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www.brand-new-life.org
office@brand-new-life.org



Those ornamentals and these accidentals never they will meet

Ariane Müller

Let's say you are in New York for the first time and you want to get a cab. Obviously what you are doing is somehow trying to use your own experience of getting a cab, and combining it with seeing other people getting a cab (more determined perhaps than you are, but alas depends on from where you started), and you will notice after some tries, that it is useless to flag down cabs with no lights on, and you realize, that as long as you don't step down from the pavement, they will make no move towards you, and so on, and so on, and so by failing several times, and employing other strategies, and by observation and reflection in the end you will get a cab in New York.

I didn't come up with this example, I am just using it, citing it out of memory and from some text I read years ago talking about how learning functioned.

Obviously the text didn't want to teach the readers how to get a cab in New York, and obviously documenta didn't want people to learn how to get cabs in Athens, but the example might work though. Since while learning how to get a cab, and his is true for Athens as well, you learn about how learning functions, and you do that—learning— whether you want it or not, intend it or not—but it may as well be that you only learn about your own inability and unwillingness to learn. You might feel it was not your time to learn, or you think there is nothing wrong with the way you are usually getting your cabs, and maybe yes, hell! you think, wasn't cab driving once a service industry and those cab drivers should learn to find you, the customer?

We move to the museum building in Athens, the EMST, which is very conveniently used as the museum it was once intended to be only to be discarded by several people during documenta opening through saying that it looked like a museum—meanwhile I find the tautology—a museum is a museum quite charming. There were other places used differently, though most of them following the same tautology, a cinema was a cinema, a bar a bar, and the conservatory was dedicated to music, the school showed—hm—learning environments. In the second storey of this building, next to the auditorium, was a wall sign, reading *An Education*, (and not unlearning or something it didn't read, but was changed into, in the course of evening-discussions). *An Education* was, besides the word and proposition it is, the name of a film, following the biographical novel of the same name, by an author who is loosely connected to the art scene, since she was also part of the jury of the Turner prize once (The film, I am told to mention here is by the Danish film directrice Lone Scherfig [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_Scherfig]). This novel talks about how—at the age of roughly sixteen—while you are in school busily learning, you obviously get a totally other education through sexual experiences, based on some post-puberty disconnections of the brain, that make you suddenly leave for the unknown, and make you plunge into situations, not overseeable, sometimes not manageable, but alas educational.

So while the people in Athens were busily learning—to understand their children, to get a connection with their neighbours, to produce a distinctive appearance to attract more sexual partners, or to cut down pears into square cubes, or whatever—they were suddenly plunged into a situation, where learning got a new sort of quality, connected them to something else, which was poverty. Somehow unwillingly, I can imagine, they were connected to the majority of the people in the world, but it also disconnected them from their previous European position.

We got a small glimpse of that, while we were in Athens, and it might, quite similar to the Greek situation, have come by surprise to some. To give just one example: as we know, at some time, money, or the distribution of money was restricted in Greece, and people were only entitled to get something like 40 euros out of their bank account at a time—I reckon a day. Since that time the number of cash machines in Athens is dwindling, some were blown up, in what the neapolitan call quartiere populare, entire banks closed taking cash machines with them, and on rioting days—the weekends—banks now barricade their front office (including the cash machine), while the engagement of foreign banks as service institutions for people, not overall crediteurs had come to a halt, reducing the number of banks even more. This resulted, during the opening days of documenta in the situation where people who actually have money were short on cash, and couldn't find it (and had to face the now emblematic cab-driver who only takes cash), and it resulted in dealing with situations that called for new behaviour (OR learning), like calculating if you still had money for dinner, and

having to ask people for money, and convincing them that you were not bumming, but that the situation demanded it. You relied on others.

There was another possibility, and it became clear that this was what people in Athens had experienced as well. You could also vanish into the OTHER bubble, the international wealth bubble, which limited the number of places you could go to, but secured a standard written on your American credit card. By reducing yourself to this OTHER bubble and its venues, you never even came into contact with this money-scarce world, or just sometimes when this oh-so-nice small bar wouldn't accept your card, or then again the cab drivers, who wouldn't accept your card for the ridiculously low sum for a fare. This was, as I heard often, a nuisance, and showed the backwardness of Greek society, or could at the other hand be blamed directly on documenta.

We were on the other hand told in different calls and texts, that in order to grasp Athens, and not wander through it in a consumerist way, as was seen in these texts to be proposed by the documenta team, you would have to see, reflect on and respond to Athen's poverty, police brutality, and un-ability to solve European problems, and to see, reflect upon and respond to the solidarity movements and the resistance people living in Athens have set up. I think these calls to respect «reality», and not to just simply go on with your life, was an experience people in Athens had in the last years as well, and we were told to share this reality with them. They had been seeing themselves reduced to having to solve problems, while being told that brutality, poverty was what they had to accept as their environment. By having a government that simply didn't care about art—something you could see in the struggles of the parallel Athens Biennial—the general feeling they were told was that art is not important anyway, and if you disagreed you were proven to be an escapist art-lover. Wanting to see art in Athens would just show thus, that you were a total ignorant, trotting the wrong path, not knowing what real problems are. There is only one Athens we were told, poor, brutal, but kept alive in the humanity of its people.

Shall we perhaps give this the benefit of a doubt? And may I add, I doubt that anyway.

By reducing the people and the city of Athens to their «real» problems, and by stating that this was done in their own voice and for their own interest, I was to be convinced to listen to their «real» interests? Hardly. It takes more to build a city, and the people on the cash desks of un-visited but still important museums, which had a short moment of relevance selling tickets to tourists that otherwise vanish to the islands after having seen one or two highlights, meanwhile surviving on their threatened minimum-wage are part of it as well, as I learned.

What else did I learn? Art in different societies has different stances and values, and the artists are more or less part of, and needed by the societies they live in. Born in Albania, while it was a worker and peasant state (and before Enver Hodscha allowed for artists and intellectuals to also be inscribed into the constitution as part of the society) is different from being born in a society which needs artists to make a meaningful end of the week. Since I had been living in Rome, where the mentioning of my being an artist, when asked, was answered with: Brava! Brava! I saw the immediate effect on myself not constantly questioning what I did (after all without art in Rome, no tourists, no money, no fun), which showed me the difference to the regular northern European view, where a similar reply would be met by an uneasy: But what do you live off then? How strongly this resonates in the art works, I should have known, yes, but seeing it in Athens, was the learning experience that made me rethink into which society we produce art. In our case a society strongly influenced by money inequality, which makes it our natural habitat to cater to the rich.

This is known, but it is good to see so clearly how this affects what you, and how you in the end see something as art. And this in a loop may show what we would really subject the

Greek society and the Greek artists to by telling them that they have «real» things to do. Not art.

ARIANE MÜLLER

is an artist based in Berlin.

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