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SOMETHING, LIKE NOTHING, HAPPENS ANYWHERE

NEW INTERNATIONALISM OR GLOBAL FRANCHISE?

SCEPTICISM IN THE AGE OF FORMAT WARS

ON THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ART SHOWS

CREDITS

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FOREWORD

Through devising *Research papers: Biennials and city-wide events*, editors Steve Dutton and Jeanine Griffin have sought to articulate some of the creative constraints and opportunities that such events invoke. Their intention is to suggest a halt to the seemingly endless declaration of opposition between so called global and parochial practices with the suggestion of an articulation of something approaching 'glocality'.

A fusion of individual and collective issues are raised and explored in the commissioned essays including: the practical and conceptual value of local "buy-in"; the need to test assumptions about "hosting"; post fixed ideas of nation-hood, what collective subject could be said to experience an "international" art project?; as Jan Vorwoert argues for a new form of qualitative evaluation, can notions of audience in visual art ever really be more than an audience of one (and one and one)?

Does as John Byrne suggest, organisers' subscription to the paradigm of a market fed by and nurturing what he calls "airport art", serve or gloss over artists' civic roles in developing alternative socio-economic strategies for change? Or, is the proliferation of such events more closely aligned with the growth of art collecting globally? From a creative practitioner's perspective, the collective legacy of such events enables a form of "reputational transfer" that attaches greater recognition to already existing informal networks of artists and cultural workers in a given location, enabling greater leverage of their stakeholders into a more challenging position for individual practice.

As Neil Mulholland so aptly puts it in his essay: "Globalisation is the same process that helped spread the 'gothic style' and net art alike... Artists in demand have always travelled... As they circulate they initiate new networks of knowledge, triggering global transformation". Did Holbein know he was acting as a cultural agent of change as well as an artist in his own right when painting the portraits of wealthy merchants in Basel long before the art-route between Venice and Basel was so regularly trodden?

Louise Wirz, Director of Development and Publisher, a-n The Artists Information Company.

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SOMETHING, LIKE NOTHING, HAPPENS ANYWHERE [1]

There are now over 200 contemporary art biennials across the globe, compared with four or five or twenty years ago. Recent additions to the Biennial circuit include Guangzhou, Shanghai, Busan, Gwangju, Prague, Istanbul and Liverpool, and, in the UK, recent city-wide exhibition projects which do not quite define themselves as biennials have been developed in Sheffield, Bristol, Leeds and Nottingham[2].

The discourse around such events is considerable, and, when biennials/city-wide projects such as these take place in a city not generally perceived to be an 'art capital', the internal and local debate frequently centres on what is perceived to be a discordant relationship between a so called 'international art world' parachuted in to the more socio-culturally specific 'art world' which is already taking place within the city which hosts it. Despite the best intentions of many curators and artists, this rift continues to exist.

At present there is something of a confusion and valorisation of terms in this arena – international is often used interchangeably with global and nomadic; local, with regional, provincial, the parochial and the antinomadic. In turn, these terms are often essentialised – for example, 'good' internationalism is pitted against 'bad' localism, or conversely the local relevance of an artwork or project held up as a marketable Unique Selling Point

These issues have been raised numerous times recently in various publications and events[3] – *Research papers: Biennials and city-wide events* sets out to examine these issues a little further, firstly in relation to artists' practice and also in the context of the biennial type event taking place in 'provincial' and subsequently, less market oriented, cities.

In his essay 'Nomadism'[4], Marcus Verhagen contrasts three types of practice – firstly, the "liquid modern", a nomadic practice as typified by the practice of Rirkrit Tiravanija which acknowledges globalisation and increasing inter-national homogeneity whilst being seen to retain the position of romantic, 'littlest hobo' outsiderdom; secondly, those artists who position themselves alongside the global commuter, at the mercy of the effects of globalisation and displacement and commenting upon those effects (Saki Satom, Shimabuki, Pavel Braila); and lastly, artists concerned specifically with the local, for which he cites the work of George Shaw, along with Lucy Lippard's text 'The lure of the local'. These latter he sees as hopeless nostalgics "who turn to the local not to describe modernity but to evade it". The first two of these three types of practice are easily recognisable, but the matter of the third type – artists working directly within the context of locality – becomes increasingly problematic, particularly in the context of biennial events which take the local context as their subject matter or defining characteristic.

Does a concern for place and an attempt to situate work in a nexus of locality, memory and representation really constitute a denial of progress and therefore become nostalgic? It may be true that Lucy Lippard's text does harbour a liberal leaning towards a panacea art which cures social ills, but all that is 'local' is not always only about locality. Even where it is, it is the degree of specificity which the local offers up which may be simply too hard for a liquid contemporary art sensibility to consume, rather than evincing some sense of nostalgia. On the one hand one can acknowledge that a work comes from somewhere, and that somewhere never really goes away. On the other, for example, George Shaw's work is more likely representing and inhabiting memory itself via Tile Hill rather than Tile Hill as a site. For most of us memory is situated in place and locality. As Lucy Lippard states place is "space plus memory".[5]

The very use of the terms of 'the local' or 'the regional' is problematic, especially when cast as the other to global (or even utopian) aspirations. Indeed, when it comes to art practice the local is perhaps simply that which does not speak the fluid language of 'international' contemporary art, drawing its cadences and wit from its immediate environment. Depending entirely on where you are standing the local can be repulsive, irritating, comforting, embracing, threatening, alien, safe, claustrophobic, charming, or disruptive. In this sense, the local doesn't exist as a thing at all, other than as the term for a frame which reduces at every point.

Ronaldo Munck also argues against the essentialising of internationalism and localism in an essay in the last Liverpool Biennial catalogue. He quotes think tank Comedia, which argues that Britain's core cities (a group including Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield) "uniquely combine the advantages of international cosmopolitanism with local distinctiveness, authenticity, originality and pride of place". He acutely notes that "in this conception the local is seen as static and unique, a place of fixity, tradition and continuity. It is contrasted, either explicitly or implicitly, with the global, seen as a realm of unfettered mobility and dynamism, a space of flows, instantaneous time and continuous transformation." However in practice he suggests, this counterposing of the local to the global cannot be sustained. The global is always "localised: it is constituted by the many 'locals' and is not a nebula hovering ominously or benignly (according to one's viewpoint) above the world."[6]

Much art practice has specificity at its core, and in global terms, so-called international art is parochial in that it operates in and speaks to a relatively small parish. Specificity is a characteristic of art, even if the art is not bound to a place or space, it nevertheless may develop its own conditions which are highly specific, unto itself and its attendant discourses. The universalising and utopian principals of modernity skew the specificity of art practices as a drive towards something global and this full forward drive remains largely unchecked by the major biennial projects which, for the last few years, have made lofty claims towards utopian ideals[7]. The pervading notions of globalism and internationalism have become conflated with spurious versions of democracies and utopias.

If, as Neil Mulholland suggests, globalism is the dominant paradigm of contemporary art management at the moment, focusing on transnational aspects of culture, this does disservice to the more liminal areas of the parochial where some of the most interesting areas of culture flourish[8]. If the local can be defined as a given territory in very much socio-geographical terms, the implication is that work which emerges from these roots is by its very nature parochial. However, work can emerge from a given set of circumstances, but many 'local' artists in this sense are, of course, showing their work globally. Can the parochial be recuperated from its pejorative frame of reference? There are boundaries to every parish, including that of the international art world and only by 'beating the bounds'[9] do you determine exactly where they are.

Much artists' work, though, is embedded in and deals with the local but is also universally transferable. During the panel discussion 'Location, Location, Location! Is Provincial a Bad Word?' Saskia Bos calls on Willie Docherty as an example of an artist who is "bridging or overlapping the void between a local vocabulary and context and a more

1 With apologies to Philip Larkin: " 'You look as if you wished the place in Hell,' /My friend said, 'judging from your face.' 'Oh well, / I suppose it's not the place's fault,' I said. /'Nothing, like something, happens anywhere.' " 'I Remember, I Remember', Larkin, Philip, *Collected Poems*, with an Introduction by Anthony Thwaite, The Marvell Press and Faber and Faber, London / Boston, 1988, p82.
2 Art Sheffield, Situations, Situation Leeds, Sideshow, respectively.
3 in articles in both *Art Monthly*, Oct & Nov 2006, and *a-n Magazine*, June 2006, and at the event Location, Location, Location! Is Provincial a Bad Word? – a panel discussion organised by the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York in association with the School of Art at The Cooper Union which took place on 10 January, 2007 and is archived at www.newmuseum.org/now_programs_events.php
4 in *Art Monthly*. Oct 2006, issue 300, and viewable at www.exacteditions.com/exact/browse/334/351/1898/3/9
5 Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: The Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society*, The New Press, New York, 1998.
6 Ronaldo Munck in essay 'The poets are, as always, in the vanguard', *Liverpool Biennial Catalogue* 2006, p154/5, quoting Comedia – 'Releasing the cultural potential of our core cities' (2002) www.comedia.org.uk p14
7 This tendency can be seen in a cross-section of biennial titles, from 'Plateaux of Humankind' (Venice Biennale, 2003), to 'BEYOND: an extraordinary space of experimentation for modernisation' (Guangzhou Triennial 2005) to the 2007 Istanbul Biennial: 'Not Only Possible, But Also Necessary - Optimism in the age of global war'.
8 Neil Mulholland, paper for Curating Post-Nation Symposium, transcript at www.situations.org.uk/research_research_resource_situations_papers.htm
9 The traditional way of making sure that boundaries are remembered is to hold annually on Ascension Day a ceremony known as 'beating the bounds', at which the vicar and surpliced choir tour the parish boundary with sticks with which they 'beat' the boundary-marks, often marking them with chalk. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beating_the_bounds

universally understandable one" but equally she quotes Sarat Maharaj to raise the point that "an artwork doesn't carry meaning like a bag of coins which we swap at a bureau de change into another currency, another meaning". Does a concern with the local then impede this ready value transference of works and meaning and its assimilation into the terms of the global market? Probably not, in practice. Most works, however vernacularly based, also operate within the lingua franca of the art world. It may, however, as Neil Mulholland suggests, "mitigate against the eradication of all trace or origin, of labour and the social relations involved in production". Conversely, as Claire Doherty points out: "Being situated, embedded, to feel that you belong or at least 'know' a place is not necessarily of artistic merit."[10] The issue here is what degree of specificity can a work of art stand and how do you assess this? Neil Mulholland calls for a 'new kind of thick description, a critical and curatorial approach which accounts for the ways that artists are affected by the local as well as the global'[11].

Of course, having a relationship or a "strong connection with a given location" (Marcus Verhagen) does not really do justice to some versions of what might be termed locality. Both Verhagen's examples of Baudelaires's Paris and Warhol's New York were as he says, "contours of modernity". In this sense, then, much as now, the space or place being encountered was the temporal as much as spatial dimension of modernity itself, the conflation of space and time being central to the narrative of modernity. "A new form of modernity has always appeared," wrote Michel Foucault, "each time our relationship to the present found itself drastically changed by history."

In relation to this the 2005 exhibition 'Translation' at the Palais de Tokyo took as starting point the question "What would be the current form of 'modern' in art today in the age of globalisation, that gigantic movement that is calling into question all that we know?" and answered it by suggesting we are about to see a new modernism appear, one founded on a resistance to the standardisation of culture.[12] The curators of this exhibition suggest, "The aim for the artists of today is to translate into a contemporary language the particularities of their specific cultural identity, their social singularity, their difference" and that "this art of resisting the standardisation of cultures and of the world economy, might best be called altermodernism." If this is so, then being an artist is not just about translating specifics into a universal language, but by doing so, actually being a language in its process of becoming, where what is at stake is the issue that language itself is a dynamic and mutable field, made as we construct and reconstruct our worlds. Globalism is market driven, it is striving towards an inevitable teleological end. Altermodernism recognises this as problematic and seeks to disrupt the path through specificity, location, fact in the moment, and, judging by the general flavours of this year's Venice and Documenta, a certain subjectivity.

Verhagen acknowledges the extent to which some artists' practices are implicated in creating a fiction of a frictionless "world of seamless communications and easy transit" and goes on to suggest that artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija might be characterised as 'liquid insider', implicit in the structures of global capital at the same time as commenting on them, and that Sarah Morris's version of global integrations "comes at a high cost of phenomenological density", another way of saying they lack experiential specificity. This is a version of nomadism in which travel meets no resistance, and it sits in polar opposition to 'altermodernism' – to a sense of locality as other to the spatial and temporal conflations of modernity. But this liquidity is temporary. Don Delillo famously declared[13] that "tourism is the march of stupidity", that being a tourist effectively gave the person license to be an idiot travelling through various alien environments. Without having to engage in either the detail or the difference, the tourist is given carte blanche by their generous hosts to make easiest observations about the places they visit. Likewise the traveller, once a byword for the tourist who took the location seriously, has been assimilated. The distinction between the tourists and traveller is outmoded – like that archetypal traveller of the '70s, this distinction doesn't wash; we are all travellers, tourists, nomads and antinomads now.

The experience of liquidity is of course by no means global. Like flicking through TV channels so-called 'nomadic' artists and curators are seen to be in a position to flick through countries and experience, and a critical or sustained engagement with locality seems to coagulate this liquid motion and exchange. Flow is restricted with the inconveniences and small incomprehensibilities of specificity. Marcus Verhagen notes this with his reference to Pavel Braila's *Shoes for Europe*, a video piece shown in Documenta 11 which painstakingly documented the process of lifting a train on the Moldava-Romania border, where the rails changed gauge. The specifics will always be there but are often disregarded because they irritate and block the flow of preferred and expedient discourses.

It might, therefore, be a mistake to dismiss work which valued a subjective relationship to a time and place as nostalgic or parochial, putting a limit on forms of practice in order to maintain a trajectory which typifies some 'international' practice. It may be possible to establish methods of judgement based on "thick description" by which quality is based neither on the goodness of local intentions (Lippard) or universal aesthetic appeal but on an informed, sympathetic and crucially flexible response to conditions which may be outside of oneself.

This dynamic then, is more than ever present within the magnifying confines of the biennial or city-wide exhibition and is prominently referenced in the curatorial statements of many such events. Some projects are squaring up to the challenge more robustly than others.

The introduction to the last Gwangju Biennial attempts to unselfconsciously bridge the local and the global with a third term: 'The Glocal' which is both local and global simultaneously. Originally a marketing term used to describe the process by which global products may absorb some local identity, the term has seen a steady increase in use in cultural discourse, most notably within last year's Gwangju Biennial. Artistic director Kim Hong-Hee brooked criticism for focusing on 'asian identity' and ignoring 'star' artists. As John Byrne points out, the suggestion is: "If you are ignoring the major players in the art world then you are not engaging on an 'international' level at all – you're simply 'local.'"[14] The flip side of this position is that a locally specific USP is positively helpful, in a city-wide event context, for attracting capital and interest. Neil Mulholland raises this double-edged sword of 'vernacular mobilisation' – a means of resisting homogenisation which focuses on local specificities. "By focusing on what makes you different, you actually attract capital. So differentiation is a means by which to attract attention or bring visibility to your city... At their worst these localised challenges can iron out uneven political relationships in the past to create a romantic identity that is profitable in the global marketplace desperate for differentiation."[15]

The Liverpool Biennial seeks to integrate the local and the global by inviting the nomadic artists of the biennial circuit to make work which takes Liverpool and its locality as subject. The intention is that the artworks demonstrate "sensitivity to the cultural specifics of the exhibition, that is, the people, history and fabric of the city of Liverpool". Where this meshes closely with the artists' ongoing practice these projects can be sympathetic and subtle portraits of aspects of the locality whilst retaining an alchemical property which makes them more than the sum of their parts. However, this strategy can as easily produce clumsy documentary and participatory projects in a touristic response to site. As Pryle Behrman argues[16] since the curators and artists are "creatures of the global art system... the transnational and nomadic world of the biennial circuit", it should not be too surprising if, "even after a studious submersion in the local environment, some very generic artworks result". As a result this sometimes seems an uneasy marriage of the 'liquid modern' nomadic artist and the space or locality performing as subject matter only.

The 2005 Istanbul Biennial was critically acclaimed in part for conceiving of a format which took local specificity as it's USP and attempted to create more significant links between participating artists and the local community and art scene, by means of residencies, in an 'attempt to give each individual presentation greater substance than is traditional in art biennials' and by using sites with quotidian import to the city's inhabitants, rather than the more tourist friendly historic venues. According to the press release, the curators selected fewer works, starting within the region and working outwards. They also aimed to 'spotlight existing phenomenon within the city that are less well known outside their own context', so reducing the representation of international artists in favor of building a Balkan and Black Sea regional network. No doubt much of the critical success of this project was due to the combinatory dynamic of an 'insider' (Vasif Kortun, director of Platform Garanti) and an 'outsider' (Charles Esche) as the curatorial team.

In comparing her position as 'outsider' or invited-in curator for both the Berlin Biennial and 'provincial' Munsterlander Biennial, Saskia Bos[17] notes that with the latter she found she came up against local bureaucracy and found that "confrontational work and avant garde strategies do not always work with a diverse or less informed audience". She also brought up the question: "Who are you working for, in a provincial biennial? Who is your audience ... maybe the smaller your audience the easier it is to think that you can widen perspectives or give something new." This gives the impression that in smaller, or more provincial arenas, there seems to be a clear hierarchy of power, authority, enforced consciousness-raising and intellectual gift-giving, rather than any sense of dialogue with a given context or population.

In contrast, Cork Caucus is another model of practice in which local initiative art/not art invited in "big name participants" for a programme of debate, discussions and presentations linked to European Capital of Culture 2005. Mick Wilson[18] notes that although the programme provided "grist for the mill of familiar biennale bashing rhetoric in terms of an allegedly uncritical capitulation to the prevailing fashions of the globalising western-art-world circuit", it also "attached recognition to the already extant informal networks of artists and cultural workers locally and enabled arts organisations to leverage their stakeholders into a more challenging critical position for practice, to a certain extent puncturing the mythos of the star system – the dominant reputational economy – that so often haunts marginal and provincial sites of contemporary practice. In this instance the attempted transactions of reputational transfer, whether successful or not, served to legitimise a field of activity – that of avowedly critical and self-reflexive contemporary art practices – in a manner that disrupts the safe containment of that field by the predictable 'old grey cardigan' grandees of the local scene". Although a critique of the cultural conservatism which leads provincial places to want to legitimise themselves by the import of big name artists so they can take part in the 'reputational economy' (as the Gwangju Biennial was locally criticised for not doing), the project does not sit entirely outside of this dynamic, but engages in this economy at a different stage – the 'big names' are in a discursive rather than an exhibition context, opening up a space of discussion and suggesting, maybe rightly, that the local needs the outside to develop a challenging critical position and that this model of ' hosting' can be highly productive.

The mother of all provincial city-wide exhibitions has to be Documenta in Kassel which achieves a high level of local 'buy-in' – from the mayor's reception to taxi drivers' conversations and shops who festoon their windows with the logo. This is either a classic case of commercial and socio-economic assimilation of a cultural event or evidence of some degree of real conceptual engagement by means of the panel of local advisors who 'share' power for the event. Kassel has now renamed itself permanently as 'Documenta City' on all the signs leading into it, a rather sobering suggestion that somehow the city itself is nonexistent in the five years between Documentas. By fixing itself to something so urgently, Kassel disappears and Documenta becomes the city, which comes into being every five years, like a hyped up Brigadoon.

Documenta 12 director Roger Buerghel notes[19] that in what he terms 'tertiary' cities "the first hand you shake is always the wrong hand – you enter local power networks you don't properly understand and you have to come up with a method to enter them and make them productive, not for yourself, but for themselves". He also states that "locality is a challenge to thinking about curatorial methods" and expands that the way of dealing with this challenge for Documenta 12 was "to set up a form of organisation so what you have to do is share power – that means trying to find a way to attract people to enter this discussion, into this kind of communication and the only way to do it, if you are not appealing to people's idea of their own career-making, is to give them a share". However, this power-sharing ideal is rendered more complex by a subsequent, more pointed statement around consensus and authority – what he terms a psychoanalytical approach: "You try to find out what people need and then the people tell you what they need, but you give them what they really need and what they really need (and this is true of exhibition-making) is almost never what they want so you are faced with resistance, to put it mildly, and the question is do you have a form to deal with this resistance – is your concept of curating able to integrate this element of resistance or not?"

So if, in these terms, the provincial city-wide exhibition follows a Rolling Stones dynamic of getting, not what you want but what you need, how do you deal with the resistance

10 Claire Doherty 'Curating Wrong Places... or Where Have All the Penguins Gone?' in *Curating Subjects*, Ed Paul O'Neill, Open Editions, London, 2007, p105.
11 ibid
12 www.palaisdetokyo.com/fr/presse/communiques/translation/comtranslationen.html, also quoted by Andrew Wilson in 'Making New' in *Curating Subjects*, Ed Paul O'Neill, Open Editions, London, 2007.
13 in *The Names*, Vintage, London, 1989.
14 in an essay for Static's Press Corps, at the Gwangju Biennial. See www.statictrading.com
15 ibid
16 in the essay 'In Search of the Ideal Biennial', *Art Monthly*, Nov 2006, issue 301.
17 in the Location, Location, Location panel discussion
18 in 'Curatorial Moments and Discursive Turns', in *Curating Subjects*, p 215.
19 in the Location, Location, Location event

of those who disagree with their prescription, other than creating cleanly delineated and potentially co-opted arenas for this resistance to demonstrate (in the words of the same song – "going down to the demonstration to get your fair share of abuse"). Resistance or fringe activity is welcomed by such events as a marker of their impact and almost automatically renders the 'fringe' event as the devalorised half of a binary pairing which depends on the main event for its impetus and therefore, as Pryle Behrman notes, elides dissent. He comments on the biennale's potential to "ingest and neuter dissenting voices" by "taking radicalism under their wing in some shape or form," using as example Paula Roush's 'boycott the bienniale' T-shirt being 'snapped up by the biennale-loving hordes in Prague 2003.[20]

Of course this dynamic, stemming from Buerghel's approach, still depends on the model of a flown-in international curator who starts from square one and tries to make connections within a local context. The alternative approach is to use on-the-ground curators and artists to cut through, ignore, placate, work alongside this level of bureaucracy and turn 'wrong-hand-shaking' into something altogether more sustainable. A pure form of this is exhibited in Situation Leeds, which is a mostly city-wide showcase of art in the public realm by artists based in Leeds, selected and promoted by a steering group made up of artists and curators from Leeds institutions and self-organised by the participating artists. The potential pitfalls of this approach is that it risks becoming a diverse but hermetically sealed exercise in internal development with no challenges from outside but, the very fact that it creates something which is not interchangeable with other events suggests that this ground up approach may provide a genuine alternative.

Further down the M1, the model for the city-wide exhibition in Sheffield – where the next incarnation will be Art Sheffield 08 – seeks also to create an intersection of the locally- and the internationally-based, and the established and the emergent, to attempt to effect a different "reputational transfer" and to take an internationalist approach without completely outsourcing curatorial responsibility or effacing locally-based artists. So far so compliant with the rhetoric of the city-wide event. But as Claire Doherty notes: "The unstated aim of any curatorial endeavour is to produce a situation like no other. Every biennial proposition can be seen as a response to its peers and its precedents."[21] In this case the response is in the curatorial process. A commentator is selected who is invited to write a text which provides a conceptual and curatorial framework for the event. This commentator and the directors of Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum (representatives of the city's exhibition venues and artists and practitioners based in the city) nominate artists whose practice they feel has a resonance with the ideas set out in this text and the group and commentator then collaboratively select the programme. This mix of consensus and autonomy, inside and outside can at times be an uneasy and conflictual one, but can also be highly productive. This year's invited commentator, Jan Verwoert, took an approach which doesn't seek to "explain Sheffield to its inhabitants" but position some aspects of possibly universal experience of life in the 'tertiary' (or in Sheffield's case quaternary) cities of the world, based around ideas of performativity and exhaustion[22] by inviting local and international artists at different stages in their careers to undertake commissions and show existing work. Art Sheffield 08 is not about locality, it does not take Sheffield as 'metaphor' (Istanbul) or 'catalytic trigger' (Manifesta 5), but it is hopefully drawing something from a specific context, which might also be relevant to a wider sphere of reference. In effect the forthcoming event will be action research into this mode of operation and how well it succeeds remains to be seen.

Perhaps there is something in the desired synthesis of inside and outside, local and international evinced by so many projects which is still crucial and which revolves around hospitality. The importance of 'the outside' in its potential to constitute the character of 'the inside' is discussed in an essay by Jan Verwoert[23]. Perhaps his quotation of Charles Esche's adoption of Derrida's notion of 'radical hospitality' can help with this problem. Verwoert/Esche use it in relation to the institutions of art gaining their creativity from outside as radical hosts or as Verwoert puts it "the creativity of the host lies in the capacity to allow for an unlimited agency of the guest". In the case of institutions the guests are artists and visitors, in the case of city-wide/biennial art projects maybe this can be played out in the relationship of host city and art community and invited artists whereby the host city and its artists and audiences are involved in a dialogue of hospitality and exchange, which is itself constitutive of creativity. Derrida notes the shared etymology of hospitality/hostility, alerting us to the fact that this relationship is complex and itself subject to local specificities and variances[24]. This position invokes the paradox of hospitality in that it is predicated on self-identity and ownership: to be a host necessitates being in control. To totally relinquish control to the guest means no longer being a functioning host. Hosting, then, isn't a passive or altruistic position; the host controls the conditions of hospitality and to be a guest implies submitting to 'house rules', but equally the guest can make certain demands of their host who is obligated to respond to them. Both parties may have agency in this negotiation and this conflicted yet convivial relationship could create a space of intersection of the 'local' and the 'international' in a temporary 'dissociative' community formed by the biennial or city-wide exhibition. Hospitality allows communities to "make their very limits their openings"[25] – here's to beating the bounds.

Steve Dutton and Jeanine Griffin

20 in 'International Art plc', *Art Monthly*, July-Aug 2007, issue 308.
21 ibid, p 107
22 full text can be read at www.artsheffield.org
23 in his essay 'This is not an exhibition: On the practical ties and symbolic differences between the agency of the art institution and the work of those on its outside' in *Art and its Institutions*, Ed Nina Möntmann, Black Dog, London, 2006.
24 see Irina Aristarkhova ' Exotic Hospitality in the Land of Tolerance' in *Manifesta Coffee Break*, Ed Paul Domela, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, 2005, p 65-74.
25 from Jacques Derrida's Questions of Responsibility: Hostility/Hospitality, series of lectures at University of California, Irvine, April - May 1996, referred to in Irina Aristarkhova's essay 'Hosting the Other' available to download at www.obn.org/inhalt_index.html as part of Next Cyberfeminist Reader (Ed. Cornelia Sollfrank) and quoted by Paul Domela in his essay 'The Bounce Factor: Recoding the International' in *Liverpool Biennial Catalogue*, 2006.

AIRPORT ART: NEW INTERNATIONALISM OR GLOBAL FRANCHISE?

Airport art, as I now like to call it, is the major problem facing biennales, biennials and art festivals today. Like the global hinterland of familiar shops that lie beyond the barriers of every passport control in every departure terminal, airport art panders to the whims and fancies of a constantly circulating (and constantly growing) community of culture professionals. Its bland ubiquity allows them to easily propagate a range of expedient mythologies about contemporary art – accessibility, accountability, cultural specificity and social engagement. As airports are indicators of a city's growing participation in growing global economies, so airport art is a confirmation of a city's inclusion into an elite group of cultural destinations. The result of all this airport art is that biennials, biennales and major festivals – like so many coffee shops, burger bars, boutiques and restaurant chains – are becoming so familiar, so interchangeable that they need a hook, claim or publicity coup to distinguish them from each other.

This became apparent to me whilst working on the Static 'Press Corp' project for Liverpool Biennial 2004. The publicity coup for that particular Biennial was Yoko Ono's city-wide project 'My Mummy Was Beautiful'. This was a series of posters, badges and carrier bags which sported the image of a female breast or pubis. It was guaranteed to cause a storm. On one hand a predictable outcry against images of nudity on public display. On the other a misty eyed 'welcome home' to Ono who, as the wife of ex-Beatle John Lennon, is supposed by many to have some kind of special attachment to the city. This link was, of course, confirmed by a large poster of her work that appeared in Liverpool's own John Lennon Airport. Perfect – a work of art by an international celebrity, bearing a tenuous link to the specificity of Liverpool, whose content was racy enough to guarantee free advertising in tabloid news around the world. The selection of Ono's work was then justified by the resulting popularity of Liverpool Biennial 04, which was, in turn, evidenced by attendance figures gleaned from the North West Tourist Board.

Because major non-gallery art events are now condemned to deal in this kind of publicity seeking, any debate which surrounds them now tends to be evaluative, or critical, in the crudest and most general of terms – eg 'what makes a good biennial?', 'is this a truly international/inclusive arts festival?', 'are biennials and festivals concerned enough with local specificity?' These arguments – or lines of inquiry – have now become somewhat of a journalistic joke, a no-win situation for any curator or director of a major festival. If there is a commitment to challenging new art, they are not international enough. If there is a commitment to procuring major pieces of art, they are not specific enough. This conundrum is often compounded when a provincial town or city enters the arts festival fray. At one and the same time they are expected to join in the 'New Internationalism' of the biennial set whilst distinguishing themselves from the more traditional nodal points of contemporary art practice (which are usually based in their countries' capitals).

Once again, I witnessed this directly whilst working on Static's 'Press Corp' for Gwangju Biennale 06. Kim Hong-hee, who was director of the Biennale, had put together an exciting and innovative show which re-assessed the role of Korean and Asian art in the development of Western Modernism and Contemporary Internationalism. To facilitate this, Kim involved a range of curators who chose works by sharp, exciting, up and coming artists. The result, she was given a torrid time by the Seoul-based Korean Press for parochialism and an inability to attract big names.

In both this case, and the case of Yoko Ono and Liverpool Biennial 04, questions about the quality or relevance of contemporary art works were subsidiary to more general questions about the contemporary relevance of art. This is because, for better or for worse, the role and function of contemporary art has, over the last two decades, changed forever. It is now more popular than it has ever been. This has been born out by the exponential increase in art festivals around the world (estimates vary, but most agree that there are now more than two hundred biennales – the equivalent of one opening every week) and the key role that international museums and galleries such as Tate Modern and Guggenheim Bilbao now play in the global tourist industry. Art's success is now measured in box office receipts and contributions to gross national product. Art now has to vie in a competitive market for its own slice of the monetary cake. This means, more often than not, a return to the crowd pleasing antics and shock tactics of the earlier avant-garde (though often with a conspicuous lack of content). This, however, is now more difficult when most advertising agencies have long learnt the syntax and grammar of avant-gardism – and deploy them better than most artists can hope to do. The result, art is now just one contemporary product amongst many. It has long lost its cultural right to stand at the apex of Western civilisation, dispensing higher truths to the masses below. If it is to fight for its relevance, it must do this across a new territory of high speed, interchangeable and globalised media. Contemporary art can make many local impacts and also, perhaps, serve as a new space for discussing and developing alternative political, economic and social strategies for change and challenge to the current status quo. This has to be supported by a radical re-think of the way we think, write, theorise and practise culture – one which accepts that the territories for making art, its very terms and conditions for existence, are irrevocably changed. Ironically, this may be the only way to save art from complete complicity with a celebrity culture which survives solely on the oxygen of scandal and publicity. It may also be the challenge which prevents contemporary art becoming another global franchise and, in turn, makes real sense of the possibilities offered to local and global communities by biennials, biennales and festivals.

John Byrne

NOT ONLY IMPLAUSIBLE, BUT ALSO DISCRETIONARY: SCEPTICISM IN THE AGE OF FORMAT WARS

Despite common parlance, globalisation is not a synonym for contemporary neoliberal capitalism; it is rather an historical process of cultural drift and metamorphosis. It concerns the ways in which lots of small local networks connect to form an international matrix. It's not possible to opt out of this process now any more than it ever was; we are social animals. To be 'local' is to participate in the process of globalisation. Art practice is as globalised now as it always was. Globalisation is the same process that helped spread the 'gothic style' and net art alike, the only real difference being the increasing speed and geographic reach of communication. Artists in demand have always travelled, the more visible and successful ones playing pawns in a political game by working for the highest bidder. As they circulate they initiate new networks of knowledge, triggering global transformation.

The density of a place is no mark of its cultural capital (think of how small the population of Florence was during the Quattrocento), no guarantee of parochialism or cosmopolitanism. Where geography once played a strategic role, ports being cauldrons of activity, today attitude is all. Nevertheless, the appropriate civic conditions have and will continue to play a crucial role in the production of some of the world's greatest artistic feats, allowing artists in turn to establish cultural imaginaries that contribute to a sense of community. To some extent, this has always involved artists playing the local-card-as-global-card. The local argot becomes something that everyone wants (eg the Corinthian column). This process is complex, slow, often cyclical, it doesn't obey a single form of logic and has no telos (think of the inspired title of Alex Frost's Tramway exhibition: 'Format Wars'.) The lingua franca starts life autopoietically as an argot, through internal interactions, self-organising and self-defining of their boundaries. It's impossible to invent such rich cultural phenomenon out of thin air.

Unfortunately, too many expos attempt to make this impossible task possible. Predicated on the most received of received ideas (a corollary of disregarding scepticism) expos are among the most superficial examples of social engineering. They are a curatorial Esperanto, New Towns on wheels, a symptom of the destructive effects that neoliberalism has had on civic pride and local democracy. Intentionally speaking, they are largely benign in so far as they attempt to suspend these conditions by role playing, offering up a space in which we might imagine that a creative community still exists. In doing so, however, they tend to accelerate the process they rally against since they operate only at the level of representation (what if?) This is due to a lack of consequential engagement with or investment in the relations of production, consumption and distribution; a lack born of a fundamental indifference towards the relative significance of site, sustainability, movement, and audience.

If world-cities are no longer the 'centre', which given their global financial importance is highly dubious, then which (former) peripheries are emerging? Do they emerge where expos appear? Not necessarily. The presence of an expo does not denote a healthy local art scene; on the contrary, where there is even the glimmer of a local art world an expo will be sure to drain it dry by annexing venues and absorbing resources. Private finance is uneven. The art market may be bigger than ever but it's not conducted everywhere; it remains tied to major art fairs and financial centres. If artists have to chase the umbilical cord of gold, as they always have, they aren't going to spend much time contributing to the culture of the so-called peripheries. Without such a local critical mass an expo is little more than a marketing tool driven by the logic of franchising and outsourcing that underlies the (allegedly) culturally-motivated economic growth that grants world-city status.

Expos won't help to nurture local gene pools of creativity since they are invariably about buying in the added value of 'international' talent – a euphemism that means a consensually globally networked McArt that is 'foreign' – to bring in visitors to view what can be seen just as readily elsewhere. This rationale closely compares with how football clubs operate; an economy that requires lucrative sponsorship deals and mass audiences. This isn't a sustainable cultural policy and is economic suicide. If a city or state can't establish its own infrastructure (whether as an economy or as a culture) on its own terms (local representation/laws require taxation, culture is a process of vernacular mobilisation that produces and is produced by the social system) then it doesn't have any basis upon which to exchange culturally with anyone anywhere. Such a place would not be a non-place; it would be a ghost town. This doesn't matter to those who benefit from this system since they are able to buy mobility, but it does forecast their demise. If you continually outsource your culture where do you go when the world's local talent has dried up? Where do you find 'international' footballers if all footballers play for your home team? What will the producers produce?

Cultural drift today, as since the economic migration spawned by the industrial modernism of the 19th century, flows towards cities. Despite this, the vast majority of people in the world, now predominately urbanites, experience only the most limited geographic, social and economic mobility. This stands in stark contrast to the hyper-geographic diaspora of some artists and curators, a product of their social and economic upward mobility. Any thesis that overstates the significance of mobility is clearly one spoken by those wealthy enough to buy their way out of the limits and responsibilities of citizenship, not to be restricted by the legal peculiarities of any particular state. Such privileged figures are in a powerful position, they have the ability to draw attention to the minutiae of the sites they work in and find correlations between them, facilitating cultural drift and political reform. Curators of expos tend not to do this as the primary objective of expos is to solicit the legitimation of other expos and, ultimately, to recruit their artists and curators.

The audience for such art is not 'local' since the very concept of the civic is eliminated in expo networks. Expo audiences are preferable to a genuinely diverse 'local' audience since they are easier to convince (optimists don't need to be converted) being members of a social system that is as closed as the average extended family. This is essentially an attempt at consensus building and canon construction which fails to understand the need for 'interference'. This is something that tends to happen in the more sensitive feedback loops we find in smaller localised systems that have to respond to the pressures of sceptical audiences not already converted to the cause. Since they filter out such pressures, expos tend to be less representative of the diversity spawned by cultural globalisation. Such juggernauts can't be flexible and adapt to changes at the ground level, they don't pick up on vibrations or on the haptic aspects of culture. They offer no means to allow artists or communities to exchange with peers globally on their own terms since they are desperate to establish a linga franca via which all communication must take place. They can't operate around nuanced concerns (Tunnock's Tea Cakes in the age of M&Ms) since they are condemned to emulate the mediocre, patronising, homogenous homily of CNN, MTV, the Olympic Games, the World Cup, Bono and Sting. Expos are the stadium rock of our times.

Expocult is mired by a misreading of the process of growth that is Maoist in its revolutionary naivety; leaping from nothing to everything. If art is worth experiencing, it will attract a dedicated audience that is simultaneously 'local' and 'global' (how could it be otherwise)? It's not obvious how big this audience has to be to sanction a practice; it's certainly not a matter of achieving a consensus among audiences. If artists want real diversity they need to work harder, on a smaller scale, with fewer means, to establish global networks that are genuinely (as opposed to metaphorically) rhizomatic. They need to resist the spoils of meta-networks and new canons premised on the possibility of possibility becoming possible. The proliferation of expos is not inherently a bad thing; culture is everywhere, and thus so are the means of distribution. Artists need to reconstruct the field of distribution by taking control back into their own hands. The 'World Fair' conception of the expo, which attracts visitors from all over the world, should be condemned to the nineteenth century where it belongs (along with imperialism and modernity). In its place should be a loose network of exchanges between cities, regions and states – temporary confederacies that flow with the movement of ideas and friendships. Redirecting the human and financial resources bestowed upon expos to facilitate what already happens in the host region, to help improve communication, in this way, would be begin to nurture creative responses to globalisation.

Neil Mulholland

FORGET THE NATIONAL: PERFORM THE INTERNATIONAL IN THE KEY OF THE LOCAL (AND VICE VERSA)!

On the experience of international art shows.

Rather than asking what a biennial represents, it may be worthwhile to shift the emphasis of the question and examine how it represents. That is: How is it experienced? On what level does the experience of an international art exhibition like a biennial register and in which parameters does that experience then come to figure as relevant and meaningful? Is it within parameters set by the national, the international or the local context of its reception? Which of these contexts does, can or should such an exhibition therefore address?

If we take the Venice Biennale as the historic prototype on which the concept of a major exhibition presenting art from around the world is modelled, the answer turns out to be complex: The Venice Biennale professes to address the world and it speaks from the position of being set in an illustrious location, Venice, a city that has been a tourist destination ever since the inception of modern tourism, a city that people around the world can therefore be expected to (wish to) visit. Yet, the key in which Venice addresses the world has traditionally been the key of national representation. For sure, efforts have been made in recent years to shift the focus away from the national pavilions towards the multinational group shows in the framework of the biennial. Still, the way the audience interacts with the exhibition – the way we come to Venice to play the game of seeing the show – remains largely determined by the quaint attraction of seeking out the national pavilions while promenading through the park grounds and palaces with the air of the global traveller and conqueror of the colonial age. "Have we done Venezuela yet?" – "We should make sure to do Argentina on the way." This experience is inevitably tainted by the traces of the imperialist if not fascist aspirations to national supremacy which the grandiose neoclassicist architecture of many of the pavilions epitomises. Still, the general attitude with which you perform the ceremony of seeing the biennial as an informed viewer is likely to be that of a postmodern ironicist who wittingly indulges in an untimely charade.

No doubt, to be nominated as an artist to represent the nation continues to be a mark of distinction which counts in terms of raising the profile and market value of the work in countries where an art market exists or which can secure status in local power struggles, especially in countries where a market is virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, for the informed viewer the strong feeling of the absurdity of the calculus of national representation tends to overshadow the experience of seeing the work and even overrule the expectation to see anything truly relevant. The international audience which assembles to see an international art exhibition will by nature of its interests and provenance be attuned to the emancipated view that ever since countries established trade relations between each other, art and ideas of true relevance have been a subject to and a product of such supra-national trade and exchange. What city would make this more tangible than Venice? (If Nuremburg and Venice had not been trade partners, who knows what would have happened to Dürer, or if he would have 'happened at all. In a similar way there would have been no Kant, had the writings of Hume not found their way from Edinburgh to Königsberg – and so on.) So why would anyone take nationalities seriously when it comes to art and ideas? Is Picasso's art French or Spanish? Was Miró truly Catalan? Who would care about this, apart from some petty power players in the respective ministries of tourism?

Then again, it might be too easy to just offhandedly dismiss the national as a relevant key of address. After all, there is a resurgence of a desire to claim art for the country in peripheral regions whose culture had been suppressed by the centre (eg Catalonia or the Basque Country) or in smaller nations that have been freed from the domination of bigger states, as in many countries of the former Eastern Block. Entire art histories are currently rewritten in countries that have emerged from the collapse of larger nations as, for instance, artists become retroactively divided into Czechs and Slovaks or Slovenians, Croatians and Serbs. Here, representing the nation is a big issue precisely because what that new nation is supposed to represent still is a contested subject. Yet, what makes the ideological if not openly chauvinist bias of such debates so bizarrely obvious when it comes to nationally (re)classified art, is, that while the nation can be the subject of (ideological) representation in art it can never be the subject that makes the experience of art. A nation never goes to see art. Only individual people do. In sports the chimera of an imaginary collective subject may still be frequently invoked as 'the nation' is said to have assembled before the television screens to, for instance, follow a World Cup football match. But who wouldn't feel silly if they used this figure of speech in relation to an art event? The nation, it seems, will not be bothered to show up as one on such occasions. As, thankfully, the imaginary collective subject of the nation has therefore become unimaginable as the subject of the experience of contemporary art, the national is an impossible key of address. It lacks an addressee. Anyone who, in art, chooses to talk in the national key talks to no-one. There is no nation there to subject itself to the experience this speaker believes she/he can provide.

But if it cannot be the nation, what collective subject could be said to experience and be addressed by an international art exhibition such as a biennial? Does it make sense at all to consider collective subjects as possible addressees and subjects of an art experience? Or is the mere thought of such abstract entities already nonsensical at best or ideologically constructed at worst? Is it not much safer to assume that the experience of even a major exhibition will at the end of the day always only be a personal experience made by different people in different ways, so that the audience of any show can by definition be never more than an audience of one. And one. And one. And one. And so on. As a corrective to overblown fantasies and demands of collective acceptance – for shows are deemed to be failures if the audience attendance figures do not support the belief that 'the nation was watching' – the modest empirical insight that no audience can and will ever be more than one of one (and one and one and one and so on) may serve as a welcome remedy. Still, it seems hard to deny that international exhibitions would, could or should not create the possibility for some sort of a collective experience or experience addressed to more than only ever just one recipient after another.

If there is one collective subject of experience whose presence is clearly felt in the place of the exhibition, it is the local. The local is out on the streets, in the pubs and family homes and speaking its mind with the tongue of cab drivers and local journalists. No doubt, the public opinion is a questionable abstraction. Still, who could deny that it exists and produces very real effects? The collective subject of the local effectively determines the mood in which an exhibition is received and this mood is bound to linger in every corner of its venues. If this mood of the city turns against the show, it is a bad omen that will affect also the experience of those who travel from far to see it. If the mood is good, however, the general feeling of overall celebration is likely to lighten up the spirit of the whole show. At the same time, it seems equally difficult if not impossible to say how the collective subject of the local actually constitutes and composes itself. How and when do you become eligible to be part of it? How much time does it take to become a local? Is it a matter of months, years, decades or, strictly speaking, of generations? More fundamentalist positions on this thorny issue have traditionally been offset by the customs and ethics of hospitality, that is, by the ways in which temporarily and without further questions someone may be accepted as a member of the community. Hosting is difficult to grasp as a form of agency since it is a pro-active form of allowance, the act of leaving it to the guest to act, as if they were at home.

There is still a lot that could and would have to be said in favour of the true appreciation of hospitality as a form of cultural agency. Much of this would in fact force us to reconsider the very nature and role of representation in the context of international exhibitions hosted by local institutions in specific cities. (In the following I am riffing on ideas formulated in different panel discussions by Irit Rogoff, Charles Esche and Maria Lind to whose thoughts I feel very much indebted.) Symptomatically, most local conflicts over biennials do erupt around issues of representation, that is around the question how and by whom the cultural scene of the local host city is represented in the exhibition, and if this representation is adequate. There is no denying that the promise of international recognition which a biennial automatically generates puts the question of inclusion and exclusion onto the agenda. No matter then how respectful curators may proceed; the universal promise of representation which any biennial generates by itself can never be universally fulfilled and is therefore bound to provoke mixed feelings or animosities somewhere along the way. Foregrounding the significance of hospitality as a genuine form of creative agency will not solve this problem but it might help to cast things in a different light since it forces us to reconsider, as Irit Rogoff has suggested, whether it is actually justified to exclusively think of participation in terms of representation.[1]

Hospitality is a compelling counter-example because by virtue of manifesting itself primarily on the level of modest performative gestures and vernacular ceremonial exchanges it has comparatively little to do with representation[2] – still it is arguably one of the most potent forms of cultural participation precisely because it creates the very possibility of (and forum for) participation. Obviously, hosting is an activity primarily performed by individual people who have a space to welcome guests in. Still, there is also a more general sense in which a place is felt to be hospitable or a city found to be welcoming. In this sense the collective subject (or genius loci) of the local can incarnate itself and become an agent of hospitality. This agency simply manifests itself in any random encounter between guests and locals in the city and the particular atmosphere, spirit and humour of these exchanges. So even before the issue of the inclusion and exclusion of the local in an exhibition comes to figure on the level of representation, the collective subject of the local may in fact always already be included and implicated, present and represented in the show through its performance in the role of the collective host. The crucial point would then be to find ways to appreciate and activate the collective practical intelligence of this performance – by enacting it publicly in and around the exhibition. Performing the local would then be a joint performance in which hosts and guests improvise intuitively to make their sense of humour chime and find ways of provoking and taking pleasure in each other.

That mutuality is essential for this performance to get off the ground, at the same time throws into relief how the international can only be performed in the key of the local – and vice versa. In art the collective subjectivity of the international exists in a complex state of diaspora. The international is embodied by people who either circulate physically and emotionally by travelling or who put their ideas and experiences into circulation by making their works and writings travel. At the same the only way these ideas, experiences and emotions can ever truly manifest themselves is in the local context in which they are received, presented – and of course produced (in the end we all settle down somewhere, even if is just temporarily, to work something out or pull things together). Conversely, the local tends to only perform itself as a collective subject when it is provoked by a visiting stranger to do so. The arrival of the guests make the hosts convene in committees of different sorts, official and unofficial. The local performance of the international brings the local into its own precisely by confronting and punctuating it with the reality of a diaspora which equally only comes into its own by struggling with the idiosyncrasies of the localities it tries to inhabit.

Curiously, the international is often perceived as the centre and source of power within the arts, when in effect the international is always needy and in want of the support by the local without which it can literally not incarnate itself. Apart from the art and ideas that it may bring to the table, the international usually arrives with empty hands, incapable of instantly producing the surprises it is expected to deliver. First of all it awaits to be welcomed, taken care of and fed, because the international usually arrives, not from the centre, but from the margins it inhabits, that is, from urban spaces (maybe quite close to the centres of capital but always rather in the niches and cracks that occur in and around them) which allow for improvised living, offer rents cheap enough to make flats, studios and studies affordable and are within reach of an airport that low fare airlines fly to. The return which the local can expect from the international for hosting these needy guests is therefore not the temporary promotion to the rank of a centre but rather the invitation to join the margins. In a sense this offer to take a ride on the margins is precisely the experience an international biennial can provide by assembling artists, works and ideas under the auspices of the local.

In terms of its psychic geography, the trajectory of the exhibition could then be a sliding motion around globally interconnected margins. The mutual performance of the local and international would then lie in the making and enacting of that very connection between margins in the process of the experience of the show. This does not have to be a success story. The international and local approximate each other precisely in the moment when they mutually realise their respective marginality. And margins can touch, overlap, rub up against each other, but due to the different shapes of their limits they are bound to never fit into each other completely. So some element of slapstick will inevitably inhere in the way in which the international performs the local and the local performs the international. But that's alright. A moment of mutual empowerment may in effect result from the very circumstance that by playing roles you are not quite used to, you end up giving what you thought you did not have to others who didn't think they actually wanted it like this… but now that it has turned out the way it has, it kind of makes sense.

Jan Verwoert

1 Irit Rogoff made this provocative point in a volatile discussion with the local audience on the Manifesta Coffee Break conference in Nikosia, Cyprus in early 2006.

2 Of course you can represent hospitality in grand public gestures, yet such grand gestures inevitably also violate a certain protocol of modesty, which only validates hospitality as a genuine concession to the guest if the host refrains from capitalising on his generosity.

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