

Program Propositions #10: Instituting Otherwise

[version 27-11-2019, subject to changes]

Saturday 7 December, 13.00-21.00 (doors open 12.00)

BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht

12.00–13.00 hrs

DOORS OPEN

A possibility to visit *Trainings for the Not-Yet*, an exhibition as a series of trainings for a future of being together otherwise, convened with a multitude of collaborators by artist Jeanne van Heeswijk

13.00–13.45 hrs

LECTURE

Instituting Otherwise: An Introduction

Maria Hlavajova

The notion of *instituting otherwise* has been an aesthetico-political adage shaping the institutional practice of BAK from its very inception in 2000. Here, *instituting otherwise* is a continuous process and a method of engaging the urgencies of the present *alongside* and *with* the diverse, multi-talented, and poly-vocal constituencies of BAK. At the same time, *instituting otherwise* is a systematic move away from (art) institutions as they persist—specifically in the west and in ways redolent of the colonial era—as custodians of power geared at aestheticization and thus depoliticization and normalization of the social, political, ecological, and economic injustices in the world. This lecture considers both these theoretical frameworks as well as practical experimentations of thinking, imagining, and actualizing the institution differently: as a propositional labor of world-making, pre-enacting socially and ecologically just futures.

13.45–14.30 hrs

CONVERSATION

Trainings for the Not-Yet

Conversation between Maria Hlavajova and Jeanne van Heeswijk

The current project at BAK, *Trainings for the Not-Yet* (14 September 2019–12 January 2020), provides a unique critical and speculative framework for the symposium *Propositions #10: Instituting Otherwise*. Actualized as “an exhibition as a series of trainings for a future of being together otherwise” and convened by artist Jeanne van Heeswijk with a multitude of collaborators, the trainings pose numerous challenges to the “business-as-usual” logic of contemporary art

institutions as they operate at present. This conversation tackles a number of the project's conceptual underpinnings and organizational difficulties, questioning some of the key building blocks of western colonial modernity that continue to barricade wider access to the possibilities of the "not-yet." Envisioning this "not-yet" as "another future and another world," the conversation engages notions of civic practice, collaborative learning, solidarity economies, non-linear time, the locale/local, livable life, etc, as well as the question that BAK and van Heeswijk share in common: *How to be together otherwise?*

14.30–15.00 hrs

BREAK

15.00–16.00 hrs

CONVERSATION RELAY

Rethinking Relationships: The Future (Art) Institution (I)

Mitchell Esajas, Triwish Hanoeman, Noline van Harskamp, and Shay Raviv,
moderated by Mustapha Seray Bah

In two rounds of conversations (15.00–16.00 and 16.45–17.45 hrs) artists, scholars, and activists associated with BAK are engaged in various ways in a relay that speculates about the future (art) institution as a space for collaborative learning, collective action, and generative engagement with the social, environmental, and economic urgencies shaping people's lives. Assuming the predictive, what-if mode, the conversations anticipate ways to rethink relationships and the consequent forms of collectivity this may enable. Questions of a common language, communal co-sharing and co-production, etc. are probed, as well as ways of reenvisioning the civic role and a true public practice for art institutions. The format of an ongoing conversational relay borrows from *The City Staircase* (2019), the opening collective endurance performance of the project *Trainings for the Not-Yet*. The members of the audience can join the conversation by temporarily taking over the role of moderator.

16.00–16.45 hrs

LECTURE

Manifestations of Neutrality

Laura Raicovich

In an effort to undo the biases embedded in museums and cultural institutions that prevent radical inclusion and participation, the myth of neutrality must be confronted. This talk addresses the ways in which cultural institutions are never politically or ideologically neutral, and calls for a space of collective imagination,

centered on art and creativity. Further it identifies where and how neutrality operates, implicitly and explicitly. Where do such notions of the neutral come from and how do they manifest in cultural space? Why are they so powerful? What are the processes that can lead to their undoing?

16.45–17.45 hrs

CONVERSATION RELAY

Rethinking Relationships: The Future (Art) Institution (II)

Yasmin Ahmed, Isshaq al-Barbary, Matthijs de Bruijne, and Jun Saturay, moderated by Natalia Kulik

For description, see session I above.

17.45–19.00 hrs

DINNER

19.00–19.45 hrs

LECTURE-PERFORMANCE

The Declaration of Independence

Barby Asante

The Declaration of Independence is an ongoing performance and forum bringing together womxn—women of color, trans women, and those who may not identify with binary gender—to reflect on how the political affects the personal and how the social and cultural implications of historic declarations, policies, and legislations impact everyday lives. The lecture-performance begins with the poem “As Always a Painful Declaration of Independence” from *An Angry Letter in January* by Ama Ata Aidoo (1992), which declares independence not only from a colonial ruler but also a self-determined gendered and racial independence. Asante then offers a stream of performative declarations that contain stories, dreams, and forgotten histories in order to articulate and imagine strategies and possibilities toward a collective ritual of declaration.

19.45–20.30 hrs

LECTURE

How to Organize Otherwise?

A Case Study from the North East of England

Andrea Phillips

The utopian aims of funded cultural organizations in Europe, rhetorized in more and less informed terms, are under scrutiny from those who have been historically

and socially excluded from the very same spaces. In Northern Europe (and North America), institutions are attempting correctives to this situation but often in the process deepen the crisis of legitimation, responsibility, and trust. If no truly collaborative organization can be built atop centuries of oppression, and any co-production requires the urgent redistribution of infrastructural power, then how to go about this? Taking the example of the strong and difficult debates held at the symposium *Reorganising Cultural Institutions* that Andrea Phillips convened in Newcastle-Gateshead in June 2019, this talk brings to bear the question: Is reorganizing possible? Or do any attempts simply reinforce the inequality of power as is?

20.30–21.00 hrs

CLOSING CONVERSATION