could meet and talk about my idea of organizing an aperitif: a sort of introduction to the organ for the population of the village. He thought it would be best if I called the counsel of the Leytron commune to see what they thought about this idea before I undertook any kind of action. He couldn't really understand how it had come to the last situation where I ended up playing with the electrical system of the church in an attempt to repair the organ. I could only give my apologies once again, and explain that this wouldn't happen anymore. I can't remember if it was after or before this call that I drove down the hill one sunny day, but in any case, we had set a meeting in Fully.

I came a little before the time and paid a visit to the church. It had thick wooden doors with engraved armories, and the entrance had an automatic light system which would switch off very fast. A large nave followed by a chancel painted entirely

in dark violet tones and with a large portrait. It's impressiveness shrouded any other decorative schemes behind the altar. Reverse mounted marble plates stood in the front of the altar, separating the believers. They formed symmetries with the drawings of their veins. Above the entrance to the tribune, the front row of the organ pipes seemed oversized and too well installed. They created three half circles. The balcony itself was decorated with musical instruments and notes suspended in the air singing a melody. At the opposite end of the church was the parish house. I rang the bell.

"Hello, I have a meeting with Mr. Zuber."

"Yes, please take a seat in his office."

For a second I feel like I've just entered the Vatican, there are two old, beautiful chairs from the 18th century – or perhaps not the Vatican – with a little table in between. I sneak around and take a photograph. He comes in and greets me warmly. He offers me a drink but won't have anything himself. For a while I try to match his face with the voice I'd become familiar with. It's not really true; I've already seen his portrait on the information paper at the entrance of the church. I tell him about my visit next door and explain about the painting and its unusual size. He reveals to me that the organ is just a decoration, and that it was replaced with an electronic version a while ago.

– "It's cheaper and we do not need to tune it." Soon enough we talk about Leytron and the double edged political knife. How to handle it? He admits to being a bit puzzled by the situation too. It's a little cold perhaps, he is still adjusting, it hasn't been long since he's taken that position.

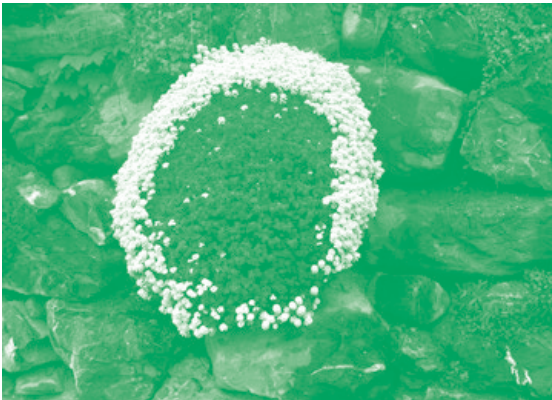
We laugh together but he is a priest; I feel like I'm in a job interview watching every word I say. Or maybe it's only the seriousness involved in the first meeting and the importance of actually dealing with the church, I mean, Zuber, standing there in front of me representing the parish of Leytron. I wonder for a while if I should ask him if he has a family. I feel stupid, I don't even know if a priest can marry in the Catholic Church. We decide that if there is to be an introduction to the organ, or some aperitif, it would be better if it took place somewhere other than the church. In that way, we could reach not only the parishioners, but also the inhabitants that do not feel connected to the church and its rituals. He explains

to me that the graveyard falls under the administration of the commune, and sometimes when someone is buried, friends prefer not to come into the church, so they wait at the entrance.

So, I was now hanging out in front of the church looking at the speakers mounted onto the walls outside, thinking of a sweet organ melody to be heard one day. Giselle, who I didn't know yet, was coming toward me with a smile already formed in the corner of her mouth. She was moving with a four-wheeled walker. We greeted and she asked if I could give her a hand with something. "Of course, what is it?" "My daughter is not with me, I can't open the doors of the church by myself." I knew from Stéphane that the automatic system wasn't working anymore, nor was the alarm system. The doors of the church were always left unlocked. We entered and she started to explain to me how much she liked to come here. She was living just a hundred meters away, down the road. Coming to the church was a way of getting out of the house and keeping in shape. I couldn't help but notice how loudly she spoke. Each of her words would resonate throughout the space. I found it wonderful. I found myself stuck in the old habit of whispering, removing my hat, and behaving. We chatted a bit and she



told me about a young fellow who tried to play on the organ, but it didn't work properly, and about another man who came from Hungary who she'd heard playing every now and then for a while. She went to buy a candle, lit it, and then sat for a while. I told her she should take her time and I would help her on her way out. Right after we'd met, it seemed clear to me that she should be part of the collective action I was trying to put together. My subconscious had already written this. I would only have to wait for this thought to come to the surface to recognize that she was to become a part of the puzzle taking place in my head.



Another devoted parishioner was Jackie. He had been involved, against his will, in the catastrophic moment of the burning electrical relay. I was now calling him and trying to explain the idea for the gathering. We would take some pipes out into the street and march with them toward the old church. There, we would sample them digitally and let the people listen to a virtual organ while sipping a glass of wine and discussing a possible future for the instrument. What really surprised me, in comparison to all the other people I got on the phone, was that he directly answered saying he was kind of busy today, but that we could do it tomorrow. He was living day to day, a little bit like me. Usually when calling busy people they give a resonating tone, without opening their mouth, making you think perhaps later or in a month, otherwise known as never. I said I wasn't sure when we could meet, and that I first had to call Dominique to see if she could help me get some children to join the march. He then understood I didn't know what was going on and said, "Call me back, but tomorrow. I'm also kind of busy." Once again,

I was just messing up someone's schedule on the phone. The plan was taking shape, though: the young ones would blow into the flutes of the organ through plastic tubes, while the older people carried them at the front line.

My time at the residency was coming to an end, and the feeling that I'd achieved nothing was growing in me. This one flute was standing there in my apartment, facing the window and looking back at me. The thought of powerlessness had given rise to ideas of chance and destiny once again. The elderly people remained a key public in my mind. I'm not really sure why, but perhaps when I asked around whether or not they remembered hearing the instrument, most of them had given the answer, "I don't remember". I saw, and felt, an unimaginable distance of about three, or four, or five decades of time. For perhaps fifty years the sound of that instrument was stuck in their memories and had slowly faded away. It simply waited there, somewhere in between their neurons, pending reactivation. Recovering a memory was the best I could do. The forgotten could reappear. This is when I thought it could take the form of a Bingo evening. Each number would be a different tone played on the organ. The Bingo would write a random score, but collectively build a song to be played once-off. And then another idea popped up in my head, about how the inhabitants of the village could participate symbolically in the recording of each and every pipe. I went to the "Coop" and bought a packet of balloons. A big pack with 500 balloons for 3.49 CHF, or a small bag with 80 for 2.49 CHF. We never know, maybe we'll reach that many people. Following the balloon thought, I went to write a little questionnaire with a few items:

- Have you ever heard the instrument?
- Do you think it's a good idea to try repair it?
- Would you symbolically give one breath in a balloon to have one pipe recorded?

I was already laughing when I pictured the situation, thinking to myself that we use the same word to describe a glass of wine and the other balloon that drivers are asked to blow into when police are eager to check the alcohol content of their blood.



Time was running out and there was still no performance and no aperitif planned. I met with Benoît in Sierre at the Café du 1^{er} Août. It was sunny, so we sat on the terrace. This was our last drink before I would get back to my city life and perhaps think this through. I started explaining to him that during these last days I often stopped in Montagnon at the Café des Mayens. I'd met Christine and Françoise, the two twin sisters, there. We sat outside looking at the sunset and enjoyed a glass of white wine with Renata, recollecting memories. We had engaged in conversation with them and asked if they knew about Creative Villages. They complained about the use of English for the project name, but they were very happy to meet us both, and started to tell us about the association they were part of, la Récré, a collective that organizes events for children in the summer. It was a great deal of work, but they like it. Although, communicating with Alexandre, who was in charge of overseeing youth and tourism in the village, was difficult. Things were hard to organize on time and extra money wouldn't be invested. They were sharing their discontents regarding the situation. I said, "I understand, you really need to meet people between four eyes." They told us that Montagnon was about to

get street names and house numbers: their street was to be named this way and dealing with the phone company was extremely difficult, what with trying to explain that their new address was the the same place. They laughed and laughed about it. I said we would have to go now and they offered us a drink before we could stand. Their friends were now busy leaving. I asked Christine what was said at the talk about the Cervelat. "Yes, this friend is creating a problem, he wants to cook 'Cervelat' for the BBQ at the *pétanque* dinner this Friday. You should come! It's just we can't seem to agree about what kind of sausage we should have and sell. He says Cervelat is good enough, but we like the white one, veal, you know them?"

"Yes, I know the ones."

Inside, the whole group of the local community council was having dinner. The chapel was ten meters farther down and I thought it must be Friday, they just had the mass in Montagnon. This was my moment. I was going to the toilet. I entered the café, and walked right up to Dominique, with whom I had the most running affairs. I had just called her, wondering if there was any possibility she could help me find children for the organ march. I greeted Janick and Robert, the Priest. They were having the full service, with dried meat, fondue, and some wine; oh I was jealous! I now explained once again about my project and this mysterious performance: marching with the population. She nodded and replied, saying that now they were too busy, because the children were about to write their exams. But then she said, "We will still be here when it all starts again in September, just come back and give us a call!" My mind was lighting up and I felt now as if they'd accepted me. I wasn't just passing by, no, I was now part of their lives and we could make a plan. I said, "Sure! Goodbye, enjoy your dinner, I'll contact you." This is what I explained to Benoît, "I think they've accepted me, I got in!" "Yes," he replied, "we would like to have you a little longer." I wasn't sure what I was getting my shoes into now. Interdependency, was that the word? Was I now trying to find a reason, a project, to come back? Had I fabricated a problem concerning them, about us? We parted. I drove to Plein Soleil C and threw my things into a bag.

AUTHORS

Born in Switzerland, **Benoit Antille** graduated from the MA Program in Classical Archeology and Art History at the Fribourg University (Switzerland, 2001) and from the Curatorial Practice MA Program at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco (2011). He currently works as researcher for the Ecole cantonale d'art du Valais (ECAV) and independent curator. He leads the project Creative Villages.

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Born in Switzerland **François Dey**, studied engineering in the University of Fribourg, photography with Friedl Kubelka in Vienna, fine arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam and has been researcher at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. His practice lies in between the everyday and the attempt of taking distance. Wandering thus around the structures, he seems to be hardly thinking of them.

Hanne Van Dyck is a visual artist based in Antwerp, Belgium. She studied Fine Arts at Sint Lucas Ghent and Artistic Research at Sint Lucas Antwerp. By using travel and writing as working methods, she researches the interaction between men and nature. She translates this research into mixed-media installations, paintings, videos, and publications. She has done residencies and exhibited in Belgium, The Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, China, Switzerland, and the UK.

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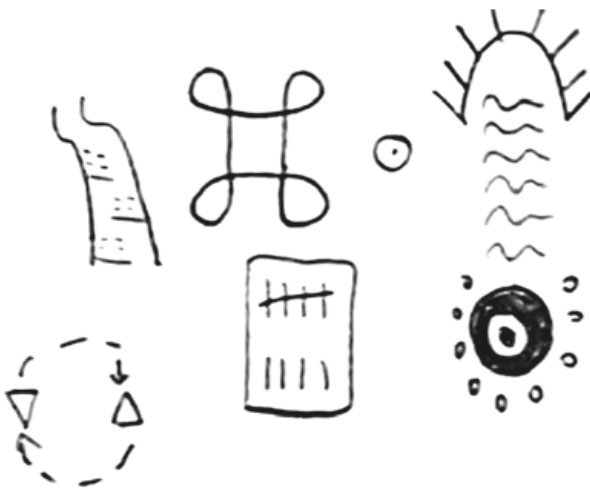
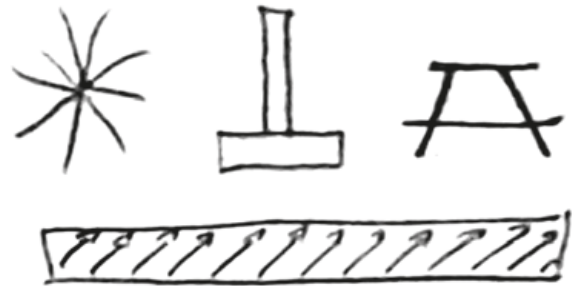
of deputy director of the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts. Prior to that she was exhibition organizer at the Serpentine Gallery in London, and at the Hayward Gallery. In addition to her CCA activities, she is Director of the Steven Leiber Trust (a significant collection of artist's books, ephemera, and works from the 60s to the 90s). Markopoulos also is a reviewer for art agenda, and has worked on numerous writing and editorial projects, such as most recently *Great Expectations: Propositions for the Future of Curatorial Education* (Cologne: Walther Koenig Books, 2016). She is currently editing an anthology of Zdenka Badovinac's writings (Independent Curators International, forthcoming, 2017).

MK Meador is an independent curator and Masters Candidate in Curatorial Practice at the California College of Arts. Previously, Meador was HATCH Resident Curator with Chicago Artist's Coalition and curator with the multidisciplinary arts space Comfort Station. Past curatorial projects include engagements and exhibitions with ACRE Artist Residency, Columbia College A+D Gallery, Milwaukee Avenue Arts Festival, Chicago Art Loop Alliance, Design Harvest, and Chapel Projects. As a writer in the arts, she has contributed to the Newcity and Proximity publications and was the Senior Editor for the online publication Chicago Art Magazine.

Amanda Nudelman is a curator living in San Francisco, where she is currently pursuing an MA in Curatorial Practice from California College of the Arts. She has worked for the Contemporary Jewish Museum and is curating an upcoming exhibition for the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts. She was a techie in her former life.

Elizabeth Thomas is the Director of Public Engagement at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, a newly created position producing discursive, performative, and participatory projects and events. Her curatorial work focuses primarily on research-based commissions with artists in museum contexts and increasingly in public space. Considering primary questions of political and social engagement, her projects place an emphasis on interdisciplinarity as well as formal and conceptual experimentation, including an upcoming performance and radio series with Michael Rakowitz, *Radio Silence*, that considers Iraq in both its destruction and its displacements. In her previous curatorial positions at UC Berkeley Art Museum and Carnegie Museum of Art, she has also produced projects with Omer Fast, Futurefarmers, Jill Magid, Trevor Paglen, Jill Magid, Allison Smith, Christian Jankowski, Ahmet Ogut, and Tomas Saraceno, among others. She lectures and publishes frequently, and serves as Senior Lecturer in both Curatorial Practice and Graduate Fine Arts at the California College of the Arts.

Rosa Tyhurst is based in Oakland, California where she has been living for (at the time of writing) 145 days. She is currently studying Curatorial Practice at the California College of the Arts (class of '18). Prior to this, she worked as Assistant Director at Limoncello, London as Studio Manager to Alice Channer and as Archivist for David Batchelor. In 2004 she applied to join the circus. She didn't get accepted.



Creative Villages

