

TEMPORARY ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

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ETYMON AND DEFINITION

The adjective 'temporary' (1540s) means 'lasting for only a limited period of time; not permanent.' It derives from Latin *temporarius*, 'of seasonal character, lasting a short time,' from *tempus* (genitive *temporis*) 'time, season.' 'Temporal' (late XIV century) was the earlier word for 'lasting but for a time.'

The adjective 'artistic' (1753) derives from French *artistique*, from Medieval Latin *artista* and Latin *ars*, *ar-tem*, from the Arian root *ar*, which in Sanskrit it means mostly 'to go, begin, to move towards something' and/or 'bring closer,' and later also 'to adhere, arouse, adapt.' In Old Greek (New Testament) the transliteration ἄρτιος: *artios* means entirely 'suited, complete, in accomplishment, ready' and also 'perfect.'

The noun 'community' appears in late XIV century, from Old French *comunité* 'community, commonness, everybody' (Modern French *communauté*), from Latin *communitatem* (nominative *communitas*) 'community, society, fellowship, friendly intercourse; courtesy, condescension, affability,' from *communis* 'common, public, general, shared by all or many.' Latin *communitatem* was merely a noun of quality, meaning 'fellowship, community of relations or feelings,' but in Medieval Latin it was, like *universitas*, used concretely in the sense of 'a body of fellows or fellow-townsmen.'

It can safely be said that the notion of *temporary community* refers to various types of conglomerations of individuals that gather together, occupy a space and form a microcosm during a limited time, and having a particular characteristic, certain attitudes or interests in common. The formation of small communities within a larger one (society) may come as a result of different circumstances and reasons, which can be social, political or religious.

States of emergencies limiting irreversibly people's freedom and tragic events such as natural disasters and wars often cause people to abandon their place of origin, native lands and homes to seek refuge into distant elsewhere, dwelling in provisory settlements that give rise to one sort of temporary communities. These dramatic occurrences that generate forced displacement and migratory flows as consequences, in turn produce a number of situations, i.e. the formation of temporary communities in enclosed refugee camps regulated by the hosting countries, where people live the condition of sharing various necessities of life such as food and shelter. Temporary communities of this kind are often multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual.¹

A mission is different from a vision in that the former is the cause and the latter is the effect.

A mission is something to be accomplished whereas a vision is something to be pursued for that accomplishment.²

When we organize art projects that involve collaborative partnerships and are conceived on the idea of 'collectivity' and its values – solidarity, cohesion, like-mindedness, cooperation and mutual support –, we privilege to operate horizontally and heterarchically,³ that is that we don't just rely on common expectations or understandings of joint activities, but we consider the individual actions brought into accordance with these values of greater importance. In 2012, when we laid the foundations of the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK and its related Educational Learning Program, the ideal model of a *temporary artistic community* has been the one that we tried to accomplish, being one of the foci of the overall project that remained unchanged over time.

Though being aware that an ideal model is not always likely to become a reality, in the course of the years that model has grounded our mission and vision, helping us to communicate a sense of intended direction to the organizational team and all collaborators, partners, institutions, participating artists and those

who have contributed to the successful realization of three editions of the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK between 2012 and 2016.

However, we have never looked at the ideal model of the *temporary artistic community* that we structured as something absolute and easily replicable, but rather as a resilient, transformable, not complete, imperfect, uncertain, relative model with its own limitations, restrictions and exceptions. In other words, if to promote an ideal model of ‘community’ can be a determinant factor of its ultimate realization, in reality its constitution is always subjected to conditionings, encumbrances, impediments, obstacles, hindrances, preventions and obstructions. It is liable to be modified at any time, and often doesn’t come into effect immediately as we wished.

Situations that may result in being detrimental to the ultimate realization of a *temporary artistic community* are several: difficulties that may arise among the members to interact and relate to each other; accidents due to common human factors fallacies; unpredictable events that may occur along the process and can’t be solved in the limited time or escaping the effect of rapid monitoring. This is to say that for example it is not immediate that an x number of artists, stranger to each other or barely knowing each other, form a *temporary artistic community* just because they gather together in a x space and engage in x art-related activities for a fixed time.

Yet, the three terms ‘temporary,’ ‘artistic’ and ‘community’ combined together have always represented the aspirational description within the theoretical framework that provides guidance to our artistic research endeavour, for choosing current and future courses of action. They continue to inspire us to structure the line of work that we must undertake to fulfil our projects’ objectives, functioning as a filter to separate what is important from what is not.

*We neither strive for, not will, neither want,
nor desire anything because we judge it to be good;
on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it,
will it, want it, and desire it.*⁴

Upon conception of the project, we didn't rely on replicating the usual schematisms of hypertrophic art platforms as there are so many in the world, nor common performance art festival formulas. Because of the emergence of the Social Age, which is all about *human connections* and *social innovations*,⁵ we firstly thought of an art project that could mainly connect people, and where the expression of human values and social concerns would not be second to the artistic proposition of the project itself.

We envisioned this project as a gathering reunion among artists of different generations and cultures; a space of encounter and dialogue where to share our interests, exchange ideas, plan future joint activities, while spending qualitative time together; possibly – a common ground, an ideal territory where ethics and aesthetics converge.

Being performance artists ourselves, we chose performance art as the content and backbone to the project, because we consider its multifaceted practices the most appropriate to embrace vitally human values, and a tool to reflect from different perspectives on the social concerns that characterize the evolutionary and devolutionary processes of our human civilization and present times.

Veritably, for us it has been important not just to display selected pioneer performers' documentation (as our personal tribute to those artists whose lessons have been determinant to the formation of our own poetics) alongside contemporary performances in line with our curatorial focus, but indeed to shape a recognizable place of magmatic creativity, emanating intellectual freedom and a pervasive noble sense of humanity. A place not institutionalized, inspired by artists and inspiring, attracting new audience.

Only on condition of a radical widening of definitions will it be possible for art and activities related to art [to] provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline.⁶

Indebted to the theoretical hypothesis of the *Soziale Plastik* or *Soziale Skulptur* (Social Sculpture) by Joseph Beuys, we ideated the project as a possible model of *temporary artistic community* – A PEOPLE PROJECT,⁷ ‘CREATED BY THE INITIATION AND EXTENSION OF OWN IDEAS TO DESIGN THE SPACES WHICH WE HAVE TO CALL.’⁸

Perhaps performance art and art in general can only symbolically serve as avant-garde counter-models to conventional perspectives and positions. And ‘concern’ here does not mean political art or the spreading of messages, but the intentional, the will within art. Therefore art can only be touching ‘well’ and moving ‘freely’ if its responsibility is not only to equip a space for presentation, but mostly to shape the world as we mean and envision it, albeit temporarily,⁹ while offering opportunities to many individualities to meet in such a way that their visions are enforced also in virtue of the collective, so that each vision’s impact with the outside increases.

With this in mind and not having access to public funds to support the project, the only currency we had was to communicate clearly our urgency, so that all those who we approached with the invitation to engage in it (artists, collaborators, volunteers, in-kind supporters, donors, etc.) could be inspired and stimulated to reflect on how much their own contribution would be decisive and existential for the realization of an art project of a different kind – MADE BY PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE, and not just for the sake of art.

At the conclusion of the first edition of the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK in December 2012, Singaporean artist Lee Wen portrayed the spirit of the project with these rewarding words: ‘This is not a circus, this not a show,

this not a biennale, this is a meeting of artists and people who looked for the pearls in the rivers of human civilizations and came to share what they found.¹⁰

We have continued on this same road until today, but with the completion of the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK *Trilogy of the Body* (*Hybrid Body – Poetic Body*, 2012; *Ritual Body – Political Body*, 2014; *Fragile Body – Material Body*, 2016) and four editions of the Educational Learning Program (2013 - 2017), we have also witnessed how much performance art has begun to be more and more institutionalized in order to fulfil objectives dictated by mainstream culture, as a way of entertainment also, risking to be turned into an orthodox art form emptied of its inherent quality of antithesis to cultural norms.

After seven years of activity, we now wish to confront new challenges. Insisting on the value of ‘collectivity’ and for the potential that the idea of *temporary artistic community*, cornerstone of the project’s foundation, has been demonstrating since its inception, we now see it crucial to turn the project itself into question, and ask ourselves about the effectiveness of performance art today:

How do we – performance artists – have to perform to respond to the increasing global state of emergency, and benefit our society without yielding to the flatteries of the dominant cultural power?

*Cooperation and compassion are our quintessential human capacities to address fundamental ethical issues such as inclusion, dignity, and equality.*¹¹

We developed our ideal model of *temporary artistic community* for the need of finding/creating a space of reflection where to share ideas on performance and existence matters, how to translate those ideas into performance (and consequently what to do with them) and extend that space to collaboration. To perfect and put into practice the ideal of the *temporary artistic community*, a great teamwork is fundamental. Agreements on the activities to undertake for the pursuing of common goals, cooperativeness, social attitudes, consensus on behavioural codes (individual and collective),

motivated participation, attentiveness, open dialogue and transparent communication, they are all qualities to the benefits of teamwork dynamics, and from there they propagate to all those who contribute and concur to the realization of a project.

The notion of ‘community’ pertains to the fields of ethics, social and political sciences. Hence it can be said that a *temporary artistic community* is about:

COOPERATION

To work together for a common purpose implies also demonstrating a willingness to engage and act with humility, inspiring others, supporting and nurturing co-creative processes, applying mutual assistance to contribute to implement internal cohesion, which is also about building the team’s capacity for collective action.

COMPASSION

The word stems from Latin *compassio* and stands for a willingness ‘to suffer with,’ being an ecclesiastical loan translation of the Ancient Greek *σὺμπάθειά* (*sumpátheia*, ‘sympathy’), from *σὺν-* (sun-, ‘with’) + *πάθος* (*páthos*, ‘suffering’) meaning a ‘fellow feeling,’ an ‘affinity’ likewise in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and also an ‘ardent observation’ and ‘affection’ likewise in William Butler Yeats. According to the definition of the word ‘compassion’ as ‘concern for the wellbeing of others,’¹² compassion can be regarded as a dynamic, processual and relational quality, where the acts of ‘noticing,’ ‘feeling’ and ‘responding’ each contribute uniquely to the realization and organization of a *temporary artistic community*, which as such can become for its members an experience with a radiating effect, extending kindness, empathy, generosity, acceptance, courage, tolerance and equanimity. To act with compassion can lead to a mindful awareness and understanding of who we and the others are, because it makes people feel listened to and recognized, and aids to feel less alone. Compassion is a ‘felt connection’ (either cognitively through perspective taking or

affectively through empathy) and ‘caring’ for others, often in communicative or behavioural ways.¹³ Whereas the artistic drive is an innate, determined urge to attain an objective, compassion can function as a propeller to fulfil greater quests by stipulating a clear focus onto the other.

SENSE OF BELONGING

It can be said that the sense of belonging is a human need and a common experience. Belonging also means acceptance.¹⁴ If people animated by a same aspiration and purpose gather and meet in a place for a destined period of time, to form a group and engage in specific activities to give shape to time-based artistic situations, a climax of reciprocity can spring up more easily. To operate within the mutual respect of the individuality of each member motivates participation and allows that the sense of belonging to the community increases. When there is motivated partaking and involvement there is also a more vigorous connection, as everyone in the community understands that their presence, proposal and service is determinant and can contribute to bringing to fruition something that could only happen this way. In terms of teamwork, it is the same when the competences of the team members are interchangeable, for they enforce considerably the sense of allegiance of each member to align organizational structure to the project’s stated mission, vision, creative strategy and objectives.

Each one of us has beautiful stories to tell. Sharing our differences and accepting them creates peace. At heart, everything revolves around the clarity and coherence of the narrative. Performance art focuses on people, life and society. In the first instance it is different from conventional art, in that allows artists to connect with others, people with people, and this is even more important than art itself. A performance can also be said to serve to propose to others how to reflect on and cope with something that the artist has experienced. Shared experiences can make a difference for others who have similar drives.

AWARENESS OF AFFECT AND JOYFUL PASSION

In the recent years, many areas of the humanities, social and environmental sciences have witnessed an ‘affective turn,’ mainly to respond to economic and ecological crises, the insurgency of populist and nationalist movements, identity politics and an array of political struggles.¹⁵

‘This new awareness of affect remains unthinkable without the pioneering work of Gilles Deleuze, who, following Baruch Spinoza, displaced the traditional opposition of reason and emotion with the new opposition between sad and joyful passions, which diminish or increase our capacity to think and act, replacing judgment with affect as the very movement of thought.’¹⁶

‘For Spinoza, affect constitutes the bare activity of the world.’¹⁷ Affects are ‘collective becomings, inseparable from, sensations, emotions, feelings, tastes, perceptions, beliefs, meanings, representations, orientations and opinions and all other forms of cognition.’¹⁸

Deleuze, putting passion at the core of thought, argues that it is through passion that we acquire our capacity of action and thus ‘the ability to produce concepts or what Spinoza calls common notions, which are adequate expressions of our communal being.’¹⁹ For Deleuze this is a question of emancipating the thought to socialize the passions in a *political body*. Therefore the liberation of thought is a becoming active of passion, which always involves joy, since ‘there is a necessary joy in creation.’²⁰

The awareness of joyful passion is a constructive and beneficial feeling. One can almost experience it as an epiphany. It surpasses truth as ultimate criterion of judgment, and is that which shifts us closer to our will and endeavour to set out and make our wishes come true.²¹

**ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF TEMPORARY ARTISTIC COMMUNITY:
THE EDUCATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM
OF THE VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK**

*There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.'*²²

In reality, nothing lasts forever. All is temporary, transient. Yet, within this global scenario of constant uncertainty, temporariness has likely become an important means of maintaining cultural production,²³ notably within those artistic areas considered to be the most precarious and less commercial, such as performance art's, which is ephemeral in its very nature, it refers to the immaterial but carries 'the potential to put pressure on art value systems to dislocate fixities and refuse commodification.'²⁴

Short-term, openly-accessible intensive laboratorial activities and temporary learning groups seem to be a logical outcome in times of economic austerity. They form fast. They bring strangers desirous of knowledge and practice together, people who sense the present critically. They enforce a collective understanding of the immediate exigency to resist,²⁵ and engage the participants in culture-making processes 'at the point where resistance is overcome.'²⁶

Paying homage to *T.A.Ž.* by Hakim Bey, *independent temporary autonomous zones of co-creation* can be thought of as constructive alternatives to usual academic and other institutionalized settings. They function as antidote to the norms of cultural hegemony and the culture of control that surround our everyday lives, influence our thoughts, expectations and behaviours, reflect interests and manipulative assumptions of the ruling classes via social institutions in form of education, media, family, religion, politics, and law and drastically reduced freedom because one has

to conform to their established rules, roles and tasks.²⁷ At this moment in time, the formation of *temporary artistic communities* and *temporary learning groups* is also a socio-political matter.

On December 2012, we founded the Educational Learning Program of the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK,²⁸ foreseeing it as a liminal territory where emerging artists could exercise, embody and perform creative ideas in absence of external pressure, therefore with less hindrance of the mind. To shape a formative path based on our ideal model of *temporary artistic community*, we entrusted our social drive²⁹ to pass on to others this utopian vision, which has matured in us through our life experiences and years of consistent training and artistic activities, through lectures, workshops and live performance presentations held worldwide. During these production travels and tours, the encounters and collaboration with colleagues with whom we share visions of the aforementioned nature,³⁰ strengthened our motivation and demand to establish a common ground where to practice creative freedom and facilitate how to learn the making processes of performance art, rather than to concentrate exclusively on the final results of the processes themselves (the performance).

We coined the expression *temporary artistic community* further reflecting critically on the concepts of *Community Theatre*, *Social Theatre* (which methodological processes as experienced by us have a lot in common with performance art matters), and *therapeutic community*.

Community Theatre generally refers to performances made by professional artists in relation to a particular community, which mostly happen in ‘non-theatrical’ spaces, often involving members of that very community.³¹

Social Theatre is a theatre of research, where aesthetics is not a ruling objective but a tool for social development. It turns non-performers into performers, who come from the elsewhere-called ‘disadvantaged social categories’ and ‘marginalized minorities.’

Social Theatre promotes human rights. It addresses ideas like race and gender equality; advocates the causes and cases of people who face difficulties to be integrated into the social fabric; enquires into conflicts of the public and private spheres, contrasting the patriarchal mindsets of supremacy, property and repression.³² In the words of James Thompson and Richard Schechner, Social Theatre is the dynamic meeting of performance and social work, an interaction that can change both disciplines; a practice in time and place of crisis; an instrument of action and healing for communities to transform individual and collective experience into art through testimonial performances.³³

In the early 1970s, Community Theatre and Social Theatre practices have been partly developed from Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal's techniques known as the 'Theatre of the Oppressed',³⁴ and the philosophy of Brazilian education theorist Paulo Freire. Boal's theatre practices and Freire's theoretical and pedagogical approach both attempt to stimulate social change by encouraging people to build capacities for critical thinking through participation in active dialogue, and call for a radical inclusion of the audience members into the performance so to become performers themselves.³⁵

*Beauty seems to be recounting the mystery of life,
with some limited discretion in its needs, and moderate in its desires.*

*Beauty that moves without provoking,
doesn't fulfil its consequence, knows how to keep its secrets.*

*Beauty that doesn't judge but where anything is a mirror,
a diamond in the rough that you find when you fall down.³⁶*

The third fundamental experience that led us to forge our ideal model of a *temporary artistic community* was the one of the therapeutic community.³⁷ Here we don't want to praise the validity of therapeutic communities, because every structure has its pros and cons, but we aim to highlight some of the foundational aspects and principles on which therapeutic communities are based and which have inspired us to form VestAndPage's ideal model of the *temporary artistic community*.

The concept of therapeutic community initially arose as an open criticism of the established total institution, turning rigid hierarchical organizations with vertical relationships into horizontal structures with a comparable relationship between users (and all those being received) and healthcare professionals.³⁸ To establish an open, forthright and beneficial relationship between the staff of operators and the users involved in the community work and activities as an essential element of the treatment method, also serves decision-making processes that maintain the sense of community. This relationship is based on the principles of democracy, permission, participation and open communication. It presupposes the necessity of alliance between all the community members to share aims and objectives and create dynamic verifications, which are used as transformation factors that allow the individual to acquire more skills and 'soft skills.'³⁹ The community life also implies a pedagogical aspect, providing regular analysis of and feedback on the relationships between the members, their behaviour and activities. It promotes social cognitions by proposing customized paths that take into account the specificity of the cultural and social background of each user. Within this frame, the respect for oneself and for the other is not only to attribute value to the individuality and necessities of each single one. It becomes a tool that encourages the users to take responsibilities and feel to be the 'masters of themselves,' also when sometimes doubting that this is even possible.

Therapeutic communities are often defined as provisory shelters because a person has no other place to go in that particular moment of his/her life. This definition may be too general, for they are actually structures where deluded people have the opportunity to understand the necessity of defending the sense of personal identity, instead of corrupting and dissolving it through self-harming lifestyles, auto-victimization or self-denial. What is worth noting is their main aspect, that is to put the individual in relation to other individuals in a propositive confrontational dialogue, to assess their own differences, accept the ones of the others, eventually renouncing the seemingly almighty demands of the ego, which oppresses the Self.⁴⁰

By interlacing the essential propositions of Community Theatre, Social Theatre and therapeutic community, we forged our ideal model of *temporary artistic community*, on which we founded the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK and its Educational Learning Program.

In a city like Venice, contemporary art is mainly dictated by the cultural hegemony of major international cultural institutions (and not only) and by the commercial logics of powerful art galleries and enterprises. So to not become institutionalized ourselves, and to keep our idea of performance art as a free, independent art practice and research vital, we deem appropriate to give the utmost importance to the investigation of creative processes that lead to performance-making in a context of creative sharing, in this way also re-shaping our ideal model of *temporary artistic community*. For this to happen, we have come to the conclusion that the next step is to transform the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK into a CO-CREATION LIVE FACTORY, conceived as a transformative space that hosts creative inquiry and diverse performance practices, implementing connections, collaborative creations and convergences, and enforcing all those key aspects described above.

*Transformation means change is not just occurring on the surface,
but at the level of the basic tenets of an age's worldview,
what we might call its 'deep structure.'
We are the transformation, and our choices and actions,
our ways of being, relating, knowing, and doing,
contribute to the direction the transformation will take.⁴¹*

As artists, through thoughts we create worlds. If every choice, belief, idea, action and interaction is a reflection of how we live our lives and inform our approach to art, the fact of being together and relating to, recognizing and acknowledging one another, can assist us to better frame and improve our understanding of the world, which is also the main reason why we perform in first place. Creativity implies the responsibility to choose and actively

decide in which way to acknowledge the current transformative moment, which ‘one way to frame it is as a form of global identity crisis,’⁴² developing agency by consciously participating in it. To give this change a direction that allows individuals to embody higher values, for we as artists it also means to engage with our ideals, hopes and concerns in transformative processes. This may happen by mobilizing our creativity, while focusing on socio-cultural elements of the wider society, although the complexity of the current uncertain and precarious situation, which seems to be irreversible, does not lend itself to easy answers and perhaps ultimately cannot be solved.

In the post-truth era of mainstream media and ‘fake news,’ unceasing international conflicts, tragic migration flows and sustained war tensions have become commonplace. Deep state secretive powers and cagey surveillance are no more conspiracy theories, but an incontrovertible matter of fact. The policy of terror perpetrated by many governments against their own citizens responds to a much wider design to annihilate the ability of people to think and act autonomously. Resurgent extremist political movements alimeted by the false pretence to curb the negative effects of globalisation, are fomenting instead separation, nonsensical hate, discrimination and violence again and again. All this seems to conjure to castle the human spirit and the progressive thinking that favour civil liberties and open to changes, behind a wall of diffused scepticism and feeling of helplessness.

Instruments such as protest, public discourse and criticism are surely valuable, but probably they are not enough to reject the viral propagation of devious trends and outbreaks on all levels of society, because changes can’t happen without the emergence of new meaningful alternatives. The fact is that capitalistic societies still push people to drive for that materialistic bullshit, in order to acquire, consume, discard and succeed, even though the chimeric idea of success has already been surpassed. Yet, those who still have a vision and yearn for knowledge, who believe in themselves as well as in the human being and the others, those who still hope for societies to change, progress and evolve, should interweave in

multiple processes of communication and interaction that endeavour to convey the immediacy of their experiences, determine positive values, clarify understanding and maintain the treasure of their identities while operating for a ‘culture in motion.’

Choosing to enact our ideals, to make sense of our own experiences by means of art is due to the imperativeness of foreseeing and creating the future while being in the present, because of the lack of positive, compelling views of the future.⁴³ Or at least to reinvent our present and to make a difference (while reflecting seriously about what ‘difference’ here means) such as an effective, valuable contribution to oppose the dominant ethical flattening, stalled demands, oppressive pressures and all those regressive aspects that afflict contemporary societies, that we feel we can no longer accept.

To combine personal and social transformation to be more personal, as well as more social,⁴⁴ coincides with directing our spiritual and psychological drives – such as the desire of self-actualization, the need for achievement, belonging, motivations based on thought patterns, social influences and sense of justice – to surpass traditional and hierarchical binary assumptions, while looking at interconnected processes of co-creation as emerging alternatives of our times.⁴⁵

This requires a ‘radical approach’ in the most etymological sense of the word – that is, of going to the roots of the issue.

It is to move along the verge of right-doing and wrong-doing, to challenge assumptions, and to continue questioning what really matters; what it means to be human; what the role of the artist is today; what an artist can be capable of in contributing to a better society, even by having nothing, with *no-thing*, but just being him/herself; what it means to know; and how we – as artists – can relate to each other and to the others in time of crisis.

*Our thinking is ruled by a profound and hidden paradigm
without our being aware of it.
We believe we see what is real;
but we see in reality only what this paradigm allows us to see,
and we obscure what it requires us not to see.*⁴⁶

Clustered around the concept of *temporary artistic community*, the new project format of the CO-CREATION LIVE FACTORY wishes to be a challenging quest into the unknown, for there's no assumption of achievement or completion.

It is a collective journey of *relational artistic creativity*.

It is a participatory process of *collaborative creative inquiry* to facilitate understanding about who we are, and which new kind of relationships we can interlace to connect creatively our socio-cultural backgrounds and personal identities through performance-making processes.

Theoretical physicist Paul Davies argues that 'creativity' is the fundamental nature of the universe, and that we human beings are part of this intrinsic creativity of the universe.⁴⁷ If creativity emerges also from visions and dreaming, and dreams themselves shape different aspects of the creative process, in terms of poetic acceptance it might be said that the intrinsic creativity of the universe is substantial to the universe's dreaming. Hence, more so we are part of the universe's dreaming, that is, paying tribute to Shakespeare, *we are such stuff as the universe's dreams are made on.*⁴⁸

With respect to Edgar Morin's theory on complexity and the view of Davies of the 'creative universe,' transdisciplinary scholars Alfonso Montuori and Gabrielle Donnelly have inquired into the application of creativity and its transformative potential in terms of consciousness, social change and innovation, to better understand how to live in a complex, pluralistic and uncertain world. They refer to contemporary man as a 'creature and creator in creation' whose 'creativity does not have to manifest in earth-shattering revolutionary ideas, but in a greater *response-ability*, de-

automatization and less unquestioned reliance on rote, habitual responses. It is the ability to participate with greater freedom and openness to change, to create more choices and act upon them, there where creativity is the way in which a human being expresses and generates his freedom to make it possible for others to do so as well.⁴⁹

Creative inquiry focuses on the relationship between theory, action, analysis and practice. It is an on-going reflection on concepts of being, knowing, acting, and relating (to one or more contexts). It is a continuous exploration of the processes of personal, interpersonal, organizational, communitarian, social transformation and their interconnections. But to understand the concept of transformation, we must first understand to what extent history has informed our way of thinking, feeling and acting. Revising the past to reconsider the present, imagining alternatives to embody the future, invites us to develop a complex relationship with knowledge and how we should engage in the world. Hence for an artist, to inquire creatively down cognitive pathways means to find a sense for him/herself, the others and the world in non-reductive, non-simplistic but not incomprehensible ways. It means to understand one's own potentials and limits, looking at the process of becoming as an unabated process of self-creation, triggering a relentless integrative dialogue between complexity and simplicity.⁵⁰

Thinking, acting, reflecting, analysing and practicing in creative participatory contexts, offers the opportunity to learn, test, shape our ideas, and may lead us to make headway for further practices to address new areas of growth. When our thoughts are embodied in our actions and inform our practices, the theoretical dimension of art making processes is enriched. Although it may sound like a paradox, to intertwine our emotional intelligence and analytical intelligence allows us to intimately perceive, understand and then challenge the binary system of modernity that has led to excessive polarization (ossification and inflexibility) and opposition (irreversible contrast) of thought.

Being a relational, participatory and non-closed, pliable situation, the *temporary artistic community* can offer opportunities to shape our understanding and manifest it in a variety of interactions and directions, inspiring in turn new generative contexts. Crucial to this process is to foresee the directions in which creative interactions move and which values they may reflect. It is to navigate along the liquid strata between the actual crisis and the artistic momentum with *Begeisterung* (the Hegelian ‘enthusiasm’ integral to inspiration and as antidote to delusion and disillusion) to find harbours where creativity emanates and transformation can come forth more fully.

If the role of the performance artist is to explore the unfamiliar; subverting pre-existing schemes; addressing fears and how they could be overcome; raising questions where it seems that there are no clear solutions yet; searching for unstructured situations to find new ways of interpreting reality by creating alternatives to systems and structures that are collapsing under our eyes, the creative act should be a *total act* in the definition given by Grotowski ‘not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.’⁵¹ Therefore also as an *act of courage* as a direct translation of the human drive to be free, indeed: to create to be free.⁵² This *act of courage* implies ‘independence of judgment, preference for complexity, psychological androgyny, tolerance for ambiguity, openness to experience, and refusal to conform and superimpose existing interpretive frameworks on situations and individuals.’⁵³ Because creativity subverts and disrupts conventional patterns, it may cause discomfort, but it is precisely for this reason that it can also grow to be an opportunity for mutual support among artists and therefore among people.

CONCLUSION

*They spread doubt about our beliefs,
our abilities, our motives, our institutions,
our sanity, our loves, our laws... even our alliteration...
and have grave doubts about our attitudes.⁵⁴*

Does to perform also mean to make the invisible visible, and the impossible possible, looking at the past to not repeat it, and embodying futures that barely exist? Is it so, for ‘time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future’?⁵⁵ Or because perhaps time present is shaped by both time past and time future, and since it is ephemeral, it needs to be endlessly reinvented?

Precedents for performance art, existing within the larger community, might be traced back to the ancient origins of shamans, medicine men, masters, oracles and witches who were regarded as persons who had access to secret knowledge that allowed them to practise healing, propitiatory rites, divination or cast spells. In the medieval era it was the unconventional wisdom of seekers likewise alchemists, magicians, monks and priests. Then the jesters, tricksters, heyokas, dreamers, storytellers and ballad singers – the holy fools, the wise fools, the Sacred Clowns, who, though they were often considered to be borderline people, were capable to exhibit a great degree of intellect, and used it to publicly speculate on truth, power, deities and the intricacies of man’s corporeal, spiritual and mental constitution, to disobey conventional rules and moral behaviours in order to shake up the existing orders within their communities.

Fundamentally, the Sacred Clowns portray the Path of Life with all of its pitfalls, sorrows, laughter, mystery, and playful obscenity. They dramatize the powerful relationships of love, the possibility of catastrophe; the sorrow of separation and death; the emerging consciousness of human beings entering into life – into this world – as ordinary beings with non-ordinary potential. They show the dark side; they show the light side; they show us that life is hard; and they show us how we can make it easier. If death takes everything away when it robs an individual of life, then the Clowns must be able to combat death in mock battle and wrestle life back again.⁵⁶

The truth intuited by the Sacred Clown is the one of the interconnectedness of all Life. He sees every thing as part of a larger reality, transient and impermanent. He calls into question our entire understanding of ourselves. He digs into the doubt with no hesitation to reach the core of the issue. His trust is so pure that nobody can corrupt it. Because of this, he is forced into the role of a rebel or madman, an almost obligatory position within a broader community from where he could be easily dismissed, but at the same time not go unheard.

There are some similarities between the Sacred Clown of yesterday and the performance artist of today. Like birds, they need to live according to their nature otherwise they will die inside. They can't be propertyed and controlled. Like the Sacred Clown of yesterday, today's performance artists don't hesitate to articulate what has to be said, showing what the given language and other orthodox artistic forms of expression do not yet know or are unable to utter. Their truth takes the unsaid across the realm of the paradox to free it from sedimentation and petrification. Their creative force can arouse speech from its slumber, as a sign, as an image – carrier of meanings, for our languages are not enough to say all that should be said.⁵⁷ Performance artists actuate forms of rebellion within an aesthetic proposition. Their art actions undermine the schemes of a ruling culture allotted to rational thought. They express ways of *civil disobedience* that take root in the poetry of life itself. They appeal to the essence of being – artists – people *in revolt* that can't do without 'a strange form of love.'⁵⁸ After all, those visionary artists and creative people who work 'to lessen the distance between their kind and the others; they so often assure us that every man is a poet at heart and that the last poet will not perish till the last man does.'⁵⁹

*A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority;
it is not even a minority then;
but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight.⁶⁰*

Contemporary art is no longer contained within the idea of

community as it was in the times of the Sacred Clowns. It is separated and to a large degree kept separate. But if contemporary art barely conforms with anything that was, and however we still consider it essentially a tool to plant seeds for peaceable revolutions, we should not resign from the duty of making our art as a counter-act of courage, a mission *à rebours*, and from there to begin again, ‘for it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever.’⁶¹ It does not depend solely on the will to act, but because to act *has to be done*. To act meaningfully, it is indispensable that we look inward before moving forward, cruising the seas of our consciousness, its edges, to find different ways of expression to make ourselves be understood. To examine the periphery of the value of our perceptions, actions, principles, changes and relations, makes us aware that anything that will be acknowledged will never be final and always changing. It calls us to measure our shifts of consciousness – individually and collectively – in front of world’s events, and to take a stand when we – people of vision, people of hope – discern and witness an increasing severity of flaws in the social systems. Within this perspective, the *temporary artistic communities* may also be intended as *communities of consciousness* open to the outside.

What contributes to making the *temporary artistic community* efficient is not just the sense of *togetherness* that permeates it, which if it is too strong can turn the community itself into an exclusive and elitist system. It is the transparent open dialogue, productive confrontation of ideas, and *mutual trust* – a trust among its members that acts not as reliance or attitude, ‘is not to be erected on happiness or good experiences alone,’ and is ‘not something caused, but is something developed.’⁶²

Another fundamental key aspect necessary to favour free creative dynamics within the *temporary artistic community*, is that it needs to be an *institutionally independent, openly accessible and self-sustainable* space for people to join to produce art as a way of surviving the on-going cultural, social and economic crises ‘caused, ironically, by those very industrial and technological advances that were once viewed as the engines of progress, whether technology,

capitalism, or communism.⁶³ Artists with extensive artistic and pedagogic experience can play a central role in the formation of new *temporary artistic communities*, offering their expertise to further learning situations through specific instructional techniques to the benefit of younger ones. However, to facilitate committedly and with commonality of intent might be not enough, because it is not just through precise in-formative toolsets that we can transform individual and social conflicts into a creative force. It is above all by taking full responsibility to embody all those human values and qualities that art needs today – to be openly accessible, embraced and appreciated by more people. Those values, which don't cause separation among human beings and are indispensable to live in harmony with each other, such as openness, respect, care, dedication, reciprocity, patience, tolerance, acceptance. Indeed, the very essence of life is not just all nature, but moreover *evidence of compassion, altruism*, which imply the *art of listening* to anguish, grief, annoyance, suffering, anxiety, and ultimately joy, to become masters of our Selves and hosts for the others.

Temporary artistic communities, as any fruitful relationship, can only function if we apply what in German language is called *Wertschätzung*, literally translated into 'treasuring one's value,' that is to recall the inner position of one toward the other on a base of respect, esteem and appreciation.

Temporary artistic communities should be places/spaces/situations where artists gather, experiment free creativity, figure things out by trial and error, 'there where the broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it,'⁶⁴ and where the concept of competition makes no sense. Places/spaces/situations that invite us to take the risk to put into play our subtle energies (or *subtle bodies*)⁶⁵ and vital force to contribute to the realization of a climax of steady *empathy* (the ability to understand and share the feelings of another).

Subtle energies guide our states of consciousness, perception, memory, emotions, thoughts, creativity, as well as our physical body, its organs and systems. They drive us to be curious, inspired,

motivated, intuitive, flexible and spontaneous. They make us aware that to be in the moment is also an opportunity to develop competencies beyond rule-based expertise. They stimulate us to be able to create on the spot, in a play of constraints and possibilities, and to look at the whole of a situation rather than merely focusing on one of its parts. Eventually they lead us to explore creative paths where the degree of personal responsibility and freedom is much greater.

To activate consciously our subtlest energies in an honest and humble way is however an arduous task, because it encompasses the emergence of a crucial emotional aptitude with the analytical thought beyond self-assertion. To scale up our emotional intelligence is not just a process of recognizing and understanding who we are, but rather of handling relationships, inspiring, connecting, communicating openly (therewith effectively), and *empathizing* with others to overcome seeming separations, distances, challenges or defuse conflicts. It is to open the doorway – of our bodies, through our bodies, and from the inside to the outside and vice versa. This way, we can retain and honour together what is wise to be learnt and unlearnt.

NOTES

- 1 M. Taibi and U. Ozolins, *Community Translation*, London, New York, Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 95.
- 2 'Mission Statement,' *Business Dictionary*, [website], 2017, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/mission-statement.html> (accessed 25 August 2017).
- 3 A heterarchy is a system of organization where the elements of the organization are unranked, non-hierarchical and share the same 'horizontal' position playing a theoretically equal role. K. Gretschmann and S. Schepers (eds.), *Revolutionising EU Innovation Policy: Pioneering the Future*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 16. About organizational structures that embrace the notions of emergence, heterarchy and shifting roles, see: K. Stephenson, 'Neither Hierarchy nor Network: An Argument for Heterarchy,' *People and Strategy*, vol. 32, no. 1, New York, HRPS, pp. 4-13.
- 4 B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. E. Curley, London, Penguin Classics, 1996, IIP:9S, p. 76.
- 5 Computer scientist and Cloud innovator Maria Azua defines Social Age as the contemporary time period that encompasses both societal and technological changes, succeeding the Information Age. Social Age gives more prominence to social factors, interactions, collaboration, sharing, including online relationships. M. Azua, *The Social Factor*, Indianapolis, IBM Press, 2009, p. xix.
- 6 Infused with both political intention and social values, Beuys' vision of an utopian society is based on the concept that every aspect of life could be approached and processed creatively, therefore that everything is art, and, as a result, everyone has the potential to be an artist. J. Beuys, 'I am searching for Field Character,' dated 1973. First published in English in C. Tisdall, *Art into Society, Society into Art*, London, ICA, 1974, p. 48.
- 7 We borrowed this definition from the artwork statement and logo 'KUNST Is The People Project' by German artist and curator Martin Mlecko (mentor and best friend of Andrea Pagnes). Mlecko's words: 'I happened to visit London where I saw this sign that reads "The People's Project." It hung outside a shelter for the homeless. And I thought that is what art is: created by people for people; it's a people's project. So I came up with this "Kunst is the People's Project," and under this logo I did a few different things.' K. Oikonomakou, 'Martin Mlecko: We have all betrayed Berlin,' *Conversations with artists and thinkers – Berlin Interviews*, [website], 2014, <http://berlininterviews.com/?p=997> (accessed 26 August 2017).
- 8 M. Mlecko, *KUNST IS THE PEOPLE'S PROJECT*, [website], 1991-98, <http://www.thing.de/shift/mlecko.html> (accessed 26 August 2017).
- 9 K. von Keitz, 'Was soll die Kunst können?', *KUNST IS THE PEOPLE'S PROJECT*, [website], 1998. <http://www.thing.de/shift/mlecko.html> (accessed 26 August 2017).
- 10 L. Wen, 'There was no beginning... ..Since there was no end,' *Republic of Daydreams*, [web blog], 23 December 2012, <https://republicofdaydreams.wordpress.com/2012/12/23/there-was-no-beginning-since-there-was-no-end/> (accessed 26 August 2017).
- 11 K. Schwab, 'A global platform for global issues,' *World Economic Forum*, [website], 2013, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2013/01/a-global-platform-for-global-issues/> (accessed 30 August 2017).

- 12 B. J. Cosley, et al., 'Is compassion for others stress buffering? Consequences of compassion and social support for physiological reactivity to stress,' *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, no. 46, 2010, pp. 816–823.
- 13 K. I. Miller, 'Compassionate communication in the workplace: Exploring processes of noticing, connecting, and responding,' *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35 (3), Taylor & Francis Online, [website], 2007, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00909880701434208>, (accessed 26 August 2017), pp. 223-245.
- 14 To validate means to offer recognition, acceptance and feedback about the other person's reality and identity in a non-judgemental way. Validation builds a sense of belonging and strengthens relationships even though maintaining different opinions. K. D. Hall and M. H. Cook, *The Power of Validation*, Oakland, New Harbinger Press, 2012.
- 15 C. Meiborg and S. Van Tuinen (eds.), *Deleuze and the Passions*, New York, Punctum books, 2016, p. 9. Citing P. Ticineto Clough and J. Halley (eds.) *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007; and M. Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010.
- 16 Idem, p. 10.
- 17 Ibidem.
- 18 Ibidem.
- 19 Idem, p. 12.
- 20 G. Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953–1974*, D. Lapoujade (ed.), trans. M. Taormina, Los Angeles & New York, Semiotext(e), 2004, p. 134.
- 21 Meiborg and Van Tuinen. Idem, p. 12.
- 22 R. Shaull, 'Foreword,' in P. Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1970, p. 15.
- 23 E. Harris and M. Nowicki, 'Cult of the temporary: is the pop-up phenomenon good for cities?', *The Guardian*, 20 July 2015.
- 24 A. Jones, 'Unpredictable Temporalities: The Body and Performance in (Art) History,' in G. Borggreen and R. Gade (eds.), *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013, p. 54.
- 25 J. Pickard, 'Temporary Communities in the Era of Climate Change,' *The Lark*, [web blog], 31 May 2017, <http://www.larktheatre.org/blog/temporary-communities-era-climate-change/>, (accessed 26 August 2017).
- 26 A. Gide, *Poétique*, Neuchatel, Ides et Calendes. 1947. Reprinted in *Anthologie de la poésie française. Par André Gide*, Paris, Edition Gallimard for New York, Pantheon Books, 1949, p. xxxi. Citation in origin: 'L'art commence à la résistance; à la résistance vaincue.'
- 27 'Cultural hegemony' is a concept developed by Italian scholar and activist Antonio Gramsci in his essay 'On Education.' With reference to Karl Marx's theory of the dominant ideology of society, cultural hegemony is about the domination achieved through ideological or cultural means by the ruling classes to design and legitimate social and economic structures according to their worldview. N. L. Cole, 'Definition of Cultural Hegemony,' *ThoughtCo.*, [website], 2017, <https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121>, (accessed 25 April 2017). The notion of 'Control Culture' mainly refers to the authoritarian educational and formative systems of schools and factories

in the Industrial Age, designed to produce docile workers and citizens. See: P. Slater, *The Chrysalis Effect*, Brighton & Portland, Sussex Academic, 2008.

- 28 As part of the Educational Learning Program of the VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK, the ART WEEK | WORKSHOP SERIES brings together international students and artists to practice over an extended period of time with experienced tutor performance artists outside of an academic setting. It is co-organized by Studio Contemporaneo non-profit Cultural Association and Live Arts Cultures non-profit Cultural Association, hosting it in its spaces C32 performingartsworkspace and C30 warehouse at Parco Contemporaneo, Forte Marghera (Venice). Conceived as collaboration between VestAndPage, Marianna Andriago and Aldo Aliprandi, it takes place every year in spring. Since 2016, it is coordinated by the independent curator Francesca Carol Rolla.
- 29 Psychiatrist of Hungarian origin Leopold Szondi created the human drive study system. For Szondi, drives are instinctual forces that shape human action, characters, behaviours and fate. They are the sustaining roots of the human being and his existence par excellence. See L. Szondi, *Lehrbuch der Experimentellen Triebdiagnostik*, Berne, Huber Hans, 1972, p. 25.
- 30 Up to date, the ART WEEK | WORKSHOP SERIES has been facilitated by: VestAndPage (2013); BBB Johannes Deimling | PAS Performance Art Studies