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PORTRAIT OF ARTISTS WITH GROUPS

Romantic dream or strike force? Young artists are producing more and more collective working and visibly modifying the landscape.

1- New Distribution

However extensive the epidemic of groups in the 80s, most of these developed around defining their own identity. They worked in teams, as businesses or agencies, and identified with or simulated the media or other economic models. An almanac might best express the diversity of their attitudes. From incessant exposure of an identity to calling identity into question, through acronyms, logos, and credits, the group in the 80s became a sort of convention. However, being a group means more than sharing work, it entails adopting a common strategy: because a group is more than an addition of parts, it functions as a single machine. A second paradox follows, namely, that groups do not group, they disperse... Today’s groups are no longer satisfied with discovering and asserting their identities, they have developed through a variety of deconstructive modes. The spirit launched by General Idea in 1968, and carried on by Guerilla Girls, Tim Rollins and his Kids, or Gran Fury, is making points on the American Richter scale. Today’s Europe is also registering this seismic disturbance which comes in groups. A few groupuscular portraits in a shifting landscape.

2- Art in Ruins,
“Propaganda as Ready-Made”

Art in Ruins (1) may be a group, but they are first and foremost a demolition squad whose target is the last vestiges of the question of value. An image, a sort of trade name repeating itself, but Art in Ruins is above all a concatenation of attitudes applied to the deconstruction of the cultural residue left by the system of art. Appropriation, diversion, “detournement”, and re-contextualisation are the preferred instruments of their corrosive praxis. In their Domestic Arrangements, for instance, paintings and found objects receive the same treatment. Art in Ruins continually shoots back with received values that have been completely flattened. Their method is to play at boomerang and nothing escapes their treatment, not even politics. In a recent work on apartheid, the latter is considered as an advanced form of ready-made... In the ambiguous interval between demolition and paroxysmal parody, beyond simple cynicism, Art in Ruins functions as an emancipatory
3- A Strategy of Segments: Via Lazzaro Palazzi

Theoretically, they are eleven members, but Via Lazzaro Palazzi (2) can operate in subgroups, and each member continues to develop individual work. For Via Lazzaro Palazzi, the group is no longer a concept sufficient unto itself, but an active principal, a generator, wherein the duality of individual versus collective work is abolished. The group took their name from the street on which they opened their own space to short-circuit the gallery. And like a street, the group function as a flux, as energy in passing. Instead of avant-gardist breaks with the past or the statu quo, they believe in circulation and displacement, in setting up new links, in changing connections. Now that all of them are in a gallery, they continue using the group’s strategy by conceiving of their shows as totalities in which the author of each piece is identifiable but each piece is connected to all the others to form a network. The work is something between object and segment or piece of a puzzle, it is conceived as a vector and the show, as an itinerary. Thus, Via Lazzaro Palazzi intends to go far.

4- Dellbrügge/de Moll, the Museum stripped naked

These Berliners (3) construct each exhibition as an undressing of the place where it is held. At the museum of Freiburg in 1990, they exhibited the Museum’s hierarchy, from the curator down to the guard and round to the waitresses in the cafeteria. In 1991, at the Staatgalerie de Saarbrucke, they presented Souvenirs de la boutique du musée (souvenirs from the Museum Shop) and proposed post cards showing views of museum shops all over the planet. Dellbrügge/de Moll takes critical discourse – which is supposed to produce art’s added value – and exhibits it, thereby turning production procedures on their heads. In stripping the museum through exposing its...
segment, dans ce jeu de puzzle, l'œuvre est conçue comme vecteur et l'exposition pensée comme un itinéraire. On aura compris que de cette façon, *Via Lazzaro Palazzi* entend aller très loin.

4- *Dellbrügge/de Moll*,
le musée mis à nu

5- *Minimal Club*, situation maximale
Chez ces cinq jeunes munichoix, certains viennent du théâtre, d'autres des arts plastiques, et tous ensemble développent une production atypique qui repose sur l'animation. A l'ère des médias, *Minimal Club* (4) génère en fait des spectacles cri-

peripheries, in their productions turned upside down, *Dellbrügge/de Moll* continue to displace the meaning of art within today’s art system. Insofar as each of their pieces works as an economic reverser, *Dellbrügge/de Moll's* spirit is closer to Broodhaer’s than it is to Haacke’s in his museum contradictions or to the didactic manner of an Asher. With *Dellbrügge/de Moll*, the whole imaginary museum ends up in the shop.

5- *Minimal Club, Maximal Situation*
Of these five young artists from Munich, several have a background in theatre, others in the plastic arts, and together they generate an atypical production whose crux is in the event. *Minimal Club* (4) reacts to the prevailing influence of the media by producing performances with critical content. Any object they produce is theatricalised, this is an active manner in which to continue conceptual art today. Their accent on the event, on the side of art which is not material, is offset by the diversity in their production; on the margins of their work are journals, records, and other interactive elements which cannot be considered as works of art. *Minimal Club* functions as a network where genres and habits cross and cross breed according to the idea that artists can no longer propose objects alone, they must propose links, connections. *Minimal Club's* maximal situations modify our relationship to art.

6- *Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour, the rhizome collection*
The attitude of these two collectors (5) constitutes an ultimate phase in the deconstructive process: through appropriation and displacement, artist after artist, from David Vincent to Claude Lantier, from Duplo to Alexandre Lenoir, the collection becomes an exercise in fiction and takes on an infinite identity where the notion of author reaches the most advanced phase of dissemination. Thus,
tiques, en deçà de l'objet, cette théâtralisation de l'art se veut une façon active de poursuivre aujourd'hui le projet de l'art conceptuel. Pour autant cette immatériel-
le et singulière attitude est contrebalan-
gée par des productions multiples, à la
périphérie de leur travail : journal, disque, autant d'éléments interactifs qui
ne peuvent être considérés comme des
œuvres. Fonctionnant comme un réseau,
au croisement des genres et des habi-
tudes, Minimal Club avec son conceptua-
lisme théâtralisé sous entend que l'artiste
ne propose plus d'objets mais des rela-
tions. C'est du même coup, à travers ces
situations, toute notre relation à l'art qui
se trouve modifiée.

6- Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour,
la collection-rhizome
L'attitude des deux collectionneurs (5)
constitue une étape ultime dans ce pro-
cessus de désidentification : artistes après
artistes, de David Vincent jusqu'à Claude
Launier, en passant par Jacques Duplo ou
Alexandre Lenoir, la collection dans
l'exercice de la fiction met en place une
identité infinie, où la notion d'auteur vit
sa phase de dissémination la plus avan-
cée. Ainsi du Cercle Ramo Nash, qui à tra-
vers ses principes de « circonstance,
deplacement et recyclage » met en place
une stratégie, post-situationniste proche
du jeu de rôle. En sorte que cette straté-
gie du détournement est tout autant un
détournement de la stratégie. Ce qui

the Ramo Nash Circle, through its principle of
« circonstance, displacement and recycling » puts
for ward a post-situationist strategy resembling
the role-play situation. Thus, this strategy of
displacement is all the same a displacement of
strategy. The refore what is important is no
longer who plays the game but how to play
its. This principle allows the collectors to officiate
as the motors of an exemplary multiplicity. The
collection functions as a critical rhizome whose
identity is deconstructed through its own
proliferation. The supreme irony is here : that the
concept of the collection is what finally clears the
accounts of art's identity.

7- Shifting Borders
Groups in the 1980s provided a final focus on
the artist's identity. Today's groups, however,
operate as diffusers of identity and are
shifting art into an open and polyvalent phase.
It is therefore important to distinguish the
groupsbuscles from the herds. Groups are
replacing the modernist nominalism and
autology expressed by "this is art" with a
question, "is this still art ?". Their varied and
nomad practises deterritorialize, dismay, and
are redetermining the borders of art. It is as if
today's Europe had become a large
laboratory, an open terrain for experimenting
with the idea of art.

1- Art in Ruins (London), Formed in 1984,
members are Glyn Banks & Hannah Vowles.
2- Via Lazzaro Palazzi (Milano).
3- Dellbrugge/de Moli (Berlin).
4- Minimal Club (Munich).
5- Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour (Nice).