

Preface

Collective

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Overthrowing the artist myth

December 2019: It fell as a minor bomb in the art world, when Oscar Murillo, Tai Shani, Helen Cammock and Lawrence Abu Hamdan, the four short-listed artists for the prestigious British art award, the Turner Prize, were granted the award as a collective. The nominees had worked ahead of the prize committees' decision by founding a collective, that, on their request, were awarded the prize, to be equally distributed between the members of the collective. With this gesture the four artists, who each one of them has a critical and socially oriented artistic practice, wished to oppose the reciprocal competitiveness between the nominees, implied in the mechanics of the prize and the nomination practice in order to “send a strong message about collectivism and solidarity” to a British society historically torn apart by Brexit and a critical election campaign (Prize presenter Edward Enninful at the prize ceremony, BBC December 4, 2019).

As Sarah Charalambides writes in her contribution to this issue of *Peripeti – journal of dramaturgical studies* on “Collective”, the question about commons is “not so much *what* creative practitioners may share, but rather *how* they make connections with others”. This is precisely the lesson realized by the Turner Prize artists. As such, the four artists are not a functioning collective, they do not work together and are not committed to a common project but to each of their individual careers. When they, in spite of this, still insist on acting as a collective in relation to the prizing of their work, it is an expression of a new resistance towards the hyper individualization of the art market that highly profiled awards such as the Turner Prize are part of.

About a month earlier, the Danish author Jonas Eika also intervened radically in a prestigious prize ceremony, when he gave his now fabled acceptance speech upon the reception of the Nordic Council Literature Prize for the short story collection *Efter solen* (*After the sun*, 2018). Doubtless, Eika's speech stirred attention due to its clear political message and opposition to the state racism that Eika identified in the immigration policy of the Nordic countries, and the fact that a number of the responsible politicians, including the Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen, were stuck in the first row, all dressed up for the formal ceremony and struggling to maintain a dignified face for the cameras.

However, in the current context it is foremost the speech's frontal attack of on the implicit premise of the prestigious award that interests us. Like the personal artist interview, a form that increasingly

dominates cultural journalism across the arts, the prize acceptance speech is a format where the artist besides gratitude towards the art institution, is expected to deliver introspection and sincerity while also producing and promoting themselves as the biographical and unique profile behind the work. In a prize acceptance speech, the connection between the individual and the appraised work, is confirmed. The first radical take of Eika's speech is that it refuses to live up to this expectation and instead emphasizes the collective backdrop of the work and connects it to a political and social fight that is also collective:

I stand here in gratitude and tenderness towards those with whom I share my life, those who inspire me, those with whom I think, those with whom I do politics and literature, those with whom I organize myself. The book that receives this prize also exists because of them.
(Eika 2019).

What Eika again reminds us of, is that every art production is based in collective processes, just like Marx has taught us that all societal production is based in collective processes. By simultaneously refusing to invest the expected biographical devoutness in the acceptance speech, he points out how art institutions stubbornly insist upon a logic that rewards the individual performance. As Eika's award-winning prose is a materialization of the fragile "I" whose boundaries to the surrounding world are blurred, his speech underlines, in direct opposition to the logic of individual performance, the fragility of the authorial "I", and its infinite entanglement with other existences.

The collective coup of the Turner Prize and of the Nordic Council's ceremony in Eika's speech both point to prestigious art awards as a regressive weapon for the bourgeois and exclusive art system, that force the artist as individualized interface to perform at the expense of the collective and in addition to this, to say thank you. In this way, they expose the prize cult as a strikingly transparent interface for the competition state and by doing so, they allow themselves to hope for something different.

The critique, of both the Turner Prize nominees provisional collective and of Eika's "ungrateful" speech, has focused on the double standards implied in expressing a systemic critique but nonetheless letting your personal career capitalize on the same system. It is a discussion as inevitable as it is meaningless since nobody ever, as long as their lives are embedded within the capitalist state can count themselves totally "outside" of its economy. The collective gesture of the four Turner Prize nominees has undoubtedly benefitted their individual careers (and has been diligently used by their commercial base to promote them). Critics from the Danish National Party to the Social Democrats have also conscientiously pointed out that Eika's personal brand and book sale has been strengthened by his rebellious acceptance of the Nordic Council's Literature Prize regardless his decision to donate the prize money to activist work with e.g. Luk Lejren (Close the Camps).

Yet there is something both refreshing and encouraging in seeing exactly the prizes, devices that, if

anything, stimulate the production of the individual star artist, being effectively hijacked as highly exposed platforms to present strong statements about collectivism and solidarity.

The return of the collective

In recent years, a number of collective movements has arisen in social and political life, not least in the arts where we, both nationally and internationally, have seen a growth in the emergence of enduring work communities, not only within commonly collaborative artforms such as music, theater and performance art, but also in more traditionally individualized practices such as fine arts, composing and writing. The mapping, analysis, historical contextualization and theoretical discussion of the return of the collective in the arts are at the heart of this issue of *Peripeti*.

The most immediate critical explanations for the return are compensatory: the collectives blossom during a time where the demands on the individual about flexibility, productivity, initiative and individual performance have never been as extensive. At the same time, even in the safe Scandinavian welfare states, we increasingly feel how the collective infrastructures of modernity that until recently served as a stabilizing safety net start to crumble around us: the trains are late, the mail never reaches its addressee, the sewerage breaks down during the autumn storms, the solidary work market is undermined, the news are fake, and human rights do not apply to rejected refugee children (Jackson 2014, Barnes 2017, Mattern 2018).

As a majority of the contemporary artistic contributions to this issue confirm, many of the current collectives operate as a response to this disproportion, as a response to a number of very tangible conditions that contemporary artists and cultural workers are subjected to. In a cultural industry characterized by an increasing precarization, alternative communities can establish a space where the individual in solidarity with others can find the safety, cohesion and recognition that is acutely missing today. In addition to this, the horizontal structure of the collective can show other pathways for the creative process than the established hierarchical distribution of power e.g. between director and actor, that traditionally has dominated the organization of co-creating processes.

Before we focus on concrete artist collectives and their characteristics, we will reflect on what the return of the collective in the arts and in our time is an expression of, besides the compensatory functions. Because, as many of the contributors of this issue describe, collectives also react to the transgressive problems of our time; problems which call for collective solutions and a solidarity that reaches far beyond the intimate, local work community: climate crisis, global inequality, normative identity politics and racism.

If we consider historical collectives in the arts, and especially those who figured in the golden age

of collectivism in the 1960s and 1970s, collective work practices have most often been motivated by the wish to challenge the myth of the solo artist: the notion of the individual, the sovereign and preferably both white and male genius, that has dominated Western art history during the last centuries. By – as for instance Eksskolen and Kanonklubben whose practices are described in Tania Ørum's contribution – abolishing the individual signature and creating collective works, they sabotaged the bourgeois art systems' capitalist logic and suggested a radically different (sharing) economy. The decoupling of the patriarchal artist myth also emancipated a huge feminist potential, both for the artists and their audiences which in the feminist happenings were invited in as active participants in the works as performative processes. But as Ørum's essay also discloses, new hierarchies and mechanisms of exclusion arise with the new forms of organization and numerous examples existed and still exists of how a collective practiced and still exists numerous examples of how a collective practice has functioned as a temporary platform from which the career of the individual artist could rise to the stars at the expense of the collective.

Thus, the artist as the flexible, independent, creative individual whose free expression was stimulated by the 1960s' showdown of academism and other rigid hierarchies, has not alone ended up as a role model for the flexible, innovative, constantly productive and forever precarious worker of the late capitalist, neoliberal workforce. Elements from the artist collectives of that period, as constructions that supply the fragile individual with a certain amount of material and emotional safety and thus supports its unfolding, has also been susceptible to the instrumentalization of an accelerated capitalism.

As both Stefan Hölscher and Charalambides touch upon in their contributions, the collective work practices that thrive in the art world cannot automatically be ascribed a critical potential in the capitalist (art) system. On the contrary, they often function as updated *corporate* versions of the logics of this system, adapted to the neoliberal economy where the collective infrastructures of society no longer support the individual whose productivity instead can be stimulated by exactly the (artist) collective as an enterprise (complete with brand and a corporate identity); a unit that is capable of pulling the maximal creative production from its individually passionate and personally dedicated members.

But luckily this issue of *Peripeti* offers a variety of suggestions of how this risk can be countered. In the article by Andrea Pontoppidan the climate crisis, the weather, is seen as the ultimate collective problem – a condition that connects the whole planet across all borders, but also a condition that affects us differently in different ecosystems and different societal positions, thus enhancing already existing divisions, so that only a troublesome solidarity that is truly inclusive, both locally and globally, become the bearer of hope. The dancers' collective Fanclub's text reflects on a ten-

year long collective practice that along the way has been confronted with challenges that arises if the collective “we” becomes a monolithic group identity that creates its own objects. Fanclub experienced how the hierarchies which they established as collective in order to dissolve, easily return in new ways in the collective processes, if a practice has to be maintained on the terms of the surrounding society. The antidote for Fanclub and others has been to work with an open “we” or to “stay with the trouble” as the Laboratory of Aesthetics and Ecology says it with Donna Haraway. The work with maintenance, tenacity and care for differences has had a renaissance in recent years’ rereadings of second wave feminism and is thus recurrent in a number of this issue’s contributions. What is disturbed, on another note, in For More Than One Voice’s collective readings, is a hierarchy between the creating part and the consuming part: the relation between performer and listener. They challenge the embeddedness of the voice as connected to a specific individual body with specific markers of identity; instead For More Than One Voice want to turn the voice into a choir. The choir shows us, as the writers’ collective BMS formulates it, that “the I is also a we”.

In the occult communities that during the 1980s arose around Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth (TOPY) which Kasper Opstrup in his article trace up to their final dissolution around 2000, the boundaries between art producer, work and audience are dissolved in a semi-fictional worldbuilding. In the expanded occult fan culture that involves cultic membership and ritual actions, the creative processes are distributed into an open membership network. As Opstrup suggests, organizations such as TOPY wants to operationalize the members’ cultural consumption to instantiate a radical change of lifestyle. As such, TOPY creates a fan culture that contains a political utopianism because it wants to dissolve the identity anchorage of the individual and produce a transformative reality for the members of the cult.

Opstrup notes that the fan culture can implicate the cultivation of a star or even guru and in this light, the revolt against the genius cult of the art system can seem superficial. At the same time, the cultic structure opens up towards the fan culture and thereby approach the worldbuilding of popular culture that we know from fantasy universes and musical subcultures. Overall, TOPY’s occult fan cultures can also be seen partly as an analogue frontrunner for a current media ecology where terms as *prosumers*, *convergence culture*, *creative industries* and *media franchising* increasingly dissolve clear divisions between cultural producer and cultural consumer (Jenkins 2006, Johnson 2013). This gives global media conglomerates the opportunity to exploit the worldbuilding potential and the creative energy that alternative communities offer their members, as can be observed in everything from the Marvel universe, the Harry Potter industry and Disney princesses to the Asian vocaloids – and of course the general prosumerism of the social media platforms. The members’ participation in the digital infrastructures is channeled in such a way that it benefits the

media corporations economically (Jørgensen, Vitting-Seerup and Wallevik 2017).

Simultaneously, many contributors to this issue describe how the digital technologies emancipate a new potential for collective co-creation that can evade capitalism. Where for instance the field of theater and performance has always depended on creative co-creation in a group, even if these processes have traditionally been hierarchically organised, then writing – print literature as well as play writing – have been closely connected to the individual as authorial source. But with simple (although not neutral) digital tools such as Google Docs, where several people can work on the same document simultaneously, new ways of working for collective production in writing has been established, as described in the writing collective BMS' contribution to our survey and in Miriam Frandsen's interview with Skrivekollektivet. Online, a common writing situation can be established, where a new anonymity is possible. Writing is cut loose from the individualized body, from the handwriting, which entails increased opportunity for distributed agency. In the work process you have the opportunity to let go of the interface of the individual identity because the anonymity – at least for a while – displaces the individual author-persona. On top of this, a new temporality of simultaneity is introduced when more people write themselves into the same line, simultaneously.

For many artists working today, the artistic work is not something that pours from the self as an original source but rather a dialogical, connected social work, a choir of voices supported by interpersonal relations and alternative infrastructures that make art as collectivism possible in new ways. Lau Tobias Tronegård Madsen retrieves this mindset in the artist collective Sort Samvittighed's work with the performance *I et forhold (In a relationship)*. In his reading, the playful, co-creative engagements with a differentiated, literary historical text material create an anti-hierarchical choir of voices consisting of female, Danish writers from the last 100 years and the members of the collective themselves; a choir, which the audience is invited to find their way into as well. The collective in the arts is thus not only about the production of art but also about the reception of art: about the togetherness between the producers of art and their audience. In the more radical end of this spectrum, both reviews of this issue treat immersive, site specific artworks that each in its own way have the audience as a co-creator and the communities of and connections between the audience members at their center. In Viron Erol Vert and Solvej Helweg Ovesens *Ambereum* at Roskilde Festival it is the festival guests that are invited to slow down the pace and open themselves up to new interpersonal relations (Sofie Volquartz Lebech). In Signa's *Det åbne hjerte (The open heart)* possibilities are investigated of how we as individuals and as a society can establish and practice empathy towards the "suffering" – those who are excluded from the established communities of society (Josefine Brink Siem).

If both reviewed performances can be seen as recognizable works of art that can be experienced by an audience, then another clear tendency connected to the return of the collective, is what we could call the infrastructural activities. At the center of many of the contemporary collectives' work is the establishing and maintenance of publishing channels and small presses, exhibition spaces, curating initiatives and alternative forms of organization as it is the case with Eget Værelse, Laboratory of Aesthetics and Ecology and Marronage. Here the production of real works that can be consumed by an audience is not always at the center. In some cases, there might not be an artwork as such and the infrastructural gesture becomes the actual product, as when Marronage postpone the production of their journal to prioritize the work with supporting a platform at Folkets Hus, that can lend a voice to other marginalized groups. In the collectives of today, it seems as if the DIY-spirit and dissolution of the artwork as artifact and commodity that marked the participatory works of the 1960s and 70s such as the happenings and the Fluxus works, which often came out as a loose or short-lived emancipation of creative energy, have sedimented. Remarkable are also the ambitions of organizing in more viable infrastructures that create permanent and sustainable support for various groups of people. Described in a Marxist vocabulary, the artists with their infrastructural performances often take over the production apparatus that they have produced for but often not co-owned. They now define the production logic and creation of value, that they were until recently subjected to, but have not been allowed to change and have not profited from (Schmidt 2019).

We can talk about infrastructuralism when art projects have the infrastructures as their material. It can be about the redistribution of money and time or common ways of producing. Such a practice can pose a critique of or an intervention into existing infrastructures. It can disturb or make visible infrastructures that are blurred or naturalized by society (and as such seems impossible to resist), or it can establish alternatives (Peters 2015, Daugaard 2018). Collectives create such alternative infrastructures – or they are such structures themselves – when they support the relation between life and work of their members differently than those “who honor the individual performance”. As such, it is also a feminist and infrastructural performance when FAMILIEN rethinks the project temporality of institutional theatre and establishes longer rehearsal periods and shorter workdays.

The characteristics of the artist collective

In a historical perspective, artist collectives have changed political motivation, aesthetic strategies and organizational character many times – the collective still haunts us in new ways. Nonetheless this issue of *Peripeti*, based on the many articles, the curated contributions from the active Danish artist collectives in the survey and the artistic contributions and essays, has inspired us to suggest a number of common characteristics across historical periods, different medias and practices: music, writing, curating and publishing practices and platforms, editorial work and

political activism, theater, dance, performance art, sound art and fine arts. We do this in part to understand collectivity as a radical interruption of the individual artist's signature in a larger perspective of art - and cultural history but also in order to be able to differentiate artist collectives from various temporary constellations of collaboration, interventions or political movements. We have identified five characteristics that seem to recur across the histories of the collective:

Foundation

How an artist collective “found and chose each other” often mark the beginning of a group's biography and is the first question they are asked in interviews. Several of the collectives we write about and present contributions from found each other during their education while others found each other in an aesthetic rebellion or in a political wish for change, and through work communities. We could say that they get together and establish themselves *in opposition to something*, be it an institutional norm, an aesthetic consensus or a political situation. The reason why a collective is a collective is rarely just a structurally determined circumstance but rather a political and artistic choice: either collectives relate to a showdown of the artist genius and the dominance of the individual in the art scene, as when the performance and sound collective We like We suggest “the composer as a group” in classical music and when the collective DANSEatelier work with a rhizomatic structuring and multiple hierarchies; as the writing collective BMS puts it, the fact that they organize themselves as a collective can be seen as a political act that seeks to “challenge the logic that rewards individuals for their performance”; sometimes, the collectives have the experience that the community creates a safe space to be in and to act from, while simultaneously the collective organization is regarded as a positioning, as when Marronage writes that they are better able to “challenge the western colonial mindset” by placing the collective at the center rather than the individual.

Rikke Lund Heinsen's dream about implementing differentiating and inclusive work communities already during the art education speaks for a structural institutional change: to make way for other power structures in the arts than the hierarchical and other processes than the linear. She actually suggests that it is not the job of the artist to compensate for an inherent white, male and power monopolizing logic in (stage) art production but that the education programs must start with collective strategies that both create diversity as a foundation and reclaim the production time as a relative entity.

Economy

Many of this issue's artist collectives more or less explicitly wish to challenge production conditions and - economies. For instance, many of the artists collectives share their salary equally in relation to everything they produce and divide also all rights to their published work between them. As We

like We writes, this is not a favorable model neither economically nor temporally. However, the flat structure makes sense for them, both as human beings and as artists.

To what degree the salary from the collective work makes up their main income differs between the art collectives. For the members of Vontrapp and LOGEN the collective work is not their main income, whereas the collective practice is a large part of the economical foundation for FAMILIEN, who are supplementing with smaller jobs on the side.

Naturally, how much the collective work pays economically will relate to how much time one can continually invest in the collective work. “The question of economy and practicalities easily sneak into the creative room” as FAMILIEN suggests. To many of the contributing artist collectives, it poses a challenge to be responsible for financial, logistic and practical work, while at the same time working to develop experimental and groundbreaking art projects. Vontrapp and LOGEN both address this explicitly. They explain how funding and support from institutions are essential to their collective work. At the same time, it is true for both collectives that the number of hours they work by far exceeds the number of hours they can finance. In this way, time and economy are two problems that continually take up space in relation to collective productions and processes.

The private finances are also often infiltrated in the art practice. This can be followed from the artist collective Corner established in 1932, whose history is traced in Jens Tang Kristensen’s contribution, to all the contemporary collectives from FAMILIEN to Marronage: here the private, social conditions of each member have a say in relation to the need for money. In terms of everyday practicalities, for instance, Marronage rents a shared workspace and divides the expenses according to how much each member can presently afford to pay. The collective sometimes also pays one of the members for a task if the member needs it. When Marronage pays according to need instead of merit, it is because the economy of the collective is informed by the economy of the private sphere.

Sociality

Contrary to many other communities and collaborations of artistic creation, artist collectives have not been to an audition and are not casted or teamed up by a director. Artist collectives have chosen each other – and can only with difficulty deselect each other. In recent theatre- and performance theory, the collective is defined as a horizontal organization where the position of the director or group leader is unworkable because this person *per se* will establish a hierarchy by being the loudest voice to the outside world, the one most frequently portrayed, and often also the one who makes the final decisions by virtue of the position as the outside eye in the process (Matzke 2012).

The artist collective is a particular social unity that is confronted with numerous structural

challenges such as refusal of funding, internal work conflicts and the fluctuations of private life such as break-ups, pregnancies, death in the family and personal crisis. The artist collective is infiltrated into the private sphere and thereby exhibits a distinguishing characteristic well-known from the theorization of the avant-garde (Bürger 1974). Namely, that it often irrevocably reflects the relation between life and art – methodically, economically, infrastructurally and artistically. FAMILIEN describe how they have three rooms they navigate in: the private, the creative and the producing. Here, the friendship between the members of the collective is just as important as the artistic and productive work being performed. Sometimes, the members of FAMILIEN need to remind each other which room they are in at what time, while they at other times are consciously mixing the three rooms in order to build up the “strength and cohesion” of their collective. As they themselves put it, “the people need to go before the product” in order for it to be “safe to embark on uncompromising experiments”. The private is drawn into the collective, especially over time, as the sociality of the private sphere changes from solo lives to more entangled family constellations. This is perhaps most evident in feminist or women’s collectives where members include their children in production processes or artworks or restrict the art production to shorter workdays. But family or alternative affiliations are also a part of the occult communities in the punk collective TOPY: new social units are established where members live together, make art together and watch TV together while synchronically exchanging gender and sharing bodily fluids.

Temporality

Performance theorist Bojana Kunst has addressed the temporality of collaboration in late capitalism. She holds that it cannot be separated from time management as a positive ruling technique in the light of our desperate impotence when it comes to the administration of our own contemporary lives (Kunst 2010). To master the temporality of collaboration is a desirable competence: distributing a task onto more shoulders can be time-saving and create an accelerating synergy of good, common creation processes. The fact that experience with collaboration in the arts sell well in arts in business models is well documented in a wave from *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage* (1999) over *Theatre-in-Business: udfordringer og potentialer* (2011) published by the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen to the launch of the BA course *Performancedesign* at RUC. But the temporality of the collective is not only easy to synchronize and economically profitable. It can be a challenge to coordinate individual calendars, agree on when the workday ends, or simply to bring a discussion to an end and agree on an artistic decision. And it can seem impossible to stick together as an artist collective through childbirths, divorces, internal affairs and abuse, as the *live*-version of Ingild Holm’s lecture performance on the Norwegian theatre and performance collective Baktruppen’s 25 years (1986-2011) – brought here in reduced length – bore witness to.

In academic texts on artist collectives, the collective is explicitly separated from various forms of collaboration (Cvejic 2015, Schmidt 2019): although a collaboration imply collective work processes, it has a short life span compared to the collective whose characteristics only become clear over time. A collaboration is a temporary constellation often defined by the art project or the activism's horizon, whereas a collective is a social grouping over time. As an example, the works of Vontrapp are stretched out over many years. Veit Sprenger's reflections on the oeuvre of Baktruppen show us that the unique contribution of collectives to performance - and art history and theory should be understood across singular artworks.

At the same time, the collective as a common political front challenge a normative production temporality. Several of the collectives in our survey challenge the balance between the necessity of the work and the artists' being-in-the-world as a whole: when Marronage collectively decides not to keep deadlines if activism at Sjælsmark seems more important than the next production of the collective; or when FAMILIEN insists on a rebellion in the production form itself, when they turn to a four day workweek and extend the rehearsal period to have enough time to make art, pick up the kids and accept lucrative jobs that pay the expensive rent in Copenhagen. Eget Værelse also operates with work hours that make space for different life situations to unfold in the collective: to stay abroad, have children and move to the countryside. In the case of Eget Værelse, Vontrapp and FAMILIEN the collective work processes have to accommodate being "a family person, and a good friend with decent work hours, weekends, holidays" as FAMILIEN writes. As several of the contributing collectives write, their slow collective practice is something that more or less consciously is seen as a resistance to the established culture of production and acceleration, that exists in the Danish job market. Historically, a critical temporality of work can be understood as a continuation of the avant-garde movements' blurring of life and work. Here, we find an early example of the collective as an everyday-utopian living- and production unit when the artist collective Corner in the 1930s proclaim that they want to "work, live and travel together" (Jens Tang Kristensen).

Work practices

Many of the addressed and contributing collectives are exploring which different methodological approaches and work practices can be feasible in a collective. As Tania Ørum describes Den eksperimenterende Kunstscole was established in the 1960s with the declared purpose of examining new work practices that set aside the personal ambition, style and vanity of the individual visual artists in advance of the "absolute claim."

Ingvild Holm unfolds how in Baktruppen the all-dominant practice – artistically, structurally and politically – was "the method of WE". That all decisions had to be made in community slowed

down the work process considerably and deciding upon a concept could take a long time. The conversations grew long and the rehearsal period short but the brief rehearsal period also became a contributing ingredient in the unique aesthetics of failure where bad performing was being elevated, cultivated and celebrated. This cultivation of failure makes Veit Sprenger refer to the collective as “tragedians”.

The collective as a band is one of the more reoccurring descriptions of how it is possible to cocreate as a group of strong individuals. BMS, We like We and LOGEN all refer to their collective work practice as a band which gives them the strength to do things they would never do individually. Eget Værelse, whose common artistic project is the band Selvhenter, describe their collective practice as a practice where each one can “evolve in dialogue/collaboration with her peers/equals/colleagues. Everyone inspires each other. The essence is the balance between the common and individual goals/ambitions.”

For several of the collectives in the survey there is a protest embedded in the work practice applied; Marronage publish text written by two or more members of the collective in order to establish different voices and positions and thereby strengthen the diverse identity of the community. In this way they are able to favour the collective over the individual. The meetings at the Laboratory of Aesthetics and Ecology are based on the feminist basis-group practice (a Danish feminist tradition with a specific protocol of conversing, red.), creating the framework for their difficult work with decolonizing themselves as “white, able-bodied, cis-women,” as they put it. As one way of working, the writing collective BMS are exploring the platform Google docs as a technological tool that enables them to write anonymously – but not facelessly – simultaneously or displaced in time.

More artist collectives such as BMS, LOGEN and FAMILIEN use dogma and rituals as platforms from where they can establish a common speech practice. BMS regard the witch circle as a feminist strategy with rituals where the spells and enchantments take the shape of poems in their work with uni- and polyphony. FAMILIEN and LOGEN explore how they can create rituals or develop and utilize a set of dogma to facilitate a movement in and out of different disciplines and areas of expertise. Here, actors can be part of artistic decisions concerning dramaturgy and staging in a desire to make all members of the stage artistic process equal. As both LOGEN and FAMILIEN stress, it is crucial for the interdisciplinary collective work practice that all collaborators agree with and perhaps even support this practice.

Reaction to the contemporary situation

Last, but not least, artist collectives can be read as reaction – compensatory, repairing or angry – towards their contemporary situation: they function as a developing fluid in a cultural analysis that

aims to uncover the historical relationship between the individual and its sociality, the relationship between art and politics and the relationship between work and life. As such, we see the first sharing economies being established in artist groups of the 1920s and 30s while the Depression is spreading, and fascism is attempting to mobilize the masses struck by poverty. We see collective artist's signatures and activist groups join forces in the 1960s and create "oppositional spaces" (Melucci via Ørum): they perform alternative world orders and restructure and create new access to the exclusive institutions of art – the academies and the exhibition spaces – in society. We see women's collectives in the 1970s that with equal part feminist basis-group and performance create new forms of protest and of new ways of being in art. In the 1980s punk movement TOPY artists and activists are reacting to the society of spectacle and its deceptive image politics. In 2020 we register decolonization, anti-whiteness communities, feminist practices, climate hope and interest in communities and types of connection that reach beyond the individual. In contemporary infrastructural, collective performances the agents are – in a desire to live in more caring and less destructive ways – trying to reimagine and reconstruct a society controlled by inherited privilege; the negative discrimination of people and citizens, as it is experienced in relation to the internment of refugees in camps and with the "ghetto package" in Denmark, the maintenance of a patriarchal and capitalist world order, where greedy speculation in the insecurity of others and a global economic inequality are on the rise.

Collective horizons

In her book *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), Judith Butler has written about the performative force of the collective: when assemblies perform resistance in contemporary rebellions, as in Black Lives Matter, at the Tahrir Square in Cairo or wearing #metoo hats in front of The White House, it is not only – as suggested by performance theory in the 1990s – an identity being renegotiated and altered, but actually a collective rationale being squashed. Thus, when artist collectives are performing different conditions of production and different types of authorship, different ways of being in the world in the plural – or polyvocally, in concert, as Butler calls it, and she is quoting Hannah Arendt – then it is contributing to alter norms of distribution politics and production aesthetics, but also to changing the way the audience is allowed to encounter, participate in and perceive artworks.

In this light, focusing on the identity of the artist, as the determining source of the artwork, or as a performative work in its own right (Hölscher), appears a strikingly limited perspective on art. Yet we experience strong tendencies in mainstream culture and the supportive structures, that keeps art locked in economic structures such as the copyright and in an understanding of art that maintains the recognizable author as the interface if individual identity.

Most recently, however, the collective impulse has demonstrated its power to fight exactly the exclusive status of the artist as individual genius. For example – as was illustrated in the first paragraphs by the four recipients of the 2019-Turner Prize and Eika’s speech at the prize ceremony for The Nordic Arts Council – by parasiting on some of the most hard-lived individualizing mechanisms of the cultural industry, and turning their frenzied logic of high performance upside down: sharing the prize, kidnapping the acceptance speech.

At the same time, it seems a mandatory task for us as academics that we do not uncritically romanticize the return of the collective and the communities it fosters. That we also keep an attention toward the mechanism of exclusion internally in the “we” of the strong collectives and the way in which hierarchic structures have a habit of returning when you least expect to encounter them (Fanclub). The precarious life conditions are all the more acute when one is threatened by exclusion. As academics we have the pen to write collectives into and out of history, and Veit Sprenger actually points to the lack of theoretical reflection and discussion of the oeuvre of Baktruppen as the possible deathblow of the group in 2011: “An addressee was missing who would be able to contextualise the group’s work within wider aesthetic movements, above and beyond the acute events of a particular evening in the theatre.”

For us, what has been decisive for *Peripeti’s* “Collective” issue, is to establish horizons. The horizons of 2020 are pieced together from the curated contributions from contemporary Danish artist collectives presented in the survey, the selected articles, the artistic contributions, essays and the interview. Together, these diversified contributions form a diachronic image of the possible ontology of the collective, but also an insight into the specific historical periods, different work practices, and different media and forms of organization of artist collectives.

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