

SOMEONE FROM MANOA FREE UNIVERSITY  
HAS BEEN INVITED TO TALK AT ACADEMIE  
SANS TOIT IN PARIS ON THE LAST WEEKEND  
OF SEPTEMBER 2004

(so I thought I better prepare a little)

script  
daegseingcny

<http://manoafreeuniversity.org> 2004

We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth.  
The artist was attempting to make art more than something to just  
look at,  
they wanted it something to be involved in, something too big to  
ignore.  
It is our function as artists to make the spectator to see the world our  
way,  
not his way.  
*/ lots of breaking glass*

Le Tigre, Slide Show at Free University

*The persons or Agents:*

1 facilitator - the inviting artist and academy founder  
1 lecturer - the invited artist and free university representant  
2-5 other invited lecturers  
the audience or participants  
random bypassers, possibly of official authority  
*The roles will mix up a bit eventually.*

*The place is somewhere in Paris. A space for lectures and/or discussion has been set up in public space. The audience and the rest of the setup would make it possible to link the whole scenery to a certain kind of "progressive" art scene. (We sure know what we mean by that, don't we?!) The mixture of the participants is probably at the same time homogenic and diverse, these days perhaps lined up under buzzwords like "cultural workers", "immaterial workers", etc. They all wear casual clothes, but it's always a good idea to have certain accessoires and props at hand.*

*When we enter the scene it's either the very beginning of or some way into the meeting of the Académie sans toit. The social climate might range and/or develop from relaxed to focussed to bored to tense. The monologues of THE LECTURER might be interrupted and turn into dialogue form at any point. The text might be mixed up. The order might change. Parts will be left out. Non-scripted acts and utterances will appear on the scene and finally take over. It's a script to be improvised upon.*

THE INVITING ARTIST or ACADEMY FOUNDER or DISCUSSION FACILITATOR might also read all the annotations aloud. To make a distinction, he could use another voice, honk, put on a helmet, whatever. He might mix up things a bit, and so will the rest of the Agents.

~~All Agents on the scene. It's more a rehearsal situation than a finished play, people standing around in groups, last looks into the textbook. Actually the Agents are pretty bad with memorizing so they need the textbook all the way through. And sometimes some scenes have to be repeated etc. Probably roles will be swapped as well at times.~~

FACILITATOR

*To the participants.* So I would like to say Hello to Ralo from the Manoa Free University in Vienna. We have first met at the Microcongress which I co-organised at the Haus Selba in Berlin in June. - It brought together different people to discuss the topic of selforganization. *Turning to THE LECTURER.* From what I know, your presentation will be concerned with different models of production and exchange of knowledge... maybe you could first give a short overview on the Manoa Free University as a place concerned with these questions? THE FACILITATOR *might bring in much more opening lines here* ...Also I think it would be great to get some background on this specific presentation in connection to... - I mean I am - and sure more people here are - interested in this. *He looks around and tries to check out the situation.*

LECTURER

*Smiling, probably more ashamed and a bit blushing.* Well... Thanks, Johannes, for inviting me to the Académie sans toit. And sorry for not speaking french... *Changing voice, getting himself together:* Well, I will try to sum up some corner stones of the Manoa Free University a bit, rather short. Please interrupt me if I jump forth too quickly, I tend to mix up things a bit in these presentation situations. *Trying to present a smile, but fails. Getting himself together once more.* Poorly prepared - as usual. Especially in this case, as I have been working jobwise for a theatre production the last weeks... good money, but pretty exhausting. It's the first time I am involved in theatre production, some people of the MFU do the video setup for the new play by Peter Handke. The rehearsals are really interesting situations, how written language turns into 3d-space, somehow real, but of course still a virtual play with a set of rules etc... the developing more interesting than any final version, I guess. Anyway... *Straightens up.* The Manoa Free University was founded in early 2003 by some art students in Vienna. At that time the group that most of us had been involved in before had totally crashed, group dynamics out of control... We wanted to continue in some collaborative way in the field of art, political art, or what you might want to call it, but then we wanted to avoid some problematics we had heavily faced before, like inclusion and exclusion. As we had got to know the Copenhagen Free University, we thought such a way of organizing might fit our needs well... So we founded a Free University and actually had no real idea of what that would be... *(Laughing)* Manoa is the native name for Eldorado, that city of Gold. So the name refers to a kind of quest or journey to some place we don't know yet, and might not find in the end... We see the MFU as a heterotopia, as described by Foucault: some kind of boat, a buccaneer ship, sailing the seven seas... I like that there's a certain kind of harsh ambivalence to the place of Manoa: on the one hand it stands for the quest for a utopian place, on the other hand it's totally connected to the history of colonialism. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the quest for Eldorado has driven madmen through the Americas and leaving a trace of blood and despair. One of them was Aguirre de Lopez. Werner Herzog based a film on his story and Klaus Kinski played him.

*He hands out some print-outs, probably maps, film stills, etc.* THE LECTURER will continue to hand out more of those at irregular intervals throughout the play, not necessarily connected to the textual content.

Just recently I read the logbook of Christopher Columbus, and the whole strange story already starts there. Just as Foucault describes the ship as the place of both dreams and economical development, the motor of the first globalization wave of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Columbus jumps back and forth between descriptions of a paradise and suggestions of how to most effectively exploit it. There's a certain touch of reality to this horrifying

ambivalence, and I think those of us working in the cultural field know it from everyday experience...

Anyway, at about the time we had started the university, we were doing a soundscape project. For that project we researched a lot about the history of recording sound in order to map social space. When we had finished the project, there was not so much of this research actually left in the installation and we thought it was a pity to put all the material into our drawer... so we put together texts and also historic audio examples and did a small publication on our own to share the accumulated knowledge on that topic... only much later we kind of understood that this was a central point to our free artist run university: the question of how to research collaboratively and how to share that with more people: socialised research.

The way I experienced the kind of project based art of the last 10 to 15 years is very ambivalent... I really think it's problematic to exhibit the research material right in the product, be it time- or space-based, like with all the didactic exhibitions with book shelves etc... I don't want to read books when I go to an exhibition, even more so when I know most of them... The format of late 90ies didactic exhibition has become more a self-affirmation of a certain segment of the art world... a self-affirmation of an established consensus of what we already know instead of a productive challenge. Acknowledging the growing dissens with this form of conceptual work, I think we have to find NEW FORMS for the production, exchange and archiving of knowledge.

*Over the last paragraphs the tone has clearly changed into that of a boring semi-emphatic lecture. THE LECTURER notices it, and suddenly tries to break with it, for example jumping up and dancing, whispering into someone's ear... the usual extrovert stuff out of the general equipment of a trained actor.*

After finishing art school some months ago I ask myself such questions more then ever before. ~~I remember one of the reasons of trying the entrance exam at the art academy in Vienna: At University I had studied linguistics which was an extremely interesting subject. When reading theory, I always wanted to do something out and with it, but that almost never was writing seminar papers... Theory inspired me to do other stuff, like videos, etc. Studying art made it possible to be more free in that way. When I think about it now, in the post-school situation where the economical pressure emphasizes the ugly sides to art-as-work more and more, I still can't think of another working situation which would make it possible to jump from field to field, not being forced to become an expert.~~

FACILITATOR

*Trying to bring back an atmosphere of serious discourse after the failed break of the presentation by THE LECTURER.*

I remember this - a certain dissatisfaction with the status quo in post-conceptual art practices - being also a topic at our last meetings: the Mikrokongress and also the Werkleitzbiennale, with its topic of Common Property. Of course the Mikrokongress itself was meant as an alternative way of meeting up and discussing. I remember you then mentioned the idea to have a congress that would only consist of coffeebreaks...

LECTURER

*(Laughing)* Yes... I think that idea came out of a telephone conversation I had with Jakob Jakobsen of the Copenhagen Free University...

If we take that before-mentioned exhibition format of didactic political art, with collections of hundreds of hours of video, thousands of pages of books, and whole essays of text to be read on the walls of the white cube, they usually come in a bundle with some kind of panel discussions, presentations, workshops, symposium etc... As interesting as the content of these events might be, the form of it almost all the time sucks. Most of the time you would hear what you already know somehow anyway, and even if it promises to bring something new, it's boring. ~~But I also remember from university courses that sometimes I don't mind if a lecture is boring... I actually like to drift away in such a situation, have my own thoughts instead of following the lecturer's script... Like in a formalist art film, Michael Snow's La Région Centrale or something...~~

Working as an artist with theory, there's almost no way around the symposium-thingy, one slowly becomes a part of the jet-set-proletariat of the critical art world, a small ~~or - later perhaps - more central~~ cog in the machine of the global theory industry. ~~I don't want to elaborate now on the obvious problems of certain implicated hegemonies of language, origin, gender and the indirectly related spectacular shifts of focus on hip margins, like Africa, the Balkan, etc...~~

Most of the content in this symposium context is later or even simultaneously available in written form - a format that most often is more appropriate to it. I prefer not to read text in an exhibition... But of course the social aspect of meeting people is an important factor. The Coffee Break... The Beer After... ~~Unfortunately this social function is in many cases disabled by the fact that invited lecturers tend to talk to other invited lecturers mostly, in order to be invited to the next lecture series...~~

LECTURER *pretends to read the next section from paper.*

So we have a situation where the same "critical" content is verbally reproduced over and over in a ritualized arena, a discourse highly based on a set of buzzwords. And the participants in this know the largest part of the

game beforehand, because it's a repetition. We have a situation of a stage, but noone really dares to PLAY. THE FACILITATOR *starts to make notes, as if figuring out something.* Additionally we have to take into account that almost all of the lectures are later published as text, even panel discussions or casual afternoon conversations are transcribed and being added to the theory monolith. I mean we are doing that ourselves already...

FACILITATOR

*Presenting the results of his sketches and notes.* Hmmm... One might think of the possibility to turn around that relation of trans-script and discussion, actually... putting it right by reversing the temporal order.

LECTURER

*A bit sceptical but interested.* Maybe... ~~Mentioning the time factor, we have to think about historification processes as well, self-historifications... Also how to deal with names? And the roles of individuals in highly collaborative processes of knowledge production... Especially for that~~ I would suggest a rather playful approach to overcome the stereotypical moulds of knowledge exchange in the art context. *Seemingly emphatic voice again.* Open up test sites. Experiment with formats, including the risk of failing. At the least one can learn from failing! The most popular fictional scientist is the guy from the muppet-show, who constantly blows up his lab<sup>1</sup>... *Laughing.* Laboratories that go BOOM! Experimental departments for Butler's performativity theory... Playgrounds out of control ... Messing around in the sandbox...

FACILITATOR

*Taking over the empathy, almost excited.* Sandbox... Like in a Wiki... SymposiumSandBox OrganizationSandBox UniversitySandBox -

LECTURER

*Interrupting the brainstorm almost impolitely.* University - yes. I think I got a bit lost from the initial presentation of the Manoa Free University. As we slowly take the self-education part more seriously, we have started a study group last spring. It's about knowledge production as well... Here are some pictures. *He hands out the last sheets into the round.* As we don't have a space of our own, we use extra-rooms of cafes and restaurants... there's a nice back-room culture in Vienna, and right now we are a Hinterzimmer-Universität somehow... nice neighbourhood, philatelists, chess-clubs, etc. I still can't really say what our focus is on, there are between 5 to 15 people from an art and architecture background, trying to find out more about how to

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<sup>1</sup> Hab ich mal gehört.

exchange knowledge. The main goal is probably to collaboratively create a toolset that will help to organize ourselves, to find verbal and nonverbal languages to communicate and work together. At one point for example we talked about what influence our job situations has on our work as artists and architects. Like what knowledge one gains from the job, and what influence that has on our work as artists or architects... I mean it's often discussed that our subjectivity is exploited in the creative industries, but I think it's important to develop a consciousness of how we can use the things we get to know in the job as graphic designer, or doing videos for money, or writing commercials, whatever, in a productive way for a more worthy or funny or revolutionary purpose...

*The tone has become a bit too kitschy - again. In a senseless try to escape, THE LECTURER suddenly turns on a stereo, probably a Powerbook. A short drum intro, then Glen Danzig screams out of small crappy speakers. It's The Misfits' Hybrid Moments. THE LECTURER starts to rattle and shake in an over-excited manner, certainly awkward. THE FACILITATOR is highly expected to join the very next moment. So should THE OTHER INVITED LECTURERS, THE PARTICIPANTS and RANDOM BYPASSERS. It's not about good looks or authenticity or spontaneity or whatever, you know. The discussion continues on its own now.*

If you're gonna scream, scream with me

Moments like this never last

When do creatures rape your face

Hybrids opened up the door

Ooh baby when you cry

Your face is momentary

You hide your looks behind these scars

In hybrid moments

Give me a moment

Give me a moment

Give me a moment

Ooh baby when you cry

Your face is momentary

You hide your looks behind these scars

In hybrid moments

In hybrid moments

In hybrid moments

In hybrid moments

Give me a moment

Give me a moment

A big hand to Mr. Gordon Alles once more!