

The Conscious Effort Fort

Juan Duque. There is a constant in your practice which traverses the conceptual aspect of your work into the experience of the participants. I see this constant as related to the ways we are experiencing phenomena through different sensorial negotiations, by constantly shifting between the individual (body) and the collective body in a sort of 'trans-individual' practice. Could you elaborate more in relation to this 'diaphragmatic apertura'?

David Bergé. Yes, most of my works are expanded forms of photography in which instead of re-presenting something optically, I present and recontextualise different materials in time-based

and participative formats. In these minimally mediated approaches, I consider aesthetics and politics through a range of formats in which audiences need to physically step into, to experience something first hand. Throughout a 100 minute Walk Piece or a durational installation involving multiple projections, audiences activate the work while becoming part of it. I am interested in the sensory immediacy that comes forward when audiences act and engage with each other and the configurations I put into place.

My work can't exist without the active participation and creative mind of my audience members. I very much follow Claire Bishop, when she states that audiences' physical activation of (installation) work is an emancipatory and political process since it analogues the viewers' engagement with the world.

The work I make is both a reaction and reflection to the current relations of production and productivity of our times. In conceiving these participative formats such as Walk Pieces, but definitely also installations like The Conscious Effort Fort. I am aware of Helio Oiticica's writings about viewer perception, and the work of other Tropicalists, artists engaging through phenomenology into participative and embodied practices.

Juan. How are these relationships between the collective and the individual contributing to your practice? Through these constant negotiations, could you identify borders and porous in-between zones?

David. Most of my work happens in no verbal exchange. The silence brought forward by the awareness, proximity and co-presence of other individuals taking

part in the work. I impose this silence to go through a transformation, to heighten the experience of the everyday. This is where I believe the individual can creatively connect with others surrounding them in similar activities. These connections can't be made without an awareness of the others, this is probably what you refer to as the trans-individual experience?

When we spoke earlier about trans-individualism, you suggested the very things that form individuality, our subjectivity, desire, sleep, sensations, and how we use language. They can't actually be unique to us. They only exist because we can share them with others. It's a process more significant than the collection of the different individuals, an articulation of the individual experience surrounding itself by others. I am interested in fluctuating individuality, evolving atmospheres over different images, not just one fixed image, being singular and plural at the same time. It's about your voice, our voice, but also the rhythm of sleeping.

This is the core of The Conscious Effort Fort: the fact that individuality and connection making can only happen in relation to others in society, the conscious perceiving of the room and the entity that flows out of that. What I hope to create with The Conscious Effort Fort is an environment centralising the position and creative mind of its participants; both in this installation and in the world.

Becoming multitude after a long period of forced individualised isolation. It takes a conscious effort to leave your domestic space, and walk or read and write with people you are not (yet) familiar with.

Juan. With regard to the operativity of the projects in your practice, you create

different protocols and scores. Through this disposition of context and discursivity, (I read that / you state that ...) you aim to invite different bodies in order to generate knowledge in togetherness. This set of poetic text-based scores calls the body to register different scales of reality where the oral communication comes, for instance, after defining what the body observes / gathers / learns through the visual, the haptic and the body moving through or resting in a conscious state.

Furthermore, looking at the different artistic processes in your work, there seems to be a predominant interest in focusing on active and passive observation, mostly without verbal intervention.

How do you see, in your practice, the relation between walking through the visual and the text-based as constructions of language?

David. I have always been fascinated by the imaginative power a word can hold when printed on a page or projected on a surface. Writing is a way to explore space through the senses. In my work, text and scores are not an extension or documentation of the work, they are the work, taking form in the space of books and physical spaces, but include as well spoken protocol introductions to audiences that are about to participate in a work.

I construct my work through different cultural references observed in the real world, where most of my research and work takes place: in a built environment, where I need the pulse, the minutiae of street life, but also its emptiness, mundaneness and pain. Dealing with your body in the street, corporeality, in my pieces I create space for temporary heightened sensory perception.

Knowledge creation doesn't always get articulated through real time verbal exchange. Imposing refraining from verbal exchange during my pieces, the experience with my work offers different modes of creating meaning through togetherness.

Especially this one, *The Conscious Effort Fort*, there is the writing wall to articulate things in language, there is the antechamber to talk,.. I am interested in language as just another form of materialising my work. In the last years I have entered a process of materialising my works beyond their temporary character, forms that can continue beyond the 100 minutes of a Walk Piece, forms that can hold and reach out the books in this installation, pillows and grass mats to support that experience.

In 2015 I started researching the interior of urban space, more specifically the Jjimjilbang saunas in Seoul, where people collectively wash themselves in the basement and later fall asleep into different configurations spread over the various floors the building exists of. These places are open 24/7 and some of them have a capacity of up to 3000 people. I chose these places because I am interested in where conscious activities coincide with the unconsciousness of falling asleep, resting, being less productive. Writing in these environments made me discover a different kind of materialisation for my work, one that actually leaves another kind of material trace than a Walk Piece.

The Conscious Effort Fort is produced by *kyklàda.press*, a publishing organ I founded last year in Athens. We produce about 4 books every year, an experiment by a transdisciplinary group of artists taking positions in writing, in and about landscapes. You are aware of that as a

co-founder. This installation is also an experiment in writing, of what exploring in books and with each other in silence close to a writing wall can mean.

Juan. In your current project The Conscious Effort Fort - an environment for reading, writing and mediating tactile perception in gardens and large indoor spaces - you are inviting diverse voices to construct place and context in togetherness. I understand this desire as an epistemological exchange which generates, from the "curatorial perspective", knowledge situations that are presentational rather than representational.

Chantal Mouffe has contributed to the definition of 'the political' by formulating it as the aspect of life which emerges from disagreements, dissent or even as an antithesis of consensus.

Drawing from this definition, I understand The Conscious Effort Fort as an arena where multiple bodies reproduce social and structural orders and where 'the political' is always present as a performativity.

How are those negotiations between economies of space and transactions between different corporealities, bodies, objects and spaces contributing to the generation of context in this specific project?

David. I have been following with great fascination the developments in the trajectories of Aemilia Papaphilippou, Ioana Mandrescu, and Aslı Çiçek for the last couple of years and invited them to construct crucial parts of this installation. They are artists aware of the swarm logic that permeates our times and were willing to collaborate and see their practices within other contexts: Aslı as a scenogra-

pher for exhibition architecture, Ioana as a sound artist working mainly with field recordings, and Aemilia, known chiefly for her continuous string installations in spaces. I realize this sounds close to your understanding of “curatorial perspective”, but for me as an artist, it’s more to transform this fascination into a question for them, I am curious how they would react upon my invitation to The Conscious Effort Fort. Like the way I initiated *kyklàda*. press last year to explore together with others my interest in writing. These three people also have in common that they are avid readers, which is essential when conceiving a space for reading and writing. They are the agents of the work, together with the content of the books, and after my invitation, they form the context, first stage of the work, the installed work; that is now ready to be activated by more agents, you, the audience!

I asked Asli to design a set of constructions to display books, based upon the principle of the traditional Turkish ‘sini’ table, in which a surface is placed upon foldable wooden legs, easy to transport. I also asked her to consider a configuration that could suggest physical distance as this work would be presented gradually from spring 2021 onwards and precisely deals with people coming together again. Her proposal to stick the wooden legs through the horizontal glass surface opened up a conversation about the meeting of two materialities, functionality and stability, in which we had to conclude that physical distance can as well be created by setting the tone of a room full of fragile elements rather than worn out stickers on the post office floor indicating those distances. And this is where Aemilia comes into the picture. Her string installation contributes obviously to that same air and precise definition space, connecting several parts of the room by one

continuous vertically oriented string. This string creates obstructions, in ways that take into consideration all the parameters of the space, creating barriers of sorts that challenge the logical movements of bodies through space, yet accentuate also, by this very fact, the awareness of interconnectivity that bides us all.

The reason for inviting Ioana or for bringing the act of sleeping into this installation, is part of a larger conversation with her. Ioana asked me if she could record my sleep for an installation she was working on in which the sound of several people sleeping was going to be spatially distributed. For this occasion, and after my earlier research in falling asleep through togetherness the Korean sauna's, but also the current research we are doing towards a new *kyklàda.press* book on Asklepieia, ancient Greek temples in which people would go sleep and dream in order to seek spiritual and physical healing. I inverted the question to Ioana and invited her to rethink my sleeping into the space of The Conscious Effort Fort.

This is not the first time I bring other contexts in my work: Since my works on Le Corbusier's formative travel to the "Orient", I have been critically questioning the Anthropocene, looking for more fluid forms of modernity, bringing forward less stable aspects of Western Modernity; that of a journey of two young and curious boys, bringing themselves to environments which are harder to grasp into one entity, in which the form may not be fully defined yet, which can leak or spill into something else.

This work has been challenging to me as it is the first time I deal with such an amount of materiality, the execution of Asli's designs in Athens in the midst of a

severe lockdown; the execution to be, of Aemilia's three dimensional string design, realized over videoconference; making decisions on the ergonomics of the pillows, the grass mats.

Most of the books selected for this installation question modernity, open up less solid spaces, and are proposals for being together in a different world. People are welcome to bring their own books too of course.

Juan. I would like to elaborate on my final question and draw from James Meyer's definition on site-specific installation; Meyer (2000) understands the artistic intervention of installation art according to two different but complementary notions of site: the literal site and the functional site.

The literal site is, as Joseph Kosuth would say, *in situ*; it is an actual location, a singular place. The artist's intervention conforms to the physical constraints of this situation, even if (or precisely when) it would subject this to critique. The work's formal outcome is thus determined by a physical place, by an understanding of the place as actual. In contrast, the functional site may or may not incorporate a physical place. It certainly does not privilege this place. Instead, it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is an informational site, a palimpsest of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places, and things... the functional work refuses the intransigence of literal site specificity. It is a temporary thing, a movement, a chain of meanings and imbricated histories; a place marked and swiftly abandoned. The mobile site thus courts its destruction; it is wilfully temporary; its nature is not to

endure but to come down.'

James Meyer, 'The Functional Site; or The Transformation of Site Specificity', in *Space, Site, Intervention, Situating Installation Art*. Erika Suderburg, (ed.) Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 24-25

In your practice you are engaging installation art from different perspectives. According to Meyer's definitions above, you are interweaving 'the literal site' with the 'functional site' in your previous works.

I see this interest as a desire to activate spatial memories such as the traces left or present in places by linking different sites and bodies, in order to generate the conditions for new places to emerge – for instance in your project 'Le Trou' at Amodo Art Space Seoul (2018), and later on re-positioning a piece of this installation in the exhibition 'A Walk in High Resolution', presented at Out of Sight, A Venue for Contemporary Art, Antwerp 2019 – or by implementing the performativity of the body in silence, moving through urban spaces in any of your several 'Walk Pieces,' you made evident spatial conditions in a sort of choreographic approach using the urban landscape as scenography or backdrop where bodies are invited to stroll and become part of these unseen places.

David. In my work, I question sites. Sites that make connections. A not yet finished metro tunnel, a museum without a floor, a passage underneath a highway. I challenge sites on their historical, social, and organizational meaning. Regarding Meyer, I can very much relate to what you say about the interweaving of the two sites. I take the functional site as seriously as the literal site. I believe in materializing works evoked by sites towards a wide range of outputs rather than documenting artistic interventions in sites. Moving part of the installation in Seoul to Antwerp and activating it there, is one example of

that. Another would be the invitation I got in 2019 to re-visit my Walk Piece from 2012 for the city of Aalst. When working towards the new presentation of the Walk Piece, I noticed the town had been transformed quite intrusively: city politics had transformed and cleaned up the towns' center to the extent that one could feel segregation was physically present. It also meant about half of the things intended in my piece seven years earlier made no more sense. I decided to make a new work in response to the current condition on the same site. As I said earlier, work takes place when an audience member encounters it, which means that in my practice, I work towards materializations of different sites. I believe that every object I produce, be it a 100 minute Walk Piece, a book, an installation with books, is materially self-reflexive.

Juan. You have conceived this current project *The Conscious Effort Fort* as a mobile installation, which in an organic way will become one with the environment. In the installation – presented in different locations, by now in Antwerp and after in Athens and Amorgos – there are four main components: a collection of selected books, commissioned and designed furniture and a sound piece which will in a constellational manner interact with the physicality of the space and the bodies of the participants and a string installation linking different objects and defining micro spaces. How is the content of the books and the conceptual nature of the furniture specifically related to the 'literal site' – the physical, institutional site – and in a broader sense as a 'functional site' considering the context of Antwerp and Athens?

David. All materials serve as structures of support to the experiential

space - both in a functional as much as in a literal sense - a space for reading and writing and existing in the proximity of others. Structures of support against the domestic we have grown too used to lately: glass/wood structures that branch out books, strings, spatialized sound of a person breathing.

The functional site of these participative environments is probably what Helio Oiticica referred to when speaking of his work as environments. His 'Subterraña', spaces hidden from view, not physical ones. His participative installations were subversive, experimental and underground in relation to the object-oriented history of the art of his time. Oiticica was very aware of the imaginative power audiences could bring to his works. Also, in his participative installation 'creleasure', proposals to spend time into, creating leisurely. He centralized the creative and responsive minds of his audiences in spending time together activating his works.

This is what I am proposing with my Walk Pieces as much as with this installation: I believe these post-pandemic times need being and thinking and articulating maybe even more than the 1970ies. I made The Conscious Effort Fort as a fort, a place in which a mental and physical effort may be needed to transform the mundane and indifference brought forward by this pandemic, into a creative and poetic space, one that is more a process of writing together than a final book.

May 2021.

Aslı Çiçek

(°1978, Istanbul, currently living in Brussels) obtained her master degree from architecture and design department from the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich in 2004. During and after her studies she worked for architectural offices in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands before she settled in Belgium to work as project architect for Gigantes Zenghelis Architects (2005-2007) and for Robbrecht en Daem architecten (2007-2014). She founded her own practice in 2014, focusing on exhibition architecture. Between 2009 and 2020 she has been a tutor in several design ateliers at KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, in the campuses Sint Lucas, Brussels and Ghent. Currently she is guest professor at Hasselt University, Faculty of Architecture and Arts and Ghent University, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning. She has published various articles on architecture and art, was the co-editor of the 11th Flemish Architectural Review and is a member of the editorial board of OASE Journal for Architecture. www.aslicicek.eu

Juan Duque

(°1974, Medellin, Colombia, currently living in Brussels), artist and researcher in curatorial practices. PhD candidate, critical practices at the Centre for Arts, Memory and communities Coventry University, UK. Juan Duque's practice implements the potential of embodied knowledge and non-academic research to generate 'otherwise' ways for being together. In this sense, his research in the curatorial explores how 'affect exchange' shapes and articulates formal, somatic and semantic discourses, focusing on the political structures and the interplay between artworks, bodies and infrastructures within and beyond institutions. Duque's research interests include decolonial theory, queer phenomenology and trans-individuality; his projects have a particular focus on performance in relation to strategies that aim at breaking up different forms of daily fascism. Juan

Duque is working collaboratively with artists and cultural institutions that approach, reflect on and question the canonical systems of knowledge production. Over the last decade, he has participated in the following curatorial projects: Perpetual Travellers at SAVYY Contemporary, Berlin, in co-curation with Belgian curator Pieter Vermeulen; FOLD at CIAP, Hasselt, in co-curation with Belgian curator Pauline Doutreluingne; MEDIATION at Platform3, Munich, in co-curation with Austrian curator Marlene Rigler and is co-founder of kyklàda.press in Athens. www.juandunque.eu

Ioana Mandrescu

(°1981, Bucharest, currently living in Brussels) is a musician and a sound artist living and working in Brussels. She has completed her studies in Romania, at the National University of Music of Bucharest, France at École Normale de Musique 'Alfred Cortot' in Paris, and Belgium at the Koninklijk Conservatorium of Brussels. In 2018 she graduated from KASK, Ghent where she has been enrolled in the European Postgraduate of Arts in Sound. She is the founding member of several contemporary music groups with whom she has performed in Belgium and abroad. The unDefined Quartet (Bozar Opening Night 2015 – collaboration with director Wouter van Looy), Quivir Ensemble (Festival Internacional de Musica y Danza de Granada, Teatro Cervantes, Malaga), and Opia Ensemble (Belgium - Festival Courants d'Airs, Festival des Minimes, Poland – FAMA Festival and Iran – First Edition of the Contemporary Music Festival in Tehran). In 2016 Quivir Ensemble was the first prize winner of the Fifth International Chamber Music Competition 'Anton Garcia Abril' in Baza, Spain. She is part of the Com(e)pulsive collective of sound artists. She was a resident of Q-O2

in Brussels and was featured on The Word Radio series FAIR PLAY as an emerging female composer. She has participated in group exhibitions in Gouvernement and KASK in Ghent and Q-O2 Brussels, and she has performed live-sets at the Atlantikwall Festival in Oostende, La Senne in Brussels, Onder Stroom in Antwerp and MixTree in Amsterdam. Since 2019 she is collaborating with Norwegian artist Kjersti G. Andvig.

www.ioanamandrescu.com

Aemilia Papaphilippou

(°1961, Asmara, Eritrea, currently living in Athens), graduated Athens School of Fine Arts in 1985, and New York University in New York in 1989, with an Onassis scholarship, and a tuition remission teaching assistantship by NYU. Represented Greece, in 1991, in 21st São Paulo Biennial curated by Maria Maragkou, in 2000 in 'Europe Exists' curated by Harald Szeemann and Rosa Martinez, and in 2003, in 'Open' curated by Lina Tsikouta. In 2010 created and supervised construction of the installation in situ/bar 'Liquid Sky' at the Onassis Cultural Center. In 2014 participated in the Greek Presidency, E.U. exhibition. 'Nautilus: Navigating Greece', at Bozar, Brussels. In 2014, realized the first contemporary art intervention at the Ancient Agora of Athens, with the support of NEON cultural organization as their first public art commission. In 2015 she exhibited at the Guangdong Times Museum, in China, in 'South to Southeast: A Further Surface' curated by Patrick D. Flores and Anca Verona-Mihulet. In 2017 participated 'Antidoron-The EMST collection', curated by Katerina Koskina, in Documenta 14, in Kassel, Germany. Consequently, was invited as a keynote speaker at Raumwelten Conference and did a video-projection/performance at the Ludwigsburg Palace in Germany. Currently participating in

'Thesis-Antithesis Synthesis: On the belt of Change', in China, curated by Katerina Koskina where Greece is being the honored country within the general exhibition 'The Tides of the Century' in Hainan Ocean Flower Museum.

www.aemiliapapaphilippou.com

David Bergé

practices photography without cameras. In his work, he addresses performative and embodied aspects of photographic materiality and time. He uses the body as a device to capture images; through the construction of an experience, often performative and over time. Audience gets invited through different projects and hybrid formats into a journey of lecture performances, site specific interventions, installations and book projects. What he is most known for though, are his Walk Pieces in which participants are taken in silence through the physicality and infrastructures of built environment. From 2012 onward, Bergé began working with the archive of photographs taken by August Klipstein and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (who would later come to be known as Le Corbusier) during their 'Voyage en Orient' from 1911. Two installations and a book question and negotiate - through speculative narratives the production of documents from this historic trip - the Western gaze, conventional singular authorship, and in doing so, slowly uncover an early Twentieth-century desire for spatial understanding through the use of cameras, rather than photographic representation. David Bergé's work has been invited to a range of international residency programs such as The Harbour in Puerto Rico, Seoul Art Space Mullae and Pivô Research in São Paulo. His work has been presented at various international art centers including SKD, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden (2018);

Thessaloniki State Museum of Contemporary Art (2018); Out of Sight in Antwerp (2019); SALT, Istanbul (2011); KCB Belgrade (2013), Gati New Delhi (2011); TanzQuartier Wien, Vienna (2010) and Kunsthaus Muerz, Muerzzuschlag (2012). He founded kyklada.press a publishing organ in Athens and has also published books with MER. Paper Kunsthalle (2015), Jap Sam Books (2020) and others. David Bergé currently lives in Athens and Brussels and holds an MA from the Dutch Art Institute (2017) and an MFA from LUCA Brussels (2005).
www.davidberge.info

THE CONSCIOUS EFFORT FORT

installation by

David Bergé

glass/wood constructions:

Aslı Çiçek, assisted by Oliva De Bree

sound installation:

Ioana Mandrescu

string installation:

Aemilia Papaphilippou

supervision of production Athens:

**Yiorgos Koufakis, Maan Halaoui,
David Bergé**

installation Antwerp:

**Robin Appels, Ilias Johri, Ben Van Den
Broeck, David Bergé**

attendants Antwerp:

**Özge Akarsu, Carolina Maciel de
França, Nicolas Lakiotakis**

thanks to:

**Katrien Reist, Juan Duque, Daniel
Demoustier and Maxime Prananto**

a production by **kyklàda.press** with the support of the
Flemish Authorities (CAP), Platform 0090 and
PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPANDED

**May 20 (3-9 PM),
May 22 (1-8 PM),
May 23 (1-7 PM), 2021**

Zuiderpershuis, Waalsekaai 15, 2000 Antwerpen