

Argument for This Historical Moment and Participating Cultures

Use this as a generic text to be changed, added and deleted in whatever way you want to

This project is in response to multiple problems. The continued problems of UKs Imperial past and present and its Colonial histories. The link between this Imperial past and Colonial present and art, with glimpses of very powerful destabilising forces, which one is almost tempted to say offer glimpses of the Deep State. The shift in art and existence in the past few years has rendered existing narratives redundant. Problems posed by asymmetrical warfare. The massive shift to the right and governments out of control and the terrible sense of not knowing what to do. The troubling lack of response to the rise of these new and existing forces and the doubts cast on art and its institutions. Along with expectations to the mythologies of art.

Artists, curators, critics recognised that we have for the past 18 years or so coexisted inside an art World that we are unable to categorise or describe [as shown by Seth Price], although maybe this is only in reference to Western or American notions of Art and the Contemporary.

At the moment we use the term art without any understanding of what art is and without any understanding of the Political role of art and what the Art Industry and its institutions are, how they are run and financed.

[This continues Suhail Malik's discussion of the Contemporary in Art, Dietrich Diederichsen's Overproduction and Value and Franz Schultheis Art Unlimited]

So that any statement, description and practice take's place without any understanding of the foundation or basis on which we are working.

And, if we ask ourselves What is our art? What are we contributing to? and how is it being used? we are unable to answer.

Yet it seems that at the End of History [which is how Alexandre Kojive understood the establishment of the EU] art has assumed a new but unspecified role, a role which is almost over burdened given its multiple functions and importance, where ultimately it is expected to shape and grow whatever is intended to be the best that civilization is capable of producing, and this is the justification for developing a practice and thinking inside this fog of not knowing, built on trust and support of the system since this is the best of all possible Worlds

We can catch glimpses of this in the statements Hirst [and Serota] makes in defence of non-critical art market-based practice, where Hirst is really the mouth piece for the new art regime.

Where art is now indistinguishable from the Western tradition of art, its histories and system, and where there is no other to this system and model, in that respect art collapses into a Neoliberal function

At the same time, we are warned that to be too specific about the Art World and how it functions endangers our career prospects, in other words not only is there a threat there is an unspoken rule and acknowledgment of self-censorship at the very heart of the Art World. This is precisely where there appears to be a contradiction in its proclamations for autonomy and freedom, although we of course recognise what it really implies, a space outside the law and beyond descriptions and prying eyes.

It seems to me that any observation and description of the Art World we make in the West is only able to confirm its power rather than make any useful suggestions for possible change, where change is not possible. I would put into this category all Post-Colonial and critical and institutional critical texts.

That is not to say that we have the resources in art to be able to capture this complexity or make changes [whatever this actually means in art], since there is a dilemma of whether to self-consciously limit the Colonial Neo Liberal function of art or add to it. Here I would define a Neo Liberal practice that is expansive and able to capture a wide complexity of information and ideas without having any impact, in other words it mirrors Neoliberal knowledge production, yet renders us passive and precarious. As we speak there has been no serious analysis and history of Neo Liberalism by Art institutions, which is a glaring problem given the fact that Neo Liberalism has been in gestation since the 1980's.

The current conditions of art are shaped by two fundamental issues:

The inability or unwillingness of Western Cultural practitioners to resolve the question of Colonialism

Art and thinking shaped by Centres of Cultural power

These issues are made more complex by the change in the role of art and its institutions. The role of art institutions [or New Institutionalism] as NGOs and the Political role of Art institutions to grow elites and carry out the mixing of different cultures in the West through the instrument of art, where Colonialism has been replaced with art institutions assisting in the mixing of cultures, through using the language of art i.e. The Western canon, its values and its language, reinforcing Western Capitals as Global Cities and Centres of Global Empires. It is almost possible to say that the real government or governing and shaping of a country and Nation State and its peoples has been transferred to the institutions of art [if we understand Blairs new Socio-Political use of art, the appropriation of participatory practices by art institutions, to tie peoples and cultures together, and New Institutionalism expanding the power of art and developing a Global agenda, correctly]. I would say that art is now the most important and powerful Global force.

[This is just an observation and not a value judgement]

It seems obvious to me that we are unable to conceptualise and find solutions to these problems within the existing language, concepts and positions, so something drastic is required to break this stasis, or cultural temporal loop and circuit we are trapped in, and this is the purpose of the methodology of Participating Cultures.

"We urgently need to ask today whether it is possible or even feasible for different peoples and cultures to meet and challenge existing thinking and positions as a route towards reconfiguring centres of cultural power?"

Which space do we go to in order to think about these issues without replicating existing forms?

And what possible form can our thinking and practice take without replicating existing forms?

Here I want to suggest developing a nonvisual art practice as our platform, and that these text works occupy this platform.

How do we break out of this Malaise?

- Participating Cultures as a methodology to break with existing centres of cultural power
- This coming together of different cultures to test out existing thinking and formations of culture in order to reimagine culture and thinking I call This Historical Moment
- This Historical Moment is the rupture in time for peoples and cultures to come together in a new opening to reimagine art again through breaking with the existing sites of cultural power

How is this clash of different minds to take place or even to coincide?

I think it is important to say here that I am not expecting approval or people to agree with what I am saying, rather I would hope to generate a space of conflict along the lines of Lyotard's *Le Differend* and Chantal Mouffe's *Agonistic Pluralism*, and I am saying this, recognising the many different contradictions I am appearing to release here through proposing obvious Western Philosophical models.

But I am imagining a space of disagreement and clashes, a space for cultural collisions, without resolution.

At best all I hope is that people recognise the value of the points I have raised and a willingness to engage with the ideas in the right spirit.

- I see this coming together as a collaboration on generating a collective script and the collective fine tuning of a text work that I have started here.
- At the same time, it is necessary to look at generating workable diagrams and visualisations that map the complexity of the engagements and coming together and splitting apart of different peoples and cultures.

How do we occupy and move into and register this New historical moment? Do we have to wait for this moment or is it already here and all we need to do is just register its existence and mentally and bodily make a shift into this new era which is already here?