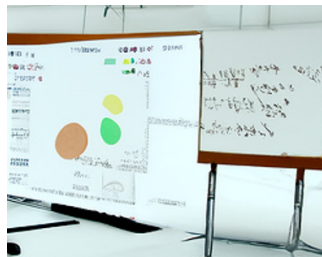
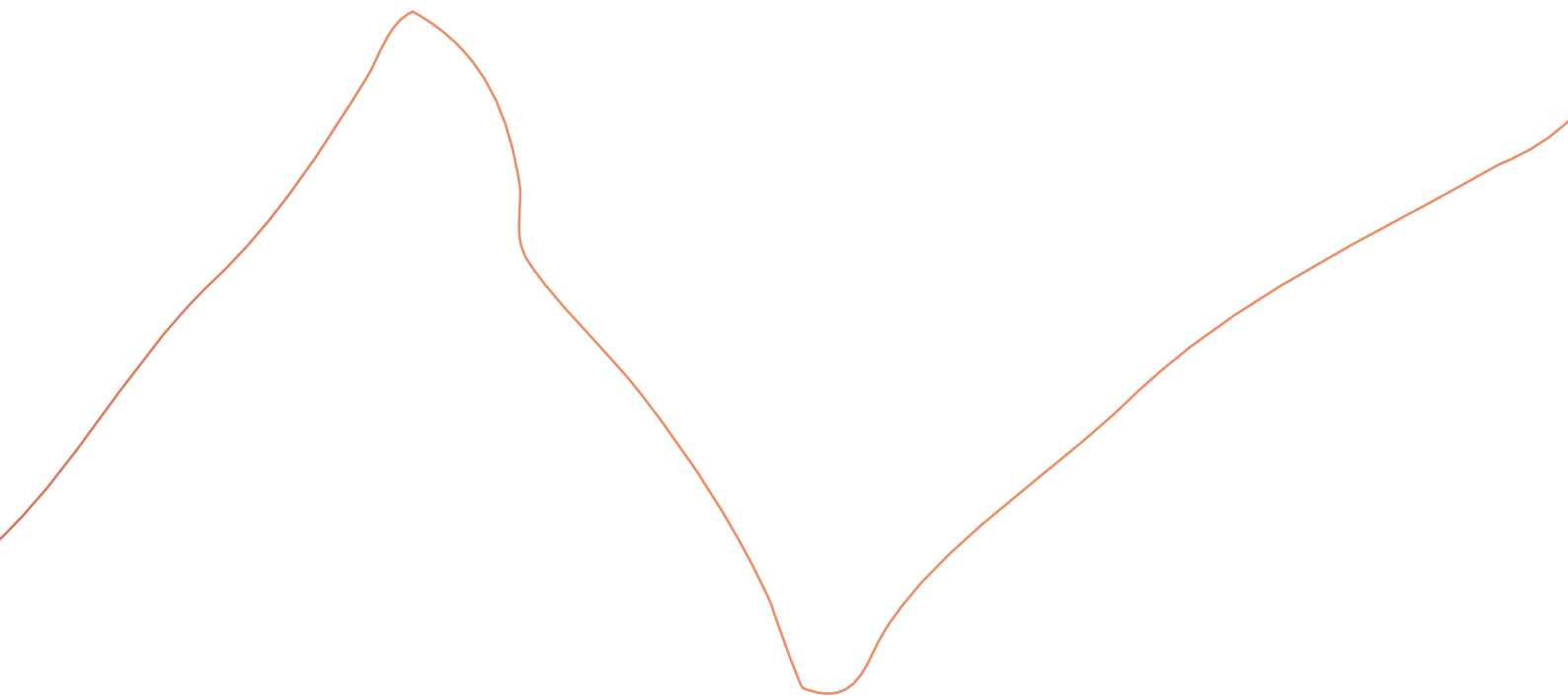


WHAT DO WE,
AS AN ORGANIZATION,
PROVIDE FOR ARTISTS?



LUCIE KOLB, BERNHARD GARNICNIG

WHAT DO WE, AS AN ORGANIZATION,
PROVIDE FOR ARTISTS?



Artists engage in a variety of activities from material and physical labor to dematerialized, intellectual, and possibly ephemeral labor.

Artists study social phenomena emerging in governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as businesses.

Artists use trained and tested methods of critical observation as central component in their ways of organizational analysis.

Depending on this practice, artists address, for example:

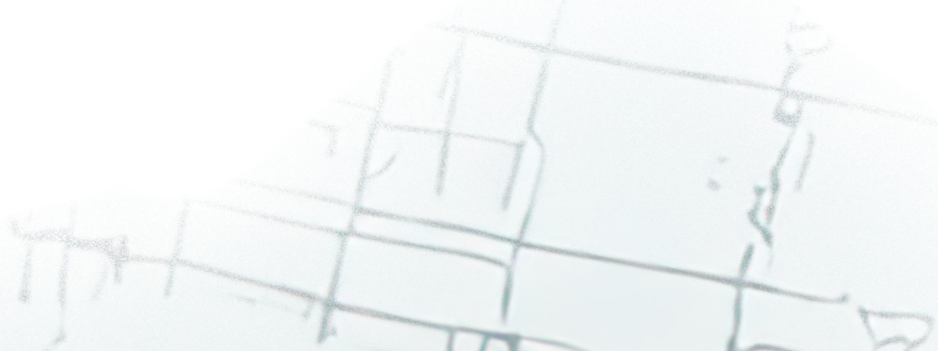
*Social, economic or political power relations within the organization, in the hierarchy of governance, or in the ties between insiders (employees, managers) and outsiders (visitors, clients).

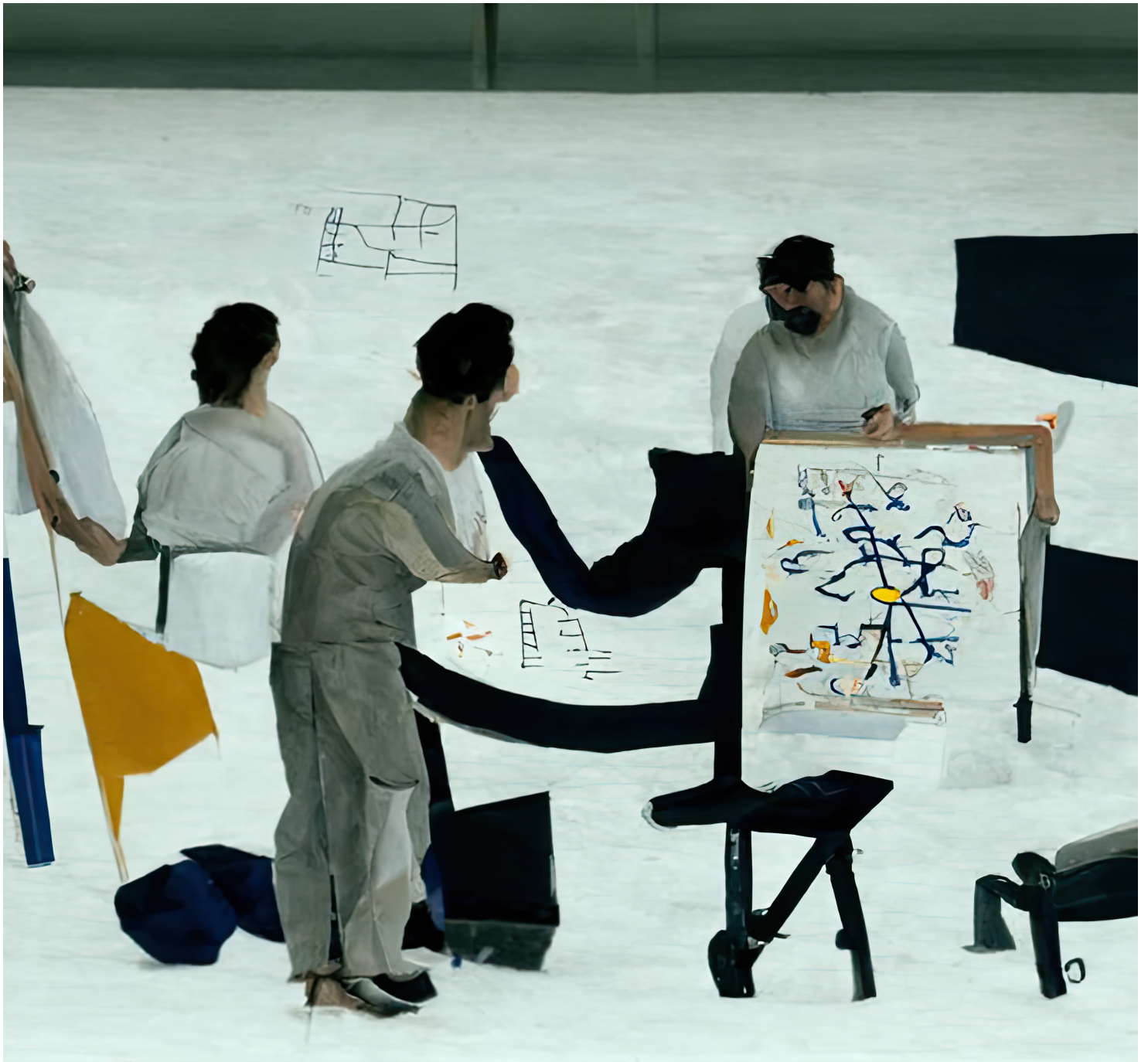
*The implication of and participation in ecologic and economic processes not aligned with current social justice issues and progressive policy.

*The gaping absence or clumsy presence of organizations in urban or audiovisual cultures through advertising and social media.

*The apparent use of “art and culture” to generate cultural capital, property development, enter a conversation by appropriating the “issue du jour”, and artwashing.

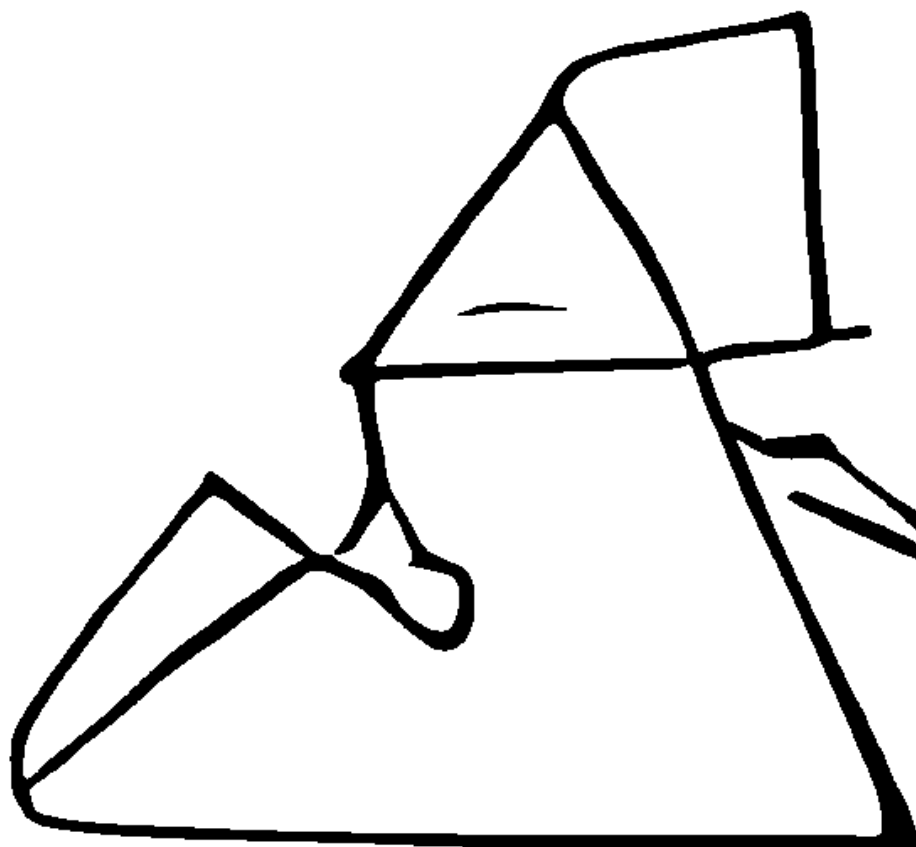
**What kinds of assignments
and which conditions
do organizations have to provide
if they want to work with artists ?**





3

INTERVIEW
APPROACH



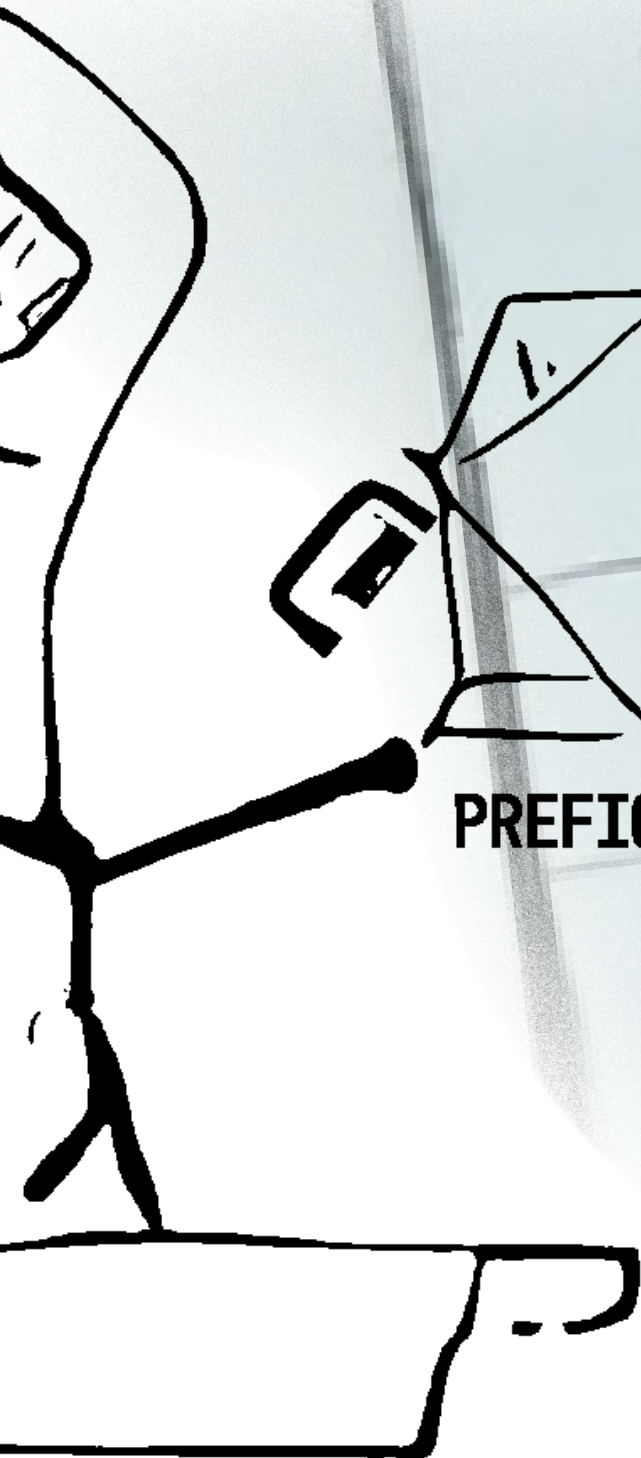
SOCIAL JUSTICE

under



CRITICAL

70
VENTION &
RIATION



PREFIGURATION

INFRASTRUCTURE

HOW DO ARTISTS ANALYZE ORGANIZATIONS?



LUCIE KOLB, BERNHARD GARNICNIG

We are interested in how artists study, transform and reconfigure organizations. In his essay “On Practice” (1976)¹, artist Mel Ramsden defines an artistic practice of institutional critique that, on the one hand, directly addresses the specific problems in institutions, but on the other hand, creates an alternative to them. It is this definition of institutional critique that we draw on for our understanding of how artists analyze organizations. With Gerald Raunig², we understand such an instituent practice as a form of institutional critique that links social- and self-criticism but simultaneously intervenes in a transformative way. In other words, it is a form of critique that does not react to a specific setting but aims to change the conditions of discussion. This mode of critique does not seek representative forms—e.g., audiovisual, performative—as part of a didactic process; instead, it pre-figures the difference to advance change.



Artists analyze organizations with a critical infrastructure approach. They analyze procedures and structures of the organization and dig holes, seeking to unravel the hidden infrastructures on which they are built: in 1991, artist Laurie Parsons, for example, developed the Security and Admissions Project for the New Museum in New York³, in which all printed materials were removed from the gallery and information was given verbally instead by the museum’s security guards and admissions staff. The

project facilitated dialogue between visitors and staff, focusing on the interpersonal and social dimensions of the museum experience and the open-ended nature of interpretation. Her performative concept changed the ways curatorial mediation and infrastructural care take place in the museum.

Artists analyze organizations with a prefigurative approach. In “Park Fiction” (1994 ongoing)², for example, a group of citizens demanded a park be built instead of an office building. Park Fiction became a participatory process and platform for activism. In “Art and contemporary critical practice: Reinventing institutional critique”, Gerald Raunig writes: “Countless smaller and larger impulses for collective insurrection and for the emergence of constituent power, a series of events, in which desiring is learned, a permanent new beginning, an instituent practice that animates an astonishing amount and is incredibly persistent at the same time.”

Artists analyze organizations with a social justice approach. “Look at Art. Get Paid. (LAAGP)” (2015 ongoing)³ by artists Maia Chao and Josephine Devanbu is a socially engaged art project that pays people who don’t visit art museums to visit one as guest critics of the art and its institution. The project uses funding to pay people who never go to museums for reasons of exclusion stemming from a history of colonialism; it reverses the agency usually located in the categories of consulting, funding, curatorship, and mediation. It also informs curatorial and strategic decisions while itself being a statement on intellectual labor under conditions of racism and the concept and practice of critique.

Artists analyze organizations by intervention and appropriation of their surfaces of representation. The Natural History Museum⁴ is an ongoing project by the activist group Not An Alternative. The project began in 2014 as an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. The show was part of an initiative to expose and untie the insidious relations between private capital and public institutions, pointing to the Koch Brothers (one of the largest emitters of CO₂) involvement with the New York Natural History Museum (a public museum existing for the preservation of nature). The Natural History Museum organizes exhibitions, tours, and symposia to discuss the future of public institutions by the targeted appropriation of institutional surfaces and communication.

¹ Mel Ramsden, “On Practice,” *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975)

² Raunig, Gerald, and Gene Ray, eds. *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*. 2009.

³ <https://archive.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/219>

⁴ <http://www.lookatartgetpaid.org/home>

For what kind of assignments can we, as an organization, contract artists' services? Which conditions do we have to create for artists to provide their services?

(An Indeterminate Listing)







SOCIAL JUSTICE

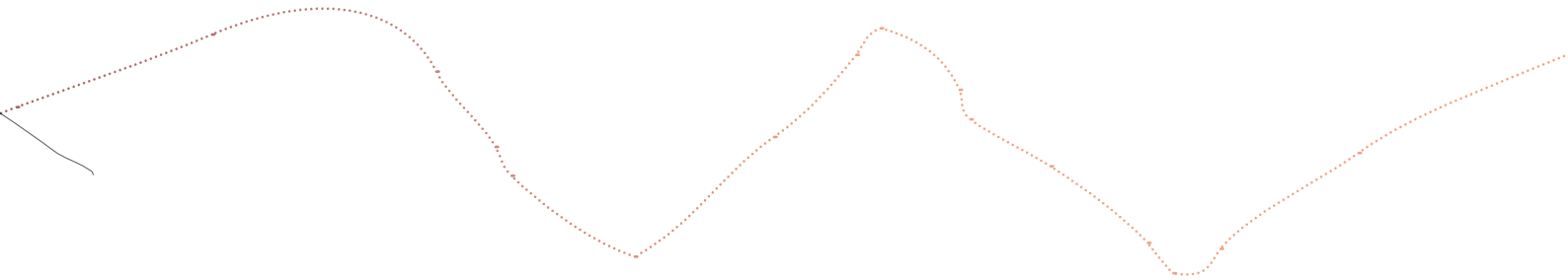
An assignment to embrace and serve entities excluded, ignored, or discriminated against by the organization.

This requires thorough documentation of the organizational practice in the form of an archive that can be made accessible to the artists.



An assignment to create frameworks for underrepresented stories. This requires the resources to support research beyond what is documented and inquiries into what is missing, left out, or explicitly omitted.

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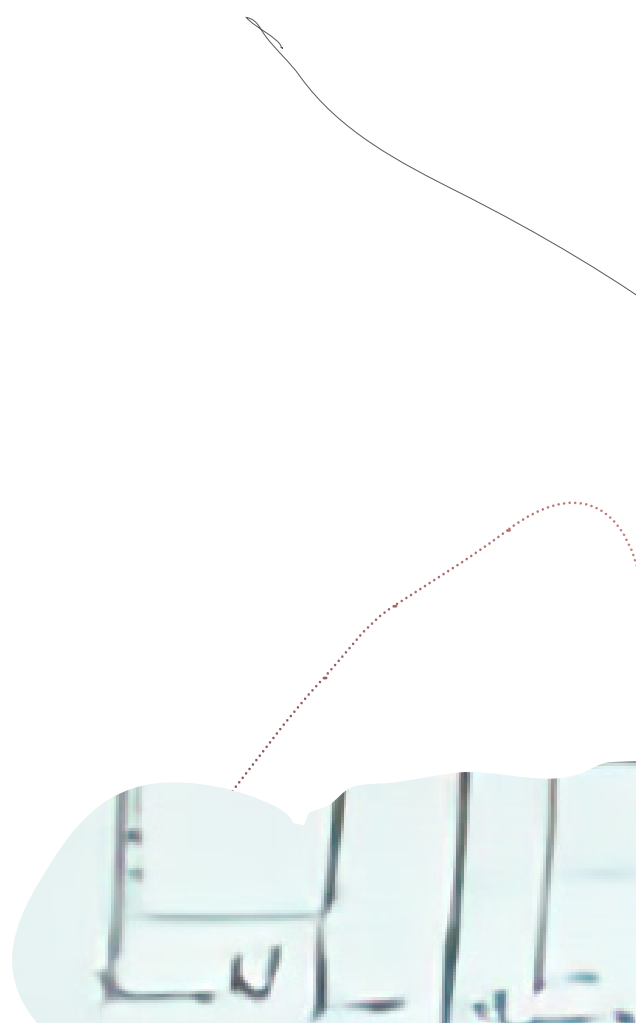


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~~X~~ **An assignment to trace the anti-semitic, racist, colonial, or otherwise exploitative or violent history of the organization as the past, present, and future relationships in motion.**

Such an assignment will require conditions in which there is space for radical acceptance of past and present insidious relationships.



An assignment to reach out to and serve those excluded from your organization.

Conditions for such an assignment would consider primarily the willingness and benefit of those whom the organization sought engagement with, putting any mechanisms of public presentation of this assignment into the hands of the artists and participants.





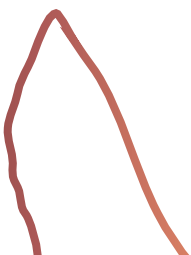
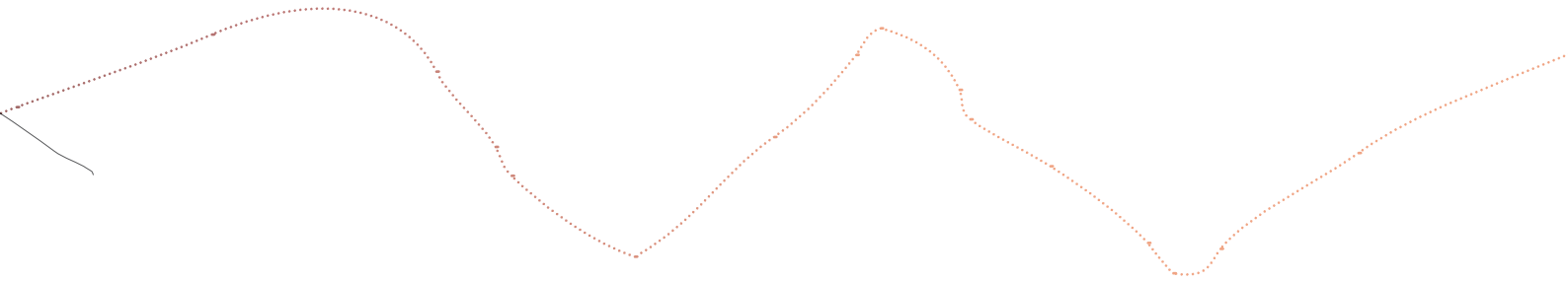
An assignment to work alongside activist projects around contemporary issues such as climate, gender, technology, and decolonization.

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When designing such an assignment, stimulate processes of social self-organization that strengthen existing networks and social movements that work for social justice. Create conditions for artists contributing to these projects rather than representing the causes through your organization.




An assignment to carve out time to think about current modes of working and their organizational structures to try to detect blind spots and contradictions.





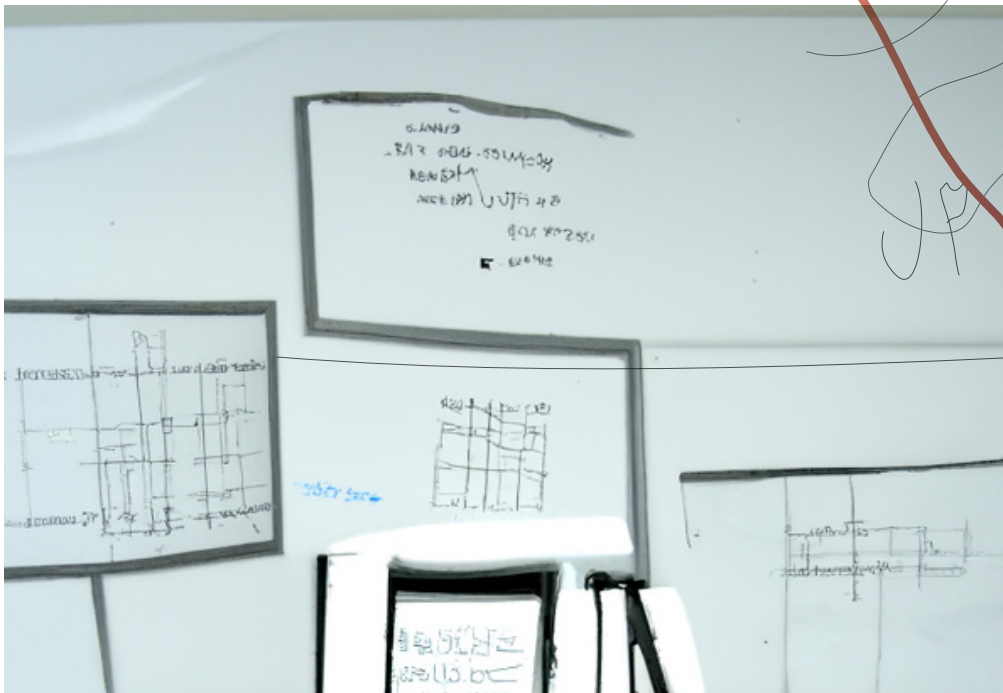
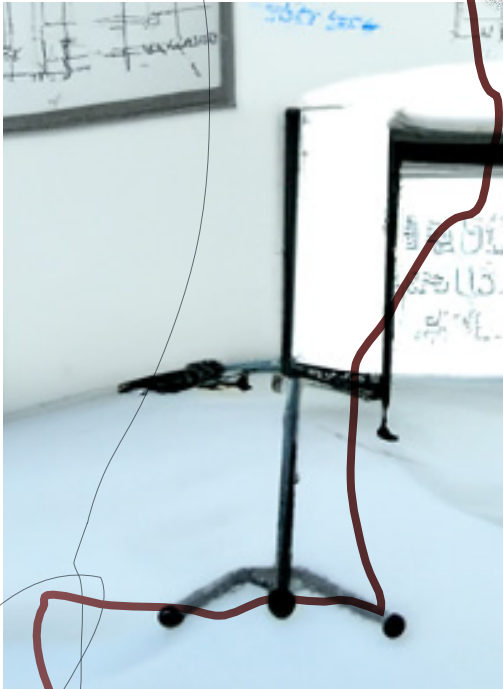
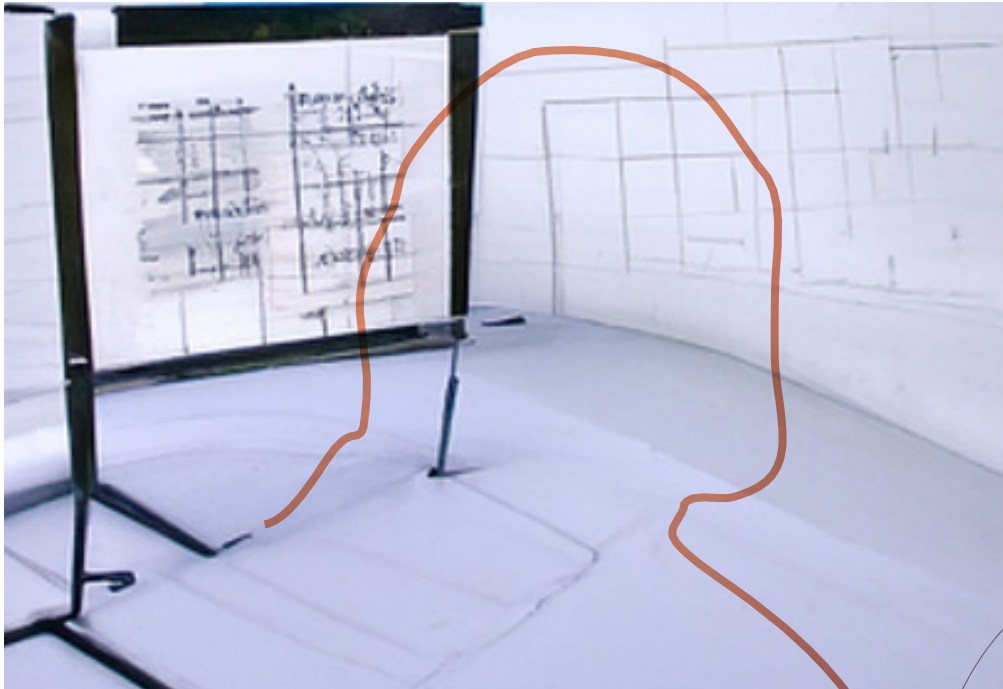
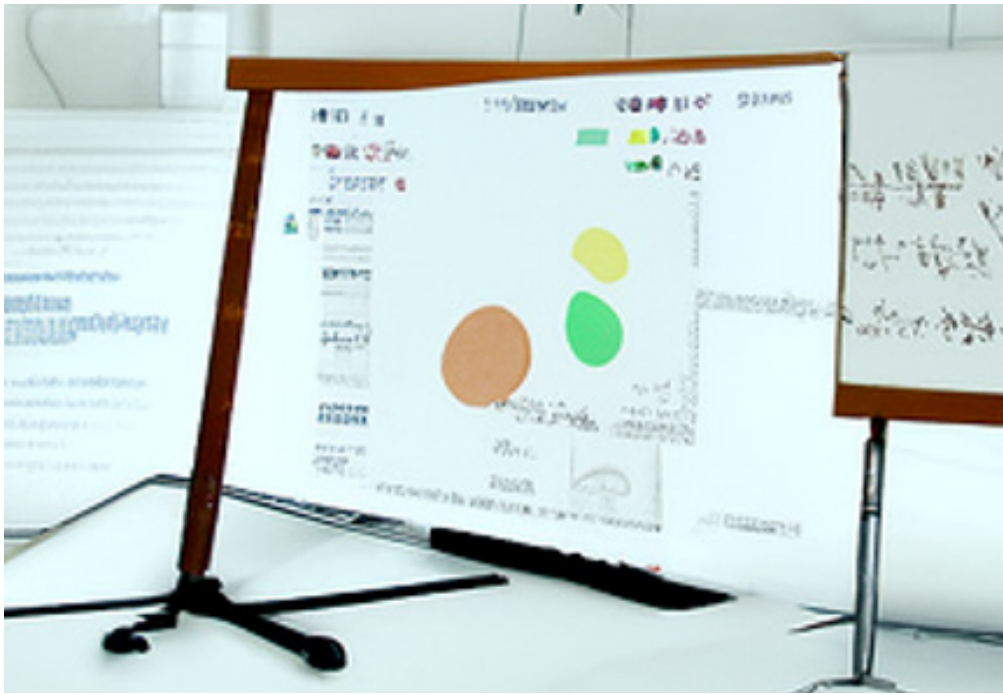
An assignment to address mental health issues stemming from organizational patterns and develop countermeasures such as a code of conduct or other reflective practices.

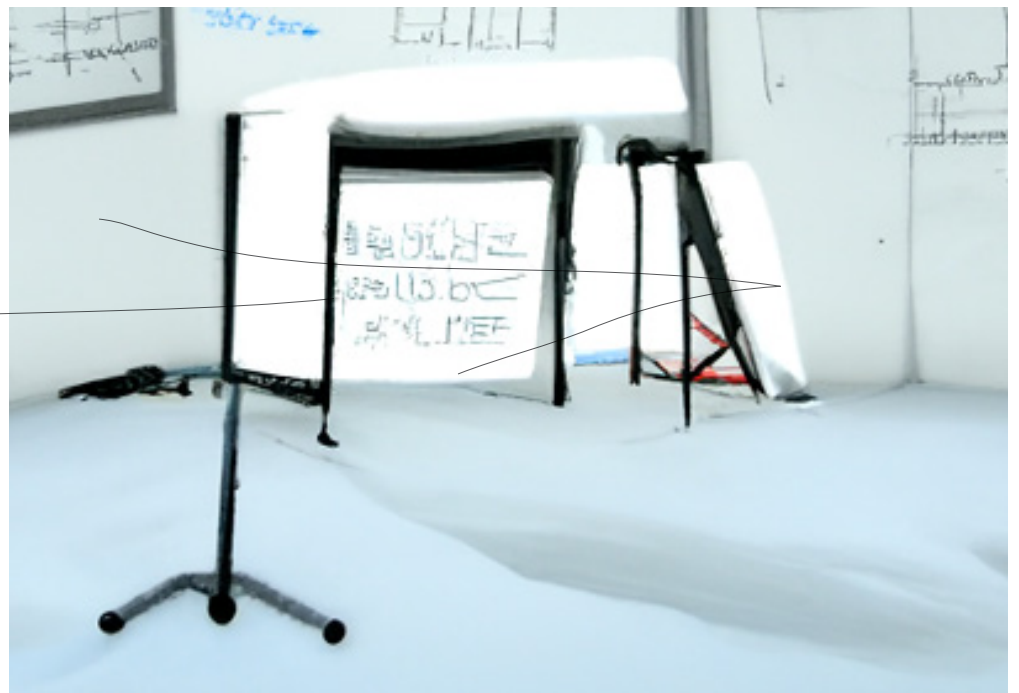
Such an assignment requires the participation of employees. Therefore, the conditions for their participation should be equal to those of their regular working hours, which include schedule and wages.





An assignment to model citizen management of equipment and common goods that promote a democratic radicalization based on equity and direct participation in the organization.









PREFIGURATION

An assignment to start a team, sub-organization, or department in the organization that is concerned with forms of knowledge and knowledge production otherwise not present in the organization.

This requires equipping this project with degrees of autonomy and resources like any other unit.





An assignment to create and actualize alternative usage scenarios for public spaces and abandoned structures.

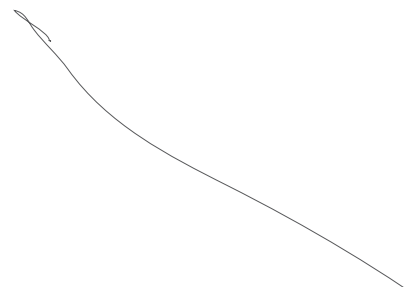
Such an assignment requires awareness of local micro scenes and biomes, as well as persistent support for perpetual beginnings.





An assignment for intervention in difficult or unproductive interactions existing between different stakeholders in the public, corporate, and governmental realm.

This requires conditions in which unconventional interpersonal exchanges take place under professional and safe circumstances.



INTERVENTION & APPROPRIATION

An assignment to redesign the spaces in which artists exhibit their work and where exhibition visitors spend their time.

When designing such an assignment, create conditions in which design proposals that alter the logic of spaces are welcome and not limited to the “look” of a room.





INTERVENTION & APPROPRIATION

An assignment in which access to historically inaccessible spaces is made possible.

Such an assignment requires the thoughtful inclusion of those in charge of infrastructure management, such as janitors and maintenance personnel, encouraging participation by making resources available to them.



An assignment to take over the Instagram account or other public digital surface and bidirectional communication channel as a way of reflecting on the organization's role in cultural production.

Such an assignment requires the organization to reconsider patterns in its management of public relations and the notion of control over its corporate image.



An assignment to transform the organization's rules and patterns through participatory and non-hierarchical approaches from the field of open source organizing.

Such processes include testing and documenting new forms of collective knowledge on the organization. Such an assignment requires a willingness to engage with open source approaches that conceive the organization as software and map non-hierarchical modes of decision-making and distributed power.




An assignment to develop ways for the organization to contribute to contemporary cultural production based on criteria of cooperation, collaborative production, and free culture.

Such an assignment requires the organization to embrace the fundamental differences of these criteria beyond their apparent use-value.

An assignment to question the methods and practices of categorization in the organization because they fail to make visible the individual and undercommon forms of knowledge hidden in the cracks of the organization.

Such an assignment requires conditions in which it is possible to expand the notion of categorization to the power structures implicit in taxonomies, which may include all levels of a hierarchy of the organization.



An assignment to follow the organization's infrastructure beyond its architecture: server farms, cables, sanitation, and understand their effects on organizational decision-making.

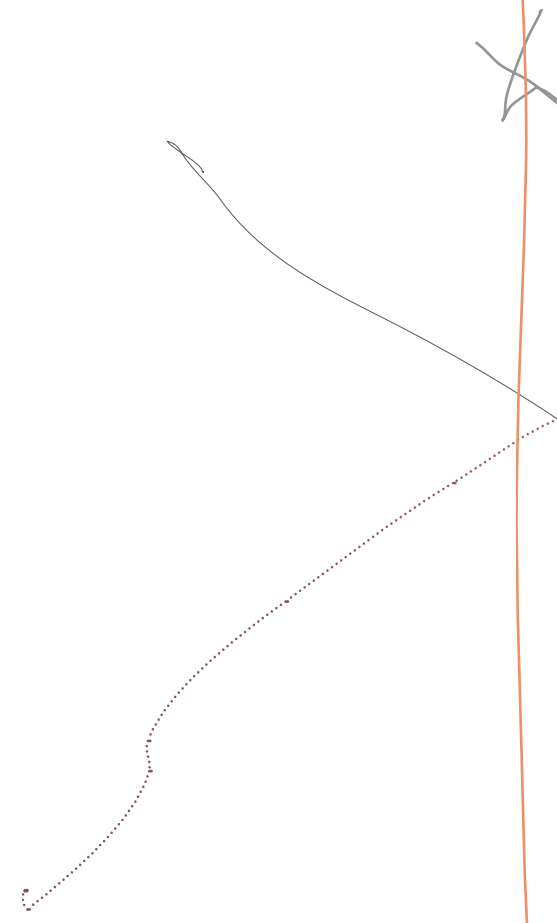
Such an assignment requires the organization to involve the operators and maintainers of these infrastructures as essential contributors to the assignment.



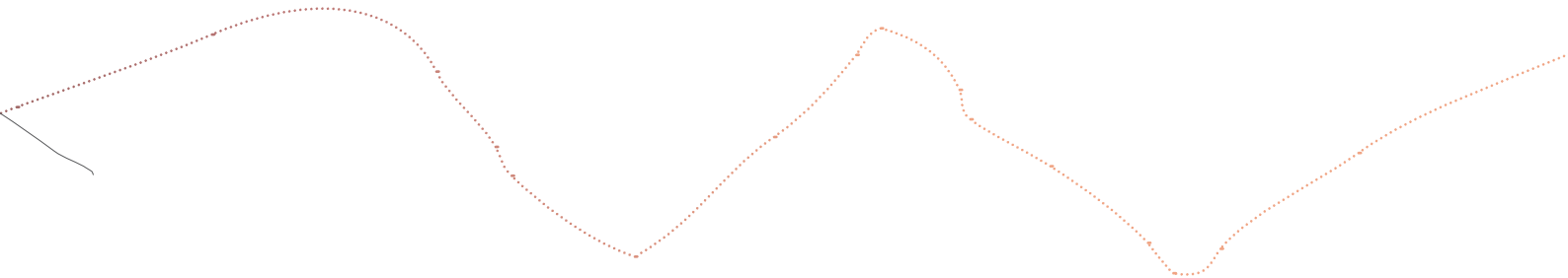
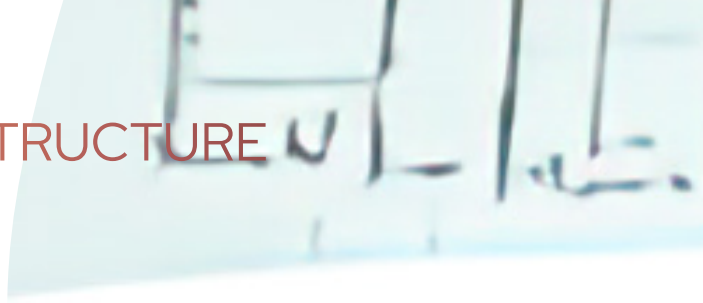
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An assignment to switch up roles in the organization and share certain functions, such as the directorial function.

This requires the collaboration of employees and adequate resources to be freed from other tasks for the duration of the assignment.

Hand-drawn lines and a cross on the right side of the page. A vertical line runs down the right edge. A horizontal line crosses it near the top, forming a cross. A curved line starts from the right edge, goes left, then curves down and left, ending near the bottom. A dotted line starts from the right edge, goes left, then curves down and left, ending near the bottom.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE



NOTES

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10

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LUCIE KOLB, BERNHARD GARNICNIG



(Artist Bios) Lucie Kolb is a senior researcher of critical publishing and research-based learning at the Critical Media Lab at FHNW Academy of Arts and Design. Working at the intersection of art history, media studies, and artistic research, she is the editor of a number of books, including *Artwork as Institution* (BNL 2019), *Paratexte* (Diaphanes 2018), and *Art Handling* (JRP 2016) and the curator of exhibitions such as *Reading the Library* (Sitterwerk St.Gallen 2021) and *Wir publizieren* (Kunsthalle Bern 2020). Her first monograph *Study, Not Critique* (Transversal Texts 2018) dealt with the fine line between self-determined knowledge production and a commodified form of critique and examined artists' magazines since the 1970s. She was awarded the Cité internationale des arts grant by visarte.ost in Paris (2022) and Landis & Gyr residency in London (2022). Lucie is the founding member and co-editor of the online magazine *Brand-New-Life*.

Bernhard Garnicnig is a research artist and lecturer. He studied Art, Media and Performative Sculpture in Vienna and Rotterdam. His current work focuses on the post-digital occupation of institutionality as artistic practice, emancipatory institutional and corporate surfaces for structures of aesthetic collaboration. He is the founding co-editor of *continentcontinent.cc*, a collectively edited journal for thinking through media (est. 2011–2020), founder & former Very Artistic Director of the Palais des Beaux Arts Wien, a historic site for futuristic art (est. 2014), the co-founder of the Bregenz Biennale, a festival for ephemeral public art in the town he was born (est. 2012) and the co-founder and Director of Supergood, a superfood brand in the ambiguous field between product and performance (2015–2019). From 2017 to 2021 he was a PhD researcher at the Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures at HGK Basel (SNF 2017–2021). He is member of the board of directors at Künstlerhaus Thurn & Taxis, Berufsvereinigung Bildender Künstler_innen Vorarlberg (BV:BKV) in Bregenz. He currently works with *memeclassworldwide* on a curriculum for post-digital art education, with the Palais des Beaux Arts Wien on the concept for a multidirectional memory site, on a site-specific design and research project for the School of Applied Sciences Dornbirn, and with Artist Project Group towards a cooperative consultancy firm for artists' performative knowledge practices.

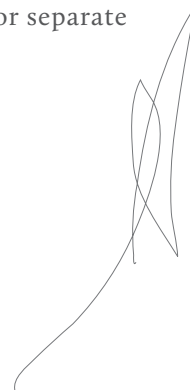
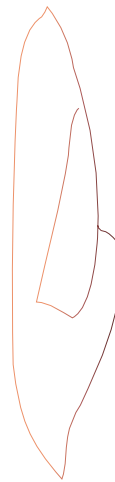
(About - Artist Project Group) The curatorial collective Artist Project Group (Bernhard Garnicnig, Lukas Heistingner, and Andrea Steves) interrogates phenomena of capitalism through curatorial and artistic methods, in an attempt to build platforms for resilient aesthetic and artistic practices. In our project for curated_ by with Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman and within the framing of Kelet, we continue to investigate the capitalist overproduction of meaning, including the recuperation of crisis phenomena into the market, and ask “What Can Artists Do Now?”

Following the workshop “Artists Have The Answers?” and the online festival “What Would Artists Do?”, the exhibition integrates recently developed works—developed from the vantage point of the Artist-as-Consultant and/or offered as services—into the context of a contemporary art gallery. The exhibition troubles notions of audience, participant, material, and impact. In presenting what these artists are doing now, the works connect to a multitude of current crises— both acute and wide-ranging—that are inherent in capitalism and continuously producing its resultant conditions and intensifications. The works hook together and offer an overall landscape of the present phenomenon and epiphenomenon of capitalism.

The Cybernetics-based model of business consultancy services is one of the most pervasive yet invisible global exports from the incipient Western Cold War information industry. Today, consultative industry continues its expansion into increasingly differentiated services, with its methods and services pervasively influencing decision making processes that govern public life.

In the 90s, artists started to critically affirm their transforming role as service providers to institutions, yet their collective movement towards self-regulating their practice was often sidelined by discourses of critique and politics, putting an end to emancipatory initiatives to improve working conditions of artists. Artist Project Group is interested in replacing the concept of innovation with practices of maintenance, that is, maintaining practices through crisis by developing projects in which artists extend their performative knowledge practices as services to institutions, organizations and businesses.

Artists are purported to hold an important role in a changing society, yet their expertise is often undervalued, and their practices are rarely integrated with the processes where change happens. The constant expansion of capitalism continues even through war and crisis, an expansion that doesn’t exist outside of or separate from crisis and war, but rather intensifies through these periods.



WHAT CAN ARTISTS DO NOW?

John M Armleder, Eglė Budvytė, Juan Blanco (memeclassworldwide), Mateusz Dworczyk (memeclassworldwide), Thomas Feuerstein, Bernhard Garnicnig (Artist Project Group), Lukas Heisteringer (Artist Project Group), Julia Haugeneder, Lucie Kolb, Ramona Kortyka (memeclassworldwide), Jens Van Lathem (Bureau of Analogies/TWIID), Mary Maggic, Walter Pichler, Scott William Raby (Bureau of Analogies/f.eks), Tobias Van Royen (Bureau of Analogies/TWIID), Jennifer Merlyn Scherler (memeclassworldwide), Miriam Simun, Paul Spendier, Peter Sandbichler, Seth Weiner, Franz West, Lois Weinberger

curated by Artist Project Group:
Bernhard Garnicnig, Lukas Heisteringer, Andrea Steves

as part of:
Curated by, Galerienfestival internationaler Kurator*innen, Vienna
Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Vienna

Dossier Design: Seth Weiner
Editing: Andrea Steves

Illustrations: Bernhard Garnicnig

WHAT CAN ARTISTS DO NOW?

