

## **Work in contradictions: The Open Brief and Incidental Person revisited**

6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Assembly Hall Nürtingen Primary School, Berlin-Kreuzberg

Concluding Symposium of the exhibition

'Context is Half the Work – A Partial History of the Artist Placement Group'



The symposium 'Work in Contradictions: Open Brief and Incidental Person Revisited', organised by Janna Graham and Carmen Mörsch, aimed to revisit the core concepts of the Artist Placement Group (APG) in the issues related to socially practiced art today. Between 1966 and 1984, the APG conceived and organised so-called 'placements' in businesses and public institutions, mainly in the UK. Within the context of each of these institutions, APG artists conducted research and, in addition to art works, produced studies with recommendations towards improving the conditions for workers, service users, citizens and managers. Active into the 1980s, with a fluctuating membership, APG placements produced a wide variety of results (cf. the Artist Placement Group archive in the Tate Modern <http://www2.tate.org.uk/artistplacementgroup/>). Central to the contractual agreement with the collaborating institution was what was called 'the open brief', which was intended to guarantee a degree of freedom in the processes and results of the artistic activities. Artists were positioned as 'incidental persons' – intermediaries who, being unbiased, interrupted the binary oppositions in social settings – with a view to finding new solutions. The exhibition in the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien (an exhibition space in Berlin), curated by Naomi Hennig and Ulrike Jordan, was the first APG exhibition in Germany after a hiatus of almost 40 years.

At the symposium, six detailed presentations of placements showed the, in part, conflict-laden negotiation processes around the Open Brief and the related idea of artistic autonomy. At the centre of the symposium's concluding session was the question of the validity of the concepts and strategies of the APG today, against the background of an omnipresent 'creative' entrepreneurial imperative fuelling strategies of contemporary governance. What were – and are – the conflicts of interest in artists' collaborations with local communities and commercial entities? What can one learn from the APG practices in relation to present conditions? These questions were discussed with a view to current debates and artistic practices in social contexts in the presence of a number of former APG artists, colleagues from various placements, an

international public invested in these questions and, importantly, groups of students working at the intersection of art and social contexts. The event was conceived as a space for sharing ideas and discussions – around half of those present contributed actively while the other half consisted of interested participants. A content-rich program was built around four APG Placements from different fields: social, educational, industrial and city district work. The following is a review.

### **Study day in the exhibition**

At the start of the symposium 'Work in Contradictions: Open Brief and Incidental Person Revisited', a Study Day provided the participants with an opportunity to engage with the APG placements exhibited in the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, and to develop their own views and questions. The exhibition curators, Naomi Hennig and Ulrike Jordan, presented an introduction to the exhibition, and symposium participants who had been involved in the APG placements, i.e., historical witnesses, reported on the projects and were available to take questions.



Study Day





Study Day discussion with Barbara Steveni and  
Garth Evans

### **Welcome address and contextualisation**

The symposium opened with a plenary session at the end of the study day. Ruth Gilberger, Chairperson of the Montag Stiftung Kunst und Gesellschaft, gave a brief presentation in which she underscored the continued importance of the APG and its work: the fundamental integration of art in society cannot take place without partnerships, and thus the concepts of the APG and the Open Brief continue to be relevant to this day. The curators, Ulrike Jordan and Naomi Hennig, followed this with a summary of the concept for the Berlin APG exhibition in the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien: "We have selected what we consider to be the 'most interesting' and 'most important' APG projects carried out in the UK and in Germany in the last 20 years. Certain things were shown, others not; we chose to shine a spotlight on certain areas."





Exhibition view

From the point of view of the curators, the concepts of 'Incidental Person' and 'Open Brief' distinguish the APG from other contemporary art initiatives. Hennig and Jordan explained their relevance for today's artistic activity: "The Open Brief protects the essence of artistic processes that, in most cases, develop over a longer time frame and involve uncertain results. With the current trend of institutionalisation and the omnipresent demand for measurability, such an open approach has become relevant again."

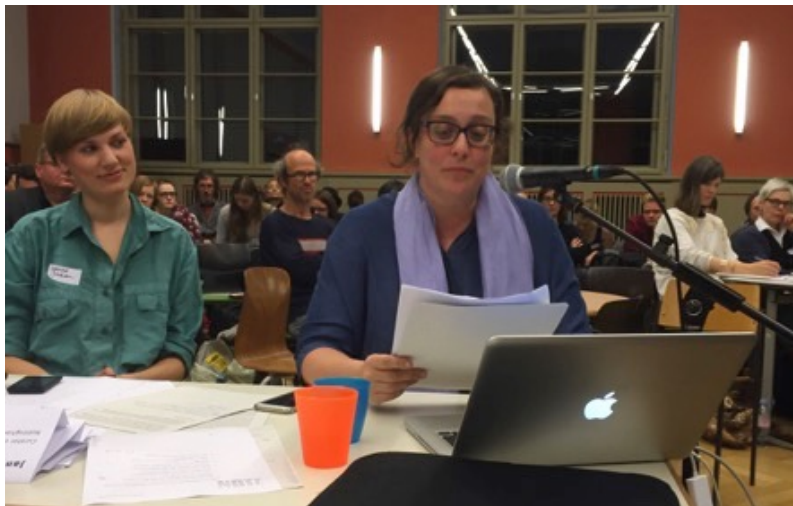
The 'Incidental Person', a term coined by APG to avoid the term 'artist', stands for a new artist's role, distinguishing it from traditional relationships, such as sponsoring or patronage. But in the current context, it is necessary to ask whether this image of 'not being governed' could be anything but illusory. The question whether those working in the cultural sector could position themselves outside of 'the system' had, according to Hennig and Jordan, already been asked in 1978 – and is aimed at one of the most frequently formulated criticisms of the APG, according to which, it supports 'the system' by working within it.

To illustrate this criticism, a historical document was read out that contained questions formulated by the public during an APG event in 1978:

1. APG is supporting the System by working in it, unless it can demonstrate that it is changing it.
2. APG cannot or will not demonstrate a product. What is APG's product?
3. What real value has APG for the ordinary people of the modern world?
4. What's in it for individual members of APG?
5. What sort of art form actually comes out of APG's work?
6. What does APG actually change?

(Conference London Riverside Studio, 16th July 1978)

Despite the amount of time that has passed, the questions have not lost any of their relevance and should be discussed again today, according to the curators. With this, the link between the APG concepts and today's art context was made, and, following on words of thanks to those who gave their support to the symposium, the podium was given to Janna Graham, who outlined the relevance of the APG for the UK.



Introduction Janna Graham (r.)

The APG experienced something of a renaissance in the last decade. In recent times, various exhibitions have been concerned with the different practices of the 1960s and 70s, including a major survey of APG's work at Raven Row. Graham herself came across the APG during her studies in Leeds in the 1990s as an interest in 'socially engaged arts' was re-emerging. In the early 2000s, Barbara Stevini - an APG founder- was, for example interviewed as part of a series of Arts Council discussions on the topic. This re-emergence of APG practices in relation to her own as an artist, curator and organiser involved in this field raised questions for Graham: How can one work with the archives of participatory practices, making them accessible without resorting to simplification? Who recounts collaborative or 'placement' projects? Which narratives and voices are included and which are left out? What questions can we put to the archives? What contradictions and what connections to the present are residing there?

Following on this, Carmen Mörsch made just such a connection by transferring the context of the APG in the UK to the present and German-speaking areas. She presented a brief overview of education for artists working in pedagogical and social contexts developed in the 1970s in the pilot project, Further Education for Artists, within which the APG represents an important and

controversial reference. Mörsch suggested, "...To question the role of artists, of art in society, is becoming increasingly important as it becomes more mainstream. This means having to work in contradictions. Taking a closer look at the APG as an historical example can be very productive in the discussion of current conditions."

Taking place on the last weekend of the exhibition, the symposium then took a closer look at the works resulting from the APG placements and their theoretical relevance from three different perspectives. 1) Students from different master's programs (in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) used study groups to carry out in-depth studies of one of the placements or core concepts. 2) The Nürtingen Primary School, in whose auditorium the conference took place, was included as an example of a current collaboration between a school and artists. 3) The presence of former participants, APG artists, Barbara Steveni, Garth Evans, Roger Coward, Rolf Sachsse, as well as APG project collaborators, Mick Kemp and Pauline Walton, and other experts from Germany and the UK made this a valuable opportunity for exchanges. Additional presentations provided current complementary perspectives, which served to elucidate subsequent conflicts and contradictions.



## **I. SOCIAL SERVICES**

Chair: Janna Graham

Respondents: Mick Kemp (APG Placement Reminiscence Aids Project)

Paper: Elizabeth Araújo Lima

Study Groups: Master Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)/  
Institute of Art in Context, Berlin University of the Arts (UdK)

APG Placement Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) II, 1978–79

Nick Alderton, Ian Breakwell, Hugh Davies, Bill Furlong, Mick Kemp, Rowan Matthews, Carmel Sammons and David Toop.



Barbara Steveni and Mick Kemp

Brief description of the APG project:

*'Reminiscence Aids' were conceived as audio-visual devices combining photographic slides and tape-recorded sound from the past, to be played to elderly people suffering from dementia and memory-loss in order to activate communication between generations, and as a mental exercise with positive therapeutic effects. The concept originated from an idea by Mick Kemp, a Principal Architect in the DHSS, who was in charge of research into accommodation for elderly people in need of care.*

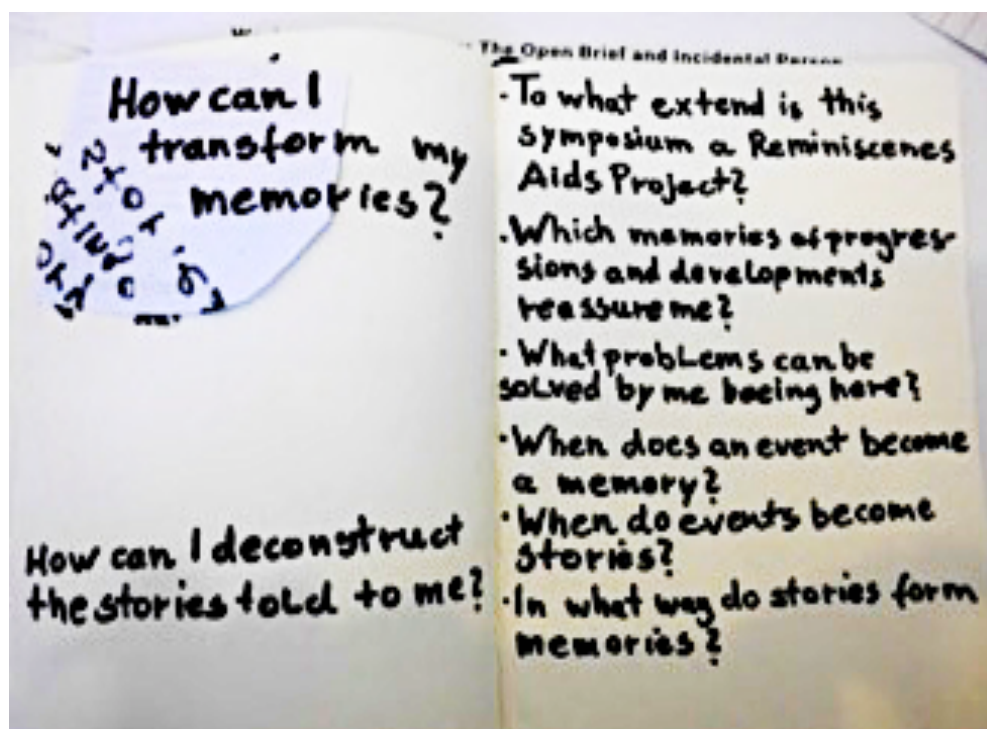
*Following discussions with specialists in psycho-geriatric medicine and with APG artists, Kemp was encouraged to develop the idea through research, and set up an interdisciplinary team of clinical and artistic members. APG was commissioned, through sound artists Bill Furlong, Hugh Davies and David Toop, to administer the arts aspects of this research project. Ian Breakwell, who was also involved, later left the team to concentrate on his studio work. After some promising test results, it was decided to structure the material into time periods, and extensive research in photo-archives and the BBC sound archive began. An effort was made to consult 'elderly alert people', and the project was introduced through several radio broadcasts and printed press, calling for elderly people to send in letters with their memories, to be used as a basis for the 'Reminiscence Aids' audio-narrations.*

*The project was perceived as creative and artistic, and while based on discussion and improvisation, sometimes it combined conflicting positions. Ian Breakwell and environmental psychologist Rowan Matthews advocated non-linear and subjective archetypal memories as opposed to preconceived ideas and media-generated images of a past that was structured historically. Debates arose around the nature of the archival material used, and also around the testing procedure of the product, which attempted to meet scientific standards. The completed Reminiscence Aids kits were promising enough*



*to be further developed under supervision of team member Carmel Sammons, in order to be marketed through the charity Help the Aged under the brand name 'Recall', for use in hospitals and care homes.*  
*(Out of the exhibition catalogue)*

In his talk, Mick Kemp, who was the originator of the APG project as an architect and employee of the Ministry of Health, described the basis for his work, which concerned contemporary political contexts, the professionalisation of the public health system and the residents of nursing homes, who were being more or less 'parked' in front of television sets. One question that interested him was what happened with older people and what image did society have of them. It occurred to him that older people themselves are writing history. In the collected experiences of a life he saw a singular value. The inclusion of a greater variety of different perspectives should pose a counterpoint to hegemonic history writing. Kemp later saw the documentation of memory as a possible method in the struggle against privatisation, in which those affected documented the evictions from their homes. The presentation by the first study group (Institute of Art in Context, Berlin University of the Arts), based on Mick Kemp's account, raised a number of questions:



- To what extent is this symposium a Reminiscence Aids Project?
- Which memories of progressions and developments reassure me?
- What problems can be solved by me being here?
- When does an event become a memory?
- When do events become stories?
- In what way do stories form memories?
- How can I deconstruct the stories told to me?
- How can I transform my memories into action?





Contribution Study Groups Master TRANS, Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD – GENEVA) and Master Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

Following on this, a study group from the Master's Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts, raised questions on how the role of artists relates to the Romantic ideal of the genius and an inferred artistic freedom. And finally, the question was posed as to whether an artist can save the world – or even should. After a brief discussion on the questions and the APG project, Elizabeth Araújo Lima, therapist, theorist and professor at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of São Paulo, provided a view into the relationship between art and the public health system in the social context of Brazil. She introduced two artists, Fernando Diniz and Osório Cesar, who have both combined art with therapeutic experiences. During the discussion that followed Araújo's presentation, a participant of an APG project from Birmingham raised a question on the role of theory. This highlighted the complexity of the relationship between art and theory, particularly with regard to the 1970s when theory could equally mean liberation as well as oppression. And, while the APG did not actively articulate its theoretical foundation in projects, it was nevertheless present in its work.

## II. EDUCATION

Chair: Carmen Marsh

Respondents: Barbara Steveni (on O + I education placement, 1989-92. ILEA and London borough of Southwark.); Nanna Lüth

Study Groups: Institute of Didactics of Art and Aesthetic Education, Berlin University of the Arts / Institute for Art and visual Culture, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg/

Master TRANS – Art-Education-Engagement, Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD – GENEVA)

### Brief description of the APG project

#### *SERP – Southwark Educational Research Project, 1989-1991*

*SERP was the first project by O+I: Organisation and Imagination, the organisation that followed APG. It was initiated along APG principles, as exemplified in the Open Brief or the Incidental Person. The project was negotiated between O+I, ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) and the Borough of Southwark. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1990, the project was approved at the first meeting of the new local school superintendents of the districts. The borough provided a space for the O+I in a former school where meetings took place on a regular basis. The O+I artists worked at six primary and six secondary schools. There was a core group to which John Latham, Rita Keegan, Carlysle Reedy, Robena Rose and Barbara Steveni belonged. It was Steveni's aim to include more female artists, compared with the APG. At the end of the project, there was an exhibition with a video installation in Southwark's town hall, in which various participants spoke about the project. An important result, which was also presented on this occasion, was a proposal entitled, Recycle and Discuss, an initiative by John Latham, which was to be implemented on various levels.*

*The project also served as a basis for Steveni's 'Southwark Walk'.*

### **"I will be archived and I am an archive." (Barbara Steveni)**

In a talk with Nanna Lüth, Barbara Steveni described the SERP school project in Southwark, which was not part of the exhibition in the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien. Steveni described how it started: "The project came about quite spontaneously. I carry the memory within me, I have the documents – so at the same time, I will be archived and I am an archive." In contrast to the placements in which artists worked in business or administration, the context was more concerned with education. The project was negotiated towards the end of 1989; Southwark was the chosen location as it was considered a typical microcosm of contemporary British society with respect to changes in the structure of the population and the concomitant changes in the education sector. O+I was invited to, among other things, look into the issue of a relatively high number of early school leavers. But, it appears that the group succeeded in ignoring the task and pursued its own aims. To begin with, a letter with information on the planned project was sent to all the schools in the district, inviting those interested to respond. As a result, six artistic interventions were carried out in six primary and six secondary schools. There were artist talks, collaborations with the Brixton Art Gallery, Breakwell's 'recycle and discuss' sessions and mixed media workshops with the artist Rita Keegan, a black artist who worked with forms of memory, documentation and collage. Steveni: "We worked with everyone throughout the schools, with the school authorities, the heads and the teachers and also with the students."

Steveni described the collaboration with the teachers as mixed; some turned down the project, others enjoyed collaborating. The latter saw art as an important factor towards bridging social differences in a multicultural environment. In a recorded interview segment, Rita Keegan pointed out the incisive effect that Thatcher's conservative government had achieved with the

disempowerment of the GLC, the Greater London Council and the ILEA, which was part of the GLC, in precisely those two years.



Study Groups Institute of Didactics of Art and Aesthetic Education (Berlin University of the Arts) and Institute for Art and visual Culture (Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg)

### **Nürtingen Primary School: A Social Meeting Place**

The following contribution is concerned with the Nürtingen Primary School in Berlin, which hosted the symposium. It is a space where lessons take place and where, since recently, artists are also at work. Anna Chrusciel, who led the development project, *Tür an Tür – Ausweitung der Schulzone* (Door to door – extending the school zone, working title), defined one of its goals as promoting the collaboration between the school and the artists, as well as other actors outside the school. Teachers, parents, the school director and various artists are all involved in the project. The aim was to establish a collaboration that should continue over an extended period and at the same time bring about a development in the school.



Markus Schega, head teacher of the Nürtingen primary school, Berlin

Although a hierarchy, which the school produces, or, reproduces, cannot be denied in this context, for Anna Chrusciel, the idea of making the most of the school's potential as a meeting place was central. Currently, two developments can be observed at the Nürtingen Primary School. One result of a merger with the neighbouring school is that more spaces that can be used for these activities have become available. This raised the question of who one would like to have as one's neighbour. At the same time, the school grew larger, as a growing number of parents – primarily individuals with a higher education – wished to enrol their children, which has now led to new tensions in the sense of a 'gentrification of the school'.

One of the teachers from the Nürtingen Primary School spoke about the shifts in the function of art within the school context in the past and today. In the 1970s and 80s, it was often necessary to oppose extremely strict systems. While art had the task of breaking up such restrictive structures and to make these a bit freer, today, in a school context which has a stronger focus on self-organised learning and the development of the student's personality, its task is rather to create reliability and new meeting spaces.

A former Nürtingen Primary School teacher, who is also an assistant in the project, posed a question relating to the APG that was also of interest to the project participants: "Who should be invited and how, in order to ensure that all the relevant groups are represented?" What stories would become visible, which voices heard? One of the three artists who had moved their studios to the school premises, explained his motivation for this step with his interest in the 'poetry of everyday life' through spontaneous encounters. He had not come in order to help. Through the presence of the children he, on the contrary, has received input and help for his work.



Following this statement, two study groups joined in: Students from the study group of the Institute for Art in Context of the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) asked whether the O+I considered itself an advisory agency that tried to change the perspectives of the authorities or a group of artists/activists who promoted learning processes and self-expression through artistic input. In addition, they asked how the concept of the 'incidental person' could function in schools and what experiences had been made with the concept 'recycle and discuss'. By whom, with whom, how often was it realised, and whether it was conceptualised to be carried out with students in the classroom or also with teachers and politicians?

The participants of the study group of the Institute for Art and Visual Culture at the Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg, joined in with the question of whether the artists of the O+I saw themselves as outsiders in the context of the school, and the extent to which this role might



change during the project. The question was also posed whether the APG wanted to change the structure of the school, and if yes, how this approach functioned on the different levels.

Barbara Steveni then described the process and said that the roles of the artists had changed during the course of the project – which became evident in the discussions with the teachers and parents, and served as a forum for reflection. In connection with this, Steveni emphasised how important it is, in her view, not to have a business plan or a manifesto in order to be sufficiently flexible for such changes. Upon this remark, a debate ensued on the strengths and weaknesses of manifestos. One of the study groups interjected that manifestos could represent a defence mechanism against rules. The view that manifestos could serve as legitimisation and identification was also put forth. The manifesto was also referred to as an instrument that could be implemented in order to assert oneself against the art market.

With regard to the practices of the APG, there is much that has changed. Digitalisation has also had an effect on communication. The question should therefore be how the practices of the APG could be implemented constructively from today's perspective, rather than whether one should still be writing manifestos.

### III. INDUSTRIES

Chair: Sophie Hope

Respondents: Garth Evans (APG Placement British Steel); CommunityArtWorks

Paper: Carmen Mörsch

Study Group: Master Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK),  
Institute of Art in Context, Berlin University of the Arts (UdK)

Brief description of the APG project:

*Garth Evans' two year placement in the British Steel Corporation (BSC) was agreed on the basis of a pre-existing fellowship programme of the BSC, that until that point had only been directed at scientists. It was the first placement that the APG had successfully negotiated. The contractual agreement was actually made with St. Martins School of Art, where Evans taught sculpture. He had previously never worked with steel and set out to research the various production methods and material qualities of steel for his sculptural practice. The BSC, the parent company created by the nationalisation of the steel industry in 1967, hoped that the placement would demonstrate the versatility of the material beyond its industrial processing.*

*During his placement, Evans visited various steelworks around the UK, and familiarised himself with the production methods. Through photography, a selection of which was later published by the BSC (Some Steel, 1971), Evans learnt about the material qualities of the medium. He also discovered aesthetic sculptural qualities in the welded exercise pieces of the apprentices, but did not, however, begin to produce sculpture from steel himself until late in his placement (Breakdown 1971, Spring, 1972). Plans to work in*

*a disused steelworks failed due to the lack of support on the part of those responsible at the BSC.*

*Evans' interests were not limited to processing techniques. He became increasingly interested in the corporate culture of large corporations. The question of what the contribution of an artist in such a context could be, prompted him to write several concept papers that he discussed with representatives of the BSC. In the papers he argued that the BSC had failed to offer the employees a meaningful, enriching work experience and to support the workers in identifying with their work. Here Evans identified a field of activity for artists in an industrial context beyond the production of conventional artworks. While BSC representatives received Evans' sculptural activity very positively, they were rather sceptical of his ideas on corporate culture.*

*(Out of the exhibition catalogue)*



Garth Evans

In a discussion with Sophie Hope, the artist Garth Evans reported on his placement with the BSC, where it was required that he deliver quarterly reports on his work. Evans, who grew up in a mining family, described how he entered into the project under the impression that the employees at the steel corporation were 'his people'. This was not the case; as an artist, he felt out of place in the setting. And, in the industrial context, encounters with the employees were relatively limited.

Following on Garth Evan's report on the project, Carmen Mörsch gave a short lecture in which she provided an overview of the historical processes on the formation of artistic subjectivity in Great Britain. Mörsch emphasised that early on, the figure of the artist was connected with an idea of the education of subjects who were defined as deficient, and with the improvement of society. Negotiations on who was entitled to possess 'taste' played as much a role as the question of the relationship of art to the sciences, which represented an important issue in legitimising artistic practice.



Carmen Mörsch

Claudia Hummel then presented an artist's project that took place in Berlin in 1979, which was followed by a report given by the German artist duo Jennifer Hoernemann and Walbrodt (Communityartwork), who set up a studio in an IT firm and worked there for a specified period. They considered their approach to be an artistic intervention. By creating new routes in and through the office space with new materials and the use of their own bodies, they provoked irritation among the employees of the IT firm. The feedback after the conclusion of the project stressed that the interventions gave individuality a higher value.

In the contributions that followed, the study group of the Master's Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and the Institute of Art in Context, Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) dealt with the characteristics of the Incidental Person. They put this in relation to how artists are viewed today, enhanced by quotations on the character of the artist from different eras and contexts. In the following discussion, the function of the artist as a catalyst was brought forward in numerous examples: the artist as a figure who can make something happen, as someone who is capable of provoking change. However, it is problematic that cooperation with the management is required, making the artist the ally of the neoliberal. This prompted the question: Whom are we working for and how do we position ourselves within this framework? Garth Evans' response was that he had not necessarily seen himself as a catalyst. What had happened during the project was that the experiences had changed *him* – and not the industry.



Lunch

#### IV. URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Chair: Nora Sternfeld

Respondents: Roger Coward, Pauline Walton, (APG Placement, DOE/ Inner Area Study Birmingham); Rolf Sachsse

Paper: Barby Asante and Etienne Joseph

Study Group: Master Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)/  
Institute of Art in Context, Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), Master TRANS – Art-Education-Engagement, Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD – GENEVE)

##### Brief description of the APG project:

*The APG negotiated a memorandum in 1972 with the Civil Service Department, and worked with various agencies and ministries to develop placements in the following years. In 1974 the Department of the Environment agreed, after lengthy negotiations with the APG, to finance a two-month feasibility study by the documentary filmmaker Roger Coward in the Small Heath district of Birmingham. A team of urbanists and sociologists worked on an Inner Area Study (IAS) with the aim of developing urban renewal for the dilapidated and neglected city district. Although certain methodological approaches had initially been agreed upon, such as working with audiovisual media, the IAS team was open to the idea of an open-ended working process.*

*As part of the feasibility study, Coward realised video workshops with local residents which documented the gradual decline of the neighbourhood and made their view of the neighbourhood clear to the planning authorities. The workshops were well received and led in some cases to the creation of local residents initiatives. The authorities were pleased by the results of the feasibility study and approved a three-month placement for Coward and four other artists. In addition to the continuation of the video workshops Coward, together with Gavin Brown, Roland Lewis, Evadne Stevens and Frances Viner, developed plays with local residents and amateur theatre groups. The joint development of the theatre pieces was key, based on the conviction that the concrete experience of cooperation in the group could lead to a better understanding of social dynamics within the neighbourhood.*

*Coward generated a wealth of material for his film 'The Most Smallest Heath in the Spaghetti Junction' (1977) during the two phases of the placement, a film dealing with the verbal and visual communication processes between Small Heath residents and policy makers. The team leader of the IAS Birmingham, Peter Walding, wrote a detailed report at the end of the placement which was published by the DoE, which critically evaluated the project in addition to Coward's own report, 'All Fine and Context'.  
(Out of the exhibition catalogue)*





Master Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

The study group responded to the question of how APG methods could be applied today with the suggestion that one would first have to implement the methods of the APG as a trial and see what types of questions result. Thus inspired, some of the symposium participants spontaneously went out into the neighbourhood streets in the vicinity of the event. By going to various shops – from the newsagent to the tailor – they tried to explore the possibilities for an 'artist placement' in the area. It quickly became evident that what was most urgently required was to find a language with which to explain the project. The introductory words on 'who we are and what we do' changed after the first few attempts, where social differences had played an important role. Finally, the group came to Modulator, a shop for art supplies. It was the first place where the employees understood the project without the need for much explanation. But as Modulator already had a 'self-optimising group', a project in which artists could play a part in the business lacked potential.



The report on the short, self-initiated experiment was followed by a discussion with Roger Coward and Pauline Walton. Coward, who had been a member of the APG and had, in 1974, carried out the above-described study in Birmingham, had also collaborated on the tie-in project in Small Heath (Birmingham). Pauline Walton was one of the participants who played an important role and collaborated in writing the piece for the theatre. She was part of a citizen's group in Small Heath and a member of the first group to take part in Roger's project. Walton

made the critical remark that she had, until then, seen herself as a driving force in the project, but within the framework of the symposium, she came to realise that she had in fact been relegated to the role of a recipient. The project, by implementing documentary films, had at the time helped the residents present their case to the city.



Etienne Joseph, Barby Asante, Nora Sternfeld and Roger Coward



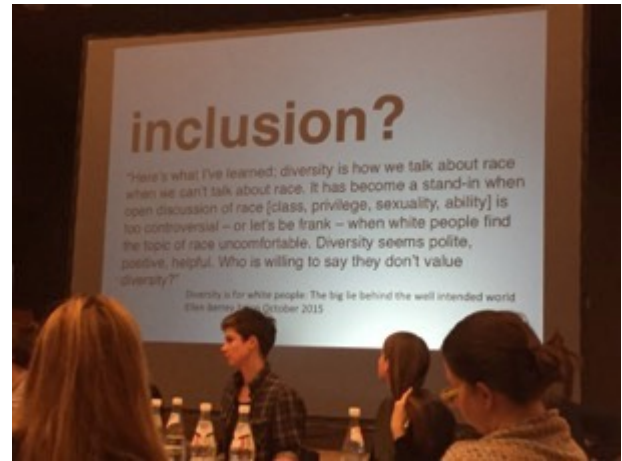
Pauline Walton (Microphone / Screen)

Coward confirmed this statement from his point of view: what had been most important was not to work 'from the top down', but to give one's attention to the real needs of the people; in this case, their living conditions. Rolf Sachsse, lecturer in the history of design at the HBK Saar and former member of the APG, then reported that, in Germany in the mid-1970s, an interest in the APG projects had existed at the highest political and societal levels, even within the government's ministries – something almost unimaginable in today's world.

Barby Asante and Etienne Joseph made a link back to the UK. In her work, the London artist, curator and pedagogue, Barby Asante, focuses on space, identity constructs and socio-political inheritance in postcolonial and so-called 'multicultural' societies. The main focus of her work is on unheard narratives by persons of colour in the UK. Etienne Joseph, researcher and pedagogue with a wealth of experience in the field of community art, addresses questions relating to history and decolonising practices. Asante, who grew up in London and worked in teaching institutions pointed out that while her personal experiences recognised the continuing relevance of the APG concepts, there is at the same time a question about how the events were reported and disseminated. Barby Asante saw a connection between her own work and the APG in her project *Baldwin's Nigger Reloaded*, which began in July, 2015 at the Institute for International Visual Arts in London and through which she has involved young people in revisited the archive around James Baldwin's visit to the UK. With regard to this project, Joseph stressed the importance of questions on belonging, about fractures, and where one positions oneself and one's choice of partner.



Presentation Etienne Joseph, Barby Asante



Presentation Etienne Joseph, Barby Asante

The study group of the Master's in Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) addressed the question concerning the role of the artist and what differentiates her/him from the scientist with a performance of their own.



Performance: Study Group Master Transdisciplinary Studies, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

The work group of the Master's TRANS – Art-Education-Engagement, Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD) reported on a project in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Geneva, to which the students had been invited in order to develop spaces for community activities. The study group saw a connection to the APG in the collaborative processes and in the exhibition of archive documents. Discussions also concerned whether an artist in a placement functions as a catalyst. Finally, the third study group from the Institute of Art in Context, Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) presented questions in the form of a montage of statements made over the years and in various contexts. In response, Steveni stated that it should be taken into consideration that in the 1970s, there were many participants in the APG circle who were opposed to documentation. What has been documented and quoted is just what survived; a small selection of the whole.

## **Final Round**

At the end of the symposium, the participants expressed their appreciation. For example, Barbara Steveni concluded that it had been possible to address many things that had previously not occurred to her. She found the students' contributions encouraging and was pleased that the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanian exhibition had been so useful as a starting point for the discussions. Garth Evans added that he found the skilful manner in which the study groups had formulated questions very moving. It showed a high level of intellectual engagement. He then thanked Barby and Etienne, and said it was important to be reminded that he, despite having grown up in an underprivileged segment of British society, was nevertheless privileged – as a white man. Other participants, who had skipped the afternoon session to join an anti-fascist rally, suggested the importance of linking placements and other artistic activities to contemporary grassroots struggle. The symposium activated material from the exhibition 'Context is Half the Work – A Partial History of the Artist Placement Group', thus representing a special form of teaching in which theory and practice were negotiated, and categories and definitions discussed. The symposium finished with a call by Barbara Steveni for a more extensive immersion in the work, that is, in the 'reactivated' material.