

Päättymätön prosessi / Ändlös process / Procés sense fi / Proceso sin fin / Endless Process

María Alcaide, Diego Diez, Roberta Lima, Agnès Pe, Harri Piispanen, Anne Roininen, Víctor Ruiz Colomer + Joe Highton, and Alexander Salvesen.

Curated by Xavier Acarín

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A long, long, time ago, back in 1971, a French conceptual artist named Daniel Buren wondered about the role of the studio. *Was the studio the unique place of production and the museum the unique place of exhibition?* Buren identified two models of studio, “the Parisian and the American [sic]”, and set about to analyze them. He considered the productive system of studio-oriented artistic practices, as well as the economic relations and seductions that were played from and within the studio. From electrical and natural lighting to commercial tactics of display, Buren dissected the studio with irony and savviness. He described how work produced in the studio was isolated from “the real world” and how its separation from this origin was understood as a tragedy. In some cases, displaced work might even become something unanticipated by its maker, ending up supporting “the financial interests and the dominant ideology.”

Buren foresaw how contemporary art would become an aesthetic regime, serving as a sensitive and sensorial background to the forthcoming globalization. Ruled by a series of more or less standardized procedures, discourses and routines, contemporary artists are today the heroes and villains of neoliberal economies. They are hackers, designers, activists, and entrepreneurs, whose work stations have diversified, from laptops on kitchen tables to outsourced production and trans-disciplinary research teams. All these multiple variations of the artist allow us to take a snapshot of contemporary art as composed network, an inter-relational field of agents that influence and validate each other. Similarly, contemporary art, the work itself, has followed a similar path towards networked environments, where agents interact in the production of a code that in turn affects them, thereby changing their status. This is the space of performativity, of the continual making of entities that engage and intra-act with each other. And this has also been identified with indeterminacy, as a compositional method, or principal, where the artist sets up the conditions for something to happen, and where the viewer becomes a participant, co-author, or actor within the performative field. Buren's aforementioned text, *The Function of the Studio*, came to signify the post-studio condition of art during the *dematerialized years of the expanded field*, when the logic of indeterminacy disrupted modern aesthetics. The work was now open beyond its contained limits and presentness, and was ready to question the conditions of its own making and those of its reception, including the market (despite the art market not being the same as today).

Site and practice appear to be interlinked; beyond site-specificity, the space of making brings together the conditions of production and those of consumption. There is a long chain of interconnected steps that shows how the process of making is an unlimited continuous flow that does not end at the artist or the work or the viewer. Buren mentioned the in-situ as location of production, where the work has an intrinsic character of process that renders the energy behind each *in-situ-ation* (insinuation?) palpable. The narrative of the artist working outside the studio aimed to open the limits of creativity and authorship and incite a series of practices that have come to define contemporary art for the past fifty years.

However, as Margaret Thatcher once said, “the heresies of one period always become the orthodoxies of the next”. And today’s contemporary art is what those dissident practices of the sixties and seventies had envisioned, a site of encounter and inclusion that is now used by mainstream powers to convey feel-good multiculturalism. The radical base of indeterminacy, its original critique of the spectacle, the predictable, and the conditions of production, today serve the standardization of sensibilities and educational initiatives. We know how behind each outreach project there is an aim to dissolve dissidence and divide those who have been traditionally excluded. We know how art museums play a key role in colonializing the other (either human or material, from educating working classes to de-naturalizing art works and artifacts). And we know how art institutions are used to gentrify neighborhoods and displace communities. No surprises.

What then are the possibilities for an artistic practice that is aware of the role of contemporary art that is complicit with normative and established powers? Is it necessary to define it? Would the artist, as a cognitive worker in an immaterial field be capable of doing anything else? Is it necessary to do anything else? Is there any need at all to do anything at all? Perhaps, we should be hyper-aware of every step we take and approach it critically, like this text for instance. This is the usual text where the curator is supposed to demonstrate expertise and give a conceptual and historical background to the works that form part of the exhibition. It should persuade the public to go deeper into the understanding of the works and the artists, and give them references to analyze the work. This text follows a precise format, yet the curator can manipulate the format to the point of talking about formats and how we accept them without questioning – not only because we are used to them, but also because we need them. If there were no text accompanying the exhibition, the organizing institutions would feel that the curator was not doing his job. And perhaps now, if you are still reading this text, you might be asking yourself, what is this all about? The curator should provide you with a simple, straight forward sentence that shows the relevance of the theme and how this exhibition makes a special contribution to our contemporaneity. A compelling argument that will put you, as reader, viewer, participant, and co-producer at the center, and although the exhibition will disappear, it will (hopefully) continue living in your memory.

Yet, what is this all about? It is about how on this stage of globalization we are incapable of changing the conditions in which we live, how this situates us in a similar emotional ethos, as many other previous contexts of distress and disbelief. The absurdity of perpetuating the current system, while it has been proven to damage the environment and exploit humans

around the world, is like the absurdity behind the idea that we have to work, and that we have to perpetuate established forms of life. Instead, if life is a constant flow towards entropy, if everything perishes, and nothing is forever, we should be more attuned to movement and less attached to static forms. Life as the process of its own making.

We are living on the eve of a massive change in the organization of work due to automation and artificial intelligence which will increase unemployment and radically modify the relations between work and life. In the coming years, we can expect every job and sector to be reviewed in terms of functionality, utility and effectiveness. Some have argued for a better distribution of work, or for the implementation of a Universal Basic Income – Finland is a pioneer – as a way to adapt societies to this new situation, but can we imagine a post-work society when we are in the midst of an expansion of the gig-economy and the uberization of everything? This is a depreciation of working conditions that is mostly used by a segment of the population that is also affected by precariousness. We are actually surrounded by it, and lower-income classes are the principal clients of Deliveroo, Uber, Ikea, Ryanair, Task Rabbit (owned by Ikea), Walmart, and many, many others. Precarious jobs, which give us precarious lives, to buy precarious commodities... so goes the exploitative circle surrounding fragility as a shared state among entities. Trash-capitalism that blurs the divisions of life and work, and situates the subject, its identity and creativity as the base of economic profit. Instagramers are the new rock stars.

But if we were to question the structure of work (post-studio/post-work) and had the chance to distribute it, we would hear the words of Karl Marx whispering his famous quote into our ears, affirming how “in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.” It would be precisely this sort of non-specialized zone of shared and distributed activities that would imply a self-critique and self-awareness of each activity. How can we imagine distributing and sharing specialized professions such as doctors, engineers, or for that matter, artists? Would we all become artists after midnight?

When I started writing this text I thought that by now I would have found a clearer way to describe how artistic practice and economics are feed by the precariat. (Perhaps I didn't succeed, but hopefully you get the point). Contemporary art is unable to provide a critique to these conditions because it is embedded in the same system that creates them. If we want to generate a critique, we should perhaps do it from a different perspective, recognizing the privilege of our position and acting accordingly, emphasizing the contradictions and absurdities of every situation. By focusing on process as a movement that is more attuned to our ways of doing and thinking, we are underlining the ongoing creation, rather than the final product. The works included in this exhibition echo the anxieties and reflections behind the conditions of their making.

María Alcaide will perform her piece *The Happiest People in the World* during the opening. It has been especially created for this exhibition and is inspired by the inaugural speech (also known as “Wear Sunscreen”) written in June 1997 by Mary Schmich, which became one of the first viral contents distributed massively online, in this case by email. The essay was later used for a spoken word song in 1999 by Baz Luhrmann, which also became a very successful piece and captured the essence of the West in the late nineties. Alcaide has remixed the content, adding to and altering the message, expanding it to reach today’s visions on youth and future, relating them to the Finnish context.

In his drawing *Another Day (Studio Practice)*, **Diego Diez** references conceptualism while introducing a critique of the studio, situating it as site of boredom and inactivity. Diez has been analyzing the studio in its transmutation into an office-like location in the context of cognitive capitalism. His piece reflects a refusal to accomplish and deliver, giving value to other ways of making that use distraction as a primary state for creativity. The letters in the text are actually drawn by a machine and later filled by the artist using graphite, which situates the work of the artist as completing a given task.

Roberta Lima’s *Red Carpet / Comfort Zone* is a performance-installation piece that will be activated by the curator during the opening of the exhibition. In this piece, the artist signals at privilege and comfort as the position of contemporary art, which is closer to VIP and luxury items. The carpet will gather dust and residues left by visitors until the artist – on June 10 – will roll it back and place it in the gallery as a sculpture. The piece is extended online via a QR code, in this manner the artist appropriates commercial tactics that together with the carpet give us a sense of uncritical links between art, market, and glamour.

As part of ongoing research into ants and their habitats, **Agnès Pe** has recorded the sound of ants in the Valley of Ocón, in the Spanish region of La Rioja. This sound is the base for her installation *ANTS UNTO THE ANT GOD*, a nest-looking formation that “is a secure ant nest for sitting and listening”, encouraging an approach to these animals and their organizational system. While the artist references mythologies and deep listening, her piece initiates visitors into the sound space of other entities, making evident the un-heard (and un-seen) dimension of traffic and labor.

With *Hatwalk*, **Harri Piispanen** shows the performative character of subjectivity. The artist will wear a selection of hats during the opening, exhibiting how these function as props, transforming the ways we behave, move, and act. This piece elaborates on the free expression of individuals in intimate spaces; by transposing it into the gallery, the artist positions himself in an act of vulnerability that underlines the seclusion and isolation in which we live.

Tracing personal relations as a way of mapping the city from a different perspective is the origin of **Anne Roininen’s** work. In her on-going project *Social Mycelium / Helsinki*, the artist has documented the connections between citizens that disrupt the official narratives of social division. Roininen’s piece consists of a LED board sign, a series of photographs and a live-stream that will broadcast whatever happens in the gallery space to another location in Helsinki. By

exhibiting the activity within the gallery, the artist points to a critique of the autonomy of the gallery space.

Victor Ruiz Colomer + Joe Highton have designed a sculptural entity that moves and changes its compositional parts. By giving importance to movement, repetition, attempt, and organic growth, their piece converges the studio in the gallery, and allows for on-site production. *Siever Circle* has its own life insufflated by electric, organic, and artificial elements that co-exist and create a perpetual movement with no particular end. Parts of the piece have been installed in one of the windows, marking the skin of the gallery as a transparent yet complex surface where outside and inside merge.

Movement is also at the core of **Alexander Salvesen's** contribution to the exhibition. His series of work, *Black Hole*, comprises light installations that generate a sense of atmosphere while relating to a long genealogy of psychedelic practices. More like an immersive environment, his work provides a space to connect and play. Salvesen's concerns about ecology, together with his long time collaborations with musicians have provided a splendid opportunity to collaborate with **Agnès Pe** on this occasion. For the opening of the exhibition, both artists will merge in the production of a shared environment.

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List of works:

María Alcaide

The Happiest People in the World, 2018.
Performance-Installation, Video 6'15"

Diego Diez

Another Day (Studio Practice), 2018.
Drawing on paper, Graphite

Roberta Lima

Comfort Zone - Red Carpet Helsinki, 2018.
Performance-installation, Cloth and Metal

Opening performance by Aime Accorsi and Xavier Acarín. Roberta Lima will perform the second part of this piece on June 10, at 13.30

Comfort Zone - QR code stamp, 2017.
Object, Mixed media

Agnès Pe

ANTS UNTO THE ANT GOD, 2018.
Sound-Installation, Sand

Harri Piispanen

HatWalk, 2018.
Performance-installation

FlipSideDestroyer, 2017.

Wearable object, Recycled Materials,
Modelling Supplies

FortDaydream, 2016.

Wearable object, Recycled materials, Toys,
Tulle

LegHorny, 2016.

Wearable object, Recycled materials, Epoxy
resin, Artificial fur

Anne Roininen

Social Mycelium / Helsinki, 2018.
LED Board, Text, Photos
Live-Stream event on Sunday May 27, 13-
16.00 in Kippari Pub, Kontula Mall

Víctor Ruiz Colomer + Joe Highton

Siever Circle, 2018.
Mixed Media, Variable Dimensions

Alexander Salvesen

Black Hole I-III, 2018.
Light, glass, polycarbonate, filter