

# ¿Creative Villages?



Dessin de François Dey, 2016

**#2**  
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offer when one seeks empowerment by starting to think about how to do things differently. Instead of waiting to be rescued by spectacular art, facing an unsecure future, these few houses, its local church and cafe could become places in which one could locally engage in a different way with the aesthetics of instability and the existential question: What should be done?

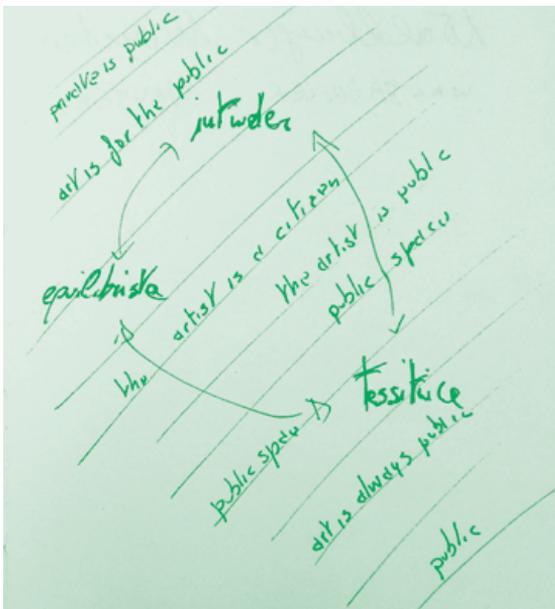
## LETTER TO ¿Creative Villages?

VALENTINA VETTURI

Dear Benoit,

I am writing this text in front of a Swiss lake. Yesterday I spent the afternoon at the Beyeler Foundation, walking among acrobats by Calder, shapes by Matisse, the weavers In Respite by Louise Bourgeois. Why the lake and why this private foundation?

Our seminar triggered this crucial question/matter: what is the role of an artist in public space? And while walking among these beloved works (and maybe also triggered by my deadline), I came up with these notes.



If art is for the (general) public and the artist is, first and foremost, a member of the Agora, what is his/her role?

It might be the position of the water I'm looking at now. It changes shape and infiltrates among the rocks even where they are narrow and difficult to reach. "Be water" and be able to assume the needed shape.

But how does one change shape and adapt without betraying? How to honour your research while changing and adjusting according to the new (public) commission? In my mind, I picture all the classical artworks I admire. The result of what now we call public commissions. I think of Giotto's frescos in Basilica di San Francesco, Cappella Cornaro and Fontana dei Quattro fiumi by Bernini, and others.

Time is my answer. Research goes on for years, crossing commissions as an opportunity to find the unexpected. The unforeseen that links the journey I am on, to a particular context. The surprising element that might enrich the path and form your research and your artwork.

I arrived in Switzerland last January with a grant while working on the hackers' world. I was supposed to stay three months, but the unexpected happened. I started to meet people and I received commissions that shaped my research and the artworks that came out of it.

And again, what is the position of an artist, or a curator in relation to this context?

I love to think it is the one Nancy describes in *L'intrus* while talking about the new foreign inside him, an implanted heart.

"The theme of the stranger in itself intrudes on our moral correctness (and is even a remarkable example of the politically correct). And yet it is inextricable from the truth of the stranger. Since moral correctness assumes that one receives the stranger by effacing his strangeness at the threshold, it would thus never have us receive him. But the stranger insists and breaks in. This is what is not easy to receive, nor, perhaps, to conceive..." Jean-Luc Nancy in *L'intrus* ed. Galilée, 2000

Can this position be the artist's one in the (public) space? Where public is intended as a potentiality of anywhere and anyone related to a given contest? I wish it were; it will.

Cordially yours,

the Intruder  
(aka Valentina Vettori)

Neuchâtel, 27 June 2016

## **SYNTHESIS OF THE SESSION**

### **ALEXANDROS KYRIAKATOS**

The *église* (church) in Montagnon is the space that the commune offered us as the location for our group meeting. The offering of this space is in accord with the memory of praxis embedded in the word *église*: that of a popular assembly (*Ecclesia*). Being in this space, which both constitutes and is constituted, we embarked on a free discussion on the interplay between the artist and the community. There were several current issues to clarify such as site specificity, production and all the necessary negotiations within collaborative projects. Inspired by the geographical position of Montagnon, located in midway between Leytron and Ovronnaz, we discussed the possibility of adopting an approach that is neither top-down nor bottom-up. Specifically, we found both non-context sensitive artistic production and social work-like production, that is art for the sake of the commune, to be inadequate. The position of the village, which was also the site of our discussion, at a midpoint, somehow prompted us to reflect on a bidirectional relationship between the artist and the community. We continued the discussion bearing in mind the difficulty that the word "community" brings to an artistic project, given the issue of demographics and participation of numbers of people. Another kind of definition started to emerge once one villager offered us cheese and the possibility of adopting a little goat. This simple gesture made it clear that the word "community" needs to be defined within the realm of social rela-

tionships, to the actual gesture of sharing and offering. The gift we received is an invitation to take part into a ritual of exchange, constructing a new meeting place between the artist/stranger and the community, the new and the familiar.

We reflected on our own contribution: did we give something back? It seems that our presence, our regard, the time and engagement did not go unnoticed. Indeed, for a while we might have been part of the community. And if that is the case, we do not need to give anything more, produced as a final work, but rather our presence, a *being there*.

We were informed that the land in and around Montagnon is floating in water, due to the high underground distribution of water of the area. The ground on which we stand is sliding, drifting, uncertain. We contemplated the disappearance of land, family, memory, language and that the artist is capable of making connections, piercing through absence and preserving lost traces. In the words of Malraux, only art can resist death. We agreed that we need to construct a space, a mental space to detach from the ordinary, a mental space where the imaginary could be inscribed as a collective production. This space where disappearance/resistance dialectics produce relations and expressions. We agreed that "useful" art retracts the very potential of art to exist. Art has the right to exist without obligations other than the responsibility to exist unappropriated, in affinity with the affect and the collective imagination. We propose that the final outcome will never be final, but an open-ended artistic process, in the form of a seminar that will constantly research ways to avoid instrumentalization. The proposed seminar will give the possibility for a collective reflection on art's proper content: resistance to disappearance and resistance by disappearance.

