

A Continuous Stream of Occurrence
Luba Drozd and William Lamson

*Again when we seek definitely to express the relations of events which arise from their spatio-temporal structure, we approximate to simplicity by progressively diminishing the extent (both temporal and spatial) of the events considered ... Thus we finally reach the ideal of an event so restricted in its extension as to be without extension in space or extension in time. Such an event is a mere spatial point-flash of instantaneous duration. I call such an ideal event an 'event-particle.' You must not think of the world as ultimately built up of event-particles... The world we know is **a continuous stream of occurrence** which we can discriminate into finite events forming by their overlappings and containings of each other and separations a spatio-temporal structure.*

Alfred N. Whitehead (1919)

The exhibition is curated by XP what follows is a conversation between them.

X: Hi Park, this exhibition contains two dimensions, one centered on the body, the senses, and perception and its organization and alteration, and the other focused on the exhibition as device, considering its qualities from atmosphere to design. This brings us to see the exhibition as a space where something happens, an instance of a *stream* of implications, that escape contemporary art to delve into the ideological and material conditions of our existence.

P: Hi Xavi, when you mention the exhibition as a space where something happens I feel this is closely related to the exhibition as casual event, though I would like to shift terminology: consider the exhibition as an evolving system. Before elaborating on this, the title of the exhibition provides a foundation and point of departure. *A Continuous Stream of Occurrence* is a reference to a quote by Alfred N. Whitehead in a text written before his philosophical shift from a naturalist materialism to organic realism – from an understanding of reality built of material, static particles or singular moments to one of a fluid *process* of becoming within and through space and time.

Whitehead lays the groundwork for his version of process philosophy, of which systems thinking has its origins. So my interest is how can we think of Luba and William's work, our collaborative approach, and the exhibition as an adaptive, self-organizing system where each agent (perhaps here artist, institution, curator, artwork, visitor) are in a state of becoming more complex through continued, non-linear causal interaction and adaptation. I think that William's *Badwater* and Luba's *Franconia Notch* provide a case study or an exploration on complex adaptive systems.

X: The works of Luba and William share a common perspective on generative environments. I see Luba's installation as a multi-layered séance, a space where the architecture and the materials that she introduces are vibrating to connect with us rhythmically. There is a level of unknown which is being activated. It also relates to a genealogy of immersive artistic practices, that in her case is particularly interested in situating our bodies as conductors, as another element in the space, with the intention of saturating our senses. Perhaps this aims to make us surrender and be *only* bodies in reverberation.

William's work also connects with a long trajectory of artistic practices that merge art and natural processes. By setting the conditions for a chain of events, he approaches nature from the inside, and he demonstrates an interest on display as habitat-making. I would say that his installation is a system for the sculptural elements, who are like living entities evolving through crystallization. The different temporal dimensions are what makes us feel estranged, as something that happens without us needing to be there, and that we are not capable of fully perceiving.

So, I would underline the unknown and alterity as features of the exhibition. The unknown is a key factor in open-ended situations, there is a certain amount of unexpectancy (spontaneity?) that is welcomed. I can't stop relating this to indeterminacy, which is one of the principles of contemporary art; mainly the public as producer within a set of circumstances. For alterity, I'm thinking on an entity that has agency beyond humans, which has also been very present in contemporary art in recent times, and I would connect it to alienation, as the possibility of difference.

P: I certainly think that the way in which you speak about the unknown has much to do with the notion of unpredictability in open systems. Both Luba and William (as you note) have acknowledged this in different ways, and to varying degrees how the body is implicated in the evolution of the system. To put it more directly while *Badwater* may seem to be an estranged independent system of liquid flows, chemical exchange, and mineral crystallization, the mere breath of the human body within the exhibition space can affect the system: the chemical makeup of the air, and the level of moisture. Whereas in *Franconia Notch* the speed at which the sound moves is changed when the different bodies of varying densities enter and move through the installation. Where you feel this as a saturation of senses (*Franconia Notch*) and the distinguishing of separate entities through alterity/estrangement (*Badwater*), I tend more on seeing both as a systems of agents acting upon each other, then reconfiguring/changing (adapting), and therein lies the inherent unpredictability of this exhibition as an open system. Note, these adaptations may not be immediately perceptible, but nonetheless affect the behavior of the overall system.

X: Following on the perceptible, each installation operates different visualities. William's work uses geological processes, and a display that invites a detailed inspection. I feel attracted to look closely to understand how it works, to the shapes and textures of the sculptural elements, and perhaps this is an analytical approach, one that searches to know. Paradoxically, although we want to know, the installation evolves at such slow pace that makes it difficult for us to notice the changes. The display is similar to what we could find in a laboratory, it has a particular scientific presence. Luba uses sound, architecture, metals, glass, granite, and dry walls to create an immersive environment. I'm drawn into it, but I find it hard to differentiate each component.

The habitat in William's installation is populated by the sculptures and crystals. I'm a witness to the process organized by the artist, who works within nature, and while I might participate, as you mentioned, with my heat or breath, I feel estranged, as if I was an intruder into the life of someone else. Luba's environment is atmospheric, yet formed by materials, motors, microcontrollers, projectors... The use of light has an immersive quality, it submerges you, and the intention is to situate us inside, to make us participant and to vibrate with it.

So, they both articulate a position of the public from different visual intentions. The capacity of art to capture our senses and attract us, has historically been a key factor, as implies a political intention and a particular idea of the subject. There is a link on how we see and how we position ourselves in the world, it is ideological, it is also about domination and hierarchy. At the same time, or because of this, they are both engaged in forms of connectivity that are not only visual. We should think on the embodiment of sound, or on the micro variations of the crystallization as shared processes that make evident how we are part of these systems. So, the installations make us present and positions us as open entities in connection with the surroundings, in a moment when the political context (characterized by isolation, depression, and intoxication) wants us dormant.

P: I think it is interesting that you have focused on different levels (perhaps even categorical) of sensorial perception, especially visible-invisible. At first this accounts for just vision, but when we speak of invisible this can account for any number of senses, concepts – or systems – that are not immediately perceptible. You speak of William's work eliciting a more analytical approach, perhaps tapping into how we approach hard sciences whereas Luba's has a seemingly more sensorial quality. I am not reiterating this to say that you are presenting a duality between an analytical read and the level of more or less immersivity nor am I saying that approaching the exhibition as a complex system somehow implies universality (or universal agency). Rather, this to me is a relevant return to process philosophy, Whitehead, and those that follow with systems thinking, because a core tenet of this line of inquiry not only breaks down dualisms between the "hard" and "soft" sciences but also exemplifies their interdependency.

This is similar to how I see the productivity of being both immersed and analytical. One way we may think of the political implications of systems thinking: the inherent unpredictability of an open system. We are not just prepared for and aware of the inherent unpredictability of a given complex system (here the works, the exhibition, our collaboration) but that we involve unpredictability into the process analyzation and action. By this I mean that we cannot determine the outcomes of the system –even though we know how it works—but we can adapt more quickly to make more effective changes towards our end goals. We are *immersed* within an unpredictable system but we are also able analyze from within, problem-solve, adapt and change. So the challenge is, with political motivations, to set up the conditions for or stimulate the emergent properties of complex adaptive systems like self-organization (not yet discussed here) to create new institutional configurations. In order to attempt to further this line of inquiry within a contemporary art context I must make the similar shift that Whitehead made (and a more developed): its moving from a materialism to an emergent-systemic ontology. Maybe I have gone too far?

This conversation is in anticipation of the publication for *A Continuous Stream of Occurrence*.

