

Logbook #4

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**FUNding**

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**FACTORY**

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Sophie Hope



## **#4 FUNding FACTORY**

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### LOGBOOK SERIES

- #1 Het Reservaat
- #2 Critical Friends
- #3 Performative Interviews  
(including DVD)
- #4 FUNding FACTORY

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## Introduction to the Logbooks

This series of four Logbooks document the projects carried out in the context of my PhD research into cultural democracy and the commissioning of art to effect social change (2006-2010). The Logbooks act as summaries of the projects and accompany a more in depth written thesis. They provide background information, descriptions, documentation and critical reflections of each of the projects and follow a chronological progression. In my practice-based research I explore methods of cultural democracy as collective critical reflection to negotiate and contest the limits and problems of the democratisation of culture exemplified in the artists' commission to effect social change.

By cultural democracy I mean a way of thinking and acting that recognises the cultural expression and critical knowledge of individuals and communities. Through my PhD I argue that this notion of cultural democracy does not sit happily with the more dominant top-down practice of democratising culture, which implies cultural provision based on predefined economic, aesthetic and social values. Cultural democracy disrupts expected forms of participation and communication of culture, drawing attention to the inequalities and inadequacies of the democratisation of culture and the re-enforcing of certain neo-liberal values such as social inclusion, citizenship and urban regeneration. The projects documented in these Logbooks explore the complex relationships between commissioned, funded socially engaged art and the meaning of critical reflection, action and participation that contradicts or reaffirms the parameters of the commission itself as a form of art labour.

Logbook #1 documents 'Het Reservaat', an experiment in collective time travel which was the result of a residency I did with 'Beyond', in Leidsche Rijn, a new town near Utrecht, The Netherlands. Logbook #2 looks at 'Critical Friends', a participant-led critique of commissioning art which evolved from an invitation I had to evaluate a series of public art projects in Greenwich, London. Logbook #3 is accompanied by a DVD of ten short films documenting a series of 'Performative Interviews' I carried out with practitioners and commissioners as a way of going public with stories of compromise, failure and censorship of commissioned socially engaged art. Logbook #4 focuses on the 'FUNding FACTORY', a work-

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shop method I tested with a group of students in Austria as a way of critiquing and negotiating the cultural production line and the relationship between critical art practice and wage labour.

Each Logbook takes the form of a step-by-step guide to the projects, beginning with an introduction to the project, the context in which it was carried out and the key starting points. This is followed by a 'making of' section which explains the process of the projects. The subsequent manifestation or findings of the project are then explained through documentation and the booklets conclude with my personal reflections on how the project has informed the relationship between cultural democracy and the commissioning of art to effect social change, highlighting key questions that have emerged. The progression of the projects reflects an iterative process that establishes a development of a methodology for a collective critical practice.

While the projects themselves have been the result of conversations and collaborations with many different partners, funders and individuals, I am the author of the content, design and editing of these Logbooks which have been produced as an integral part of my PhD research. They therefore do not necessarily reflect the opinions or experiences of others involved in what have otherwise been multi-authored projects.

I would like to thank everyone I have worked with on the projects and acknowledge the different roles they have each played to make these projects happen. These Logbooks I hope will prove useful both to those who have been directly involved and other readers who work in the field of commissioning art and those who are concerned with the meaning and possibilities of developing collective, critical practices and manifestations of cultural democracy.

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## Introduction to 'FUNding FACTORY'

The 'FUNding FACTORY' is the final project in this series and represents the culmination of the development of my attempt to create spaces for collective critical reflection as a way of negotiating the tensions between cultural democracy and the democratisation of culture. The 'FUNding FACTORY' involved a series of 'Performative Interviews' with five professional cultural workers based in Vienna (plus one written response included in the Logbook), and a practical exercise with five art students in collective production and critical reflection through the act of making a 'cultural production line'.

The project began with an invitation I had from curator Gülsen Bal to do an exhibition in her gallery, Open Space, Zentrum für Kunstprojekt in May 2009. The 'FUNding FACTORY' used the factory and production line as metaphors for negotiating the professionalisation and precariousness of commissioned cultural work. It was a practical experiment in trying to turn the critique back onto the conditions of art and labour and the artists' complicit role in perpetuating systems of exploitation. This final experiment in the series illustrates the culmination of an iteration of projects devised for increasingly conflictual moments of co-production (or 'participating in the wrong way') to occur.

Whereas the 'Performative Interviews' acted as declarations or affirmations of positions, the practical element of building the 'FUNding FACTORY' was a more intense, collective process of questioning the security of those positions and a chance to rethink them. It became a performative social experiment in participation in which the group acted as both the guinea pigs and scientists exploring critical relationships to issues of cultural work and the creative industries. The process became an improvised drama in which the set we were co-producing became the focus of the 'play' as we performed different roles in this scenario. The conflict of setting a semi-open structure which the participants interacted with encouraged us to rethink notions of participation as self-directed critical interpretations of imposed structures of democratised culture, allowing new versions of cultural democracy to emerge.

Following the exhibition in Vienna I organised 'Making a Living', a one day public event (co-facilitated with Veronica Restrepo and the Carrot Workers Collective) on 26 September 2009 at the Austrian Cultural Forum (ACF), London to continue the conversations started through the 'FUNding FACTORY'. Attendees confessed modes of survival, declared their ideals and decided collectively how to spend the £500 funding received for the event from the ACF. The students I worked with on the 'FUNding FACTORY' travelled to London for the event, their flights and accommodation paid for by the ACF. During the 'Making a Living' event there was enthusiasm from some of the attendees to continue to meet. From this, Making a Living, an independent group of arts professionals currently active across the UK has formed, and continue to meet regularly to research and campaign on issues of art and labour.

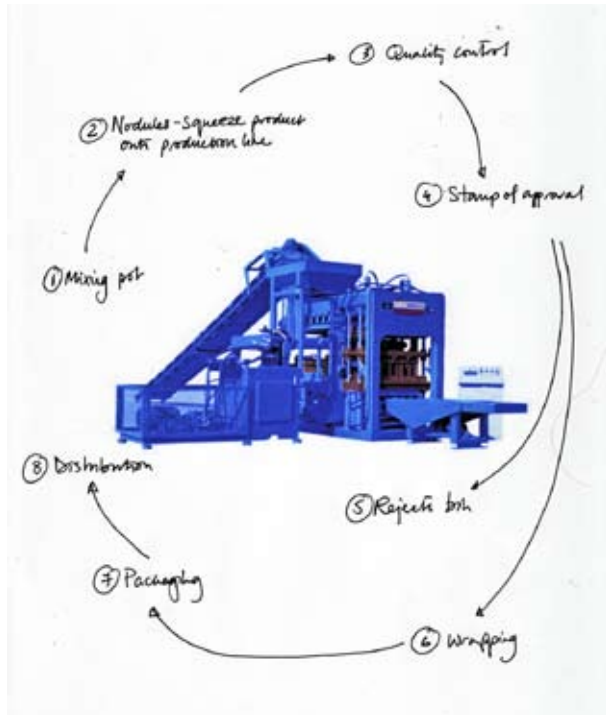


Diagram of the function of the 'FUNding FACTORY'. (Sophie Hope)

## Context & starting points

### Funding

Open Space Zentrum für Kunstprojekte is in a basement of a residential block in the 2nd district of Vienna which the curator Gulsen Bal funds through project grants from a variety of sources, such as The Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture and the Erste Foundation. The programme consists of monthly group shows (curated by Bal or invited guest curators) underpinned by theoretical and political concerns. It is an intense programme that reflects Bal's interests in investigative art as research.

Despite Open Space's fundraising efforts, ironically, there was no funding for the 'FUNding FACTORY'. I was asked by Bal to apply to the Arts Council and/or the British Council which I explained to Bal I was unwilling to do because firstly I would not be eligible as a full time student to apply and secondly I saw a problem in asking for more UK tax-payer's money to do a project in Vienna when I was already receiving public funding for my studies. This was an ethical as well as practical dilemma and in the end I made the decision to do the project based on the fact that my grant would cover my time and the cost of two return flights to Vienna and on the basis that there would be little or no production costs. The lack of funds also extended to the participants of the project who had to make a decision about the amount of time and energy they wanted to put into the project based on the fact that there were no fees or production budget.

This experiment in exploring the hierarchies of art work and processes of negotiation artists go through was based on the self-exploitation of my own labour and of those who took part. My suggestion to make transparent in the exhibition this fact by making visible as part of the installation the budget and funding for the 'FUNding FACTORY' was not encouraged by Bal. Exposing the disparities between funding for the different monthly exhibitions (who gets paid for what) was not something the gallery wanted to draw attention to, if it appeared they are able to do so much with so little then their funders may be reluctant to support the programme in the future.

## Art as Labour

The four projects I have developed as part of my PhD research documented in these Logbooks have tried to grapple with the predicament of earning a living from a creative industry whilst dreaming of its demise or radical reincarnation as cultural democracy. Characteristics such as collective production and critical reflection are to a certain extent shared by 'socially engaged artists' although these processes are not always occurring in the context of commissioned socially engaged art. In contemporary, commissioned practices these elements have become the apparatus of an artists' tool box which they can charge for implementing. The means of collective production have become a way of making a living. It could be argued that the current system of arts funding is not in the interest of the majority, but instead increases the power of a minority of professionals. When those professionals start to draw attention to the inequity of the situation, however, this can cause problems and jeopardise the continuation of the work.

The question raised through the 'FUNding FACTORY' and subsequent 'Making a Living' event, is how do we resist and dodge the exclusionary and suppressing forms of administering culture whilst not increasing exploitation and jeopardising the hard work gone into lobbying for equal pay rights in the arts? This dilemma can seem to promote (unpaid) culture for those who can afford the time to practice it, reserving the production of culture for those who can afford the time.

I have been trying to find ways of talking with other cultural workers – artists, curators, commissioners – about how we can develop a critical relationship to the work we do rather than just assume that the more money we can make as a cultural producers the more successful we are. I felt it was problematic to take for granted that I had developed some sort of 'critical' practice as an 'independent' cultural worker. As more paid work came my way that enabled me to continue this happy illusion, the more I began to question what a professional critical cultural worker was. What is the (written on symbolic) contract for cultural work and how can a critical practice be compromised or thrive in this environment?



Collage made during the making of the 'FUNding FACTORY'. (Sophie Hope)

The 'FUNding FACTORY' was an experiment in working that out with other practitioners. The first step was to realise that we play a part on the cultural production line and that it is impossible to be outside it. We are implicated in some way, even if we decide consciously to avoid official contracts, work for free, refuse or subvert invitations.

The focus was not on what the factory was producing as the participants and visitors to the factory would interpret this based on their own experiences. I was more interested in the mechanisms and meanings that allow the cultural production line to exist and prosper. How are we involved in oiling the cultural production line, demanding cultural workers rights and occasionally throwing our clogs into the machinery to halt production? How do we negotiate the production, packaging and consumption of 'critical art practices'?



## Key Questions

The questions I posed and my proposition of making a 'cultural production line' provided the starting points for my conversations with the students. These were:

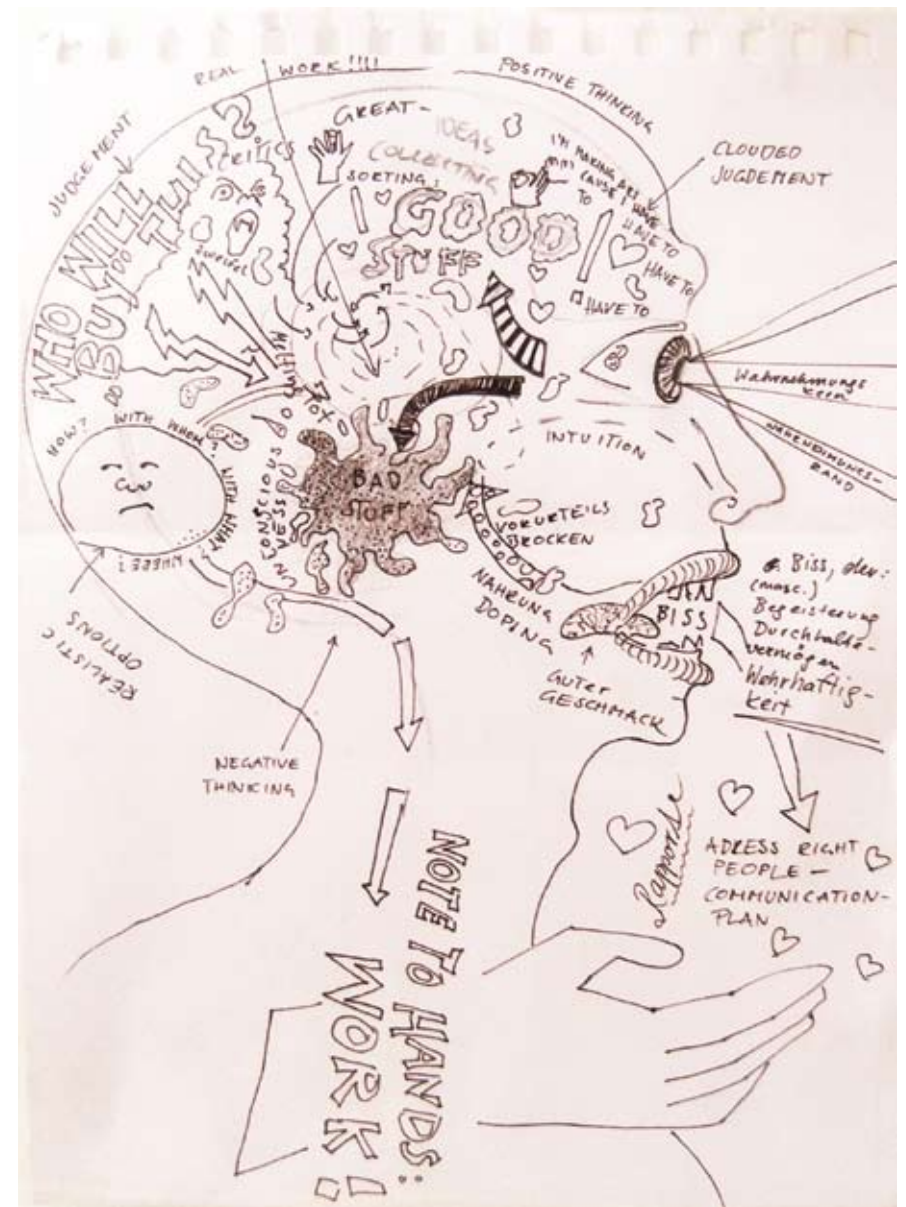
- What does it mean to produce art for a living?
- Do you often wonder what critical art practice is and if that's what you are doing?
- Do you care where your money is from?
- Do you aim to make a career out of art?
- Who do you make art for?
- Have you had any experiences of censored, abandoned, unfinished or 'failed' art?

I was interested in finding out if we could break down hierarchies between practitioners and acknowledge that we are all on this production line together, with different ways of negotiating it. Rather than curate a group show of the students' work, I was more interested in setting something up to see how they reflected on their positions and conditions of art. I wanted to see what happened when they had the opportunity to work together to design, intervene and build the factory as a way of reconsidering their relationship to their own positions as future 'creative industry-workers'. Some of the interpretations of the production line metaphor from the students included:

"Some nebulous creature representing the 'real art world' opposed to the life around the university. The cultural production line seems like an overbearing, unpredictable beast, standing between me and my fortune." (Tina Raffel).

"A metaphor for production under precarious circumstances." (Christoph Srb).

"I see it as a type of art assembly line within which I am familiar with some situations from my own experience, but the rest not. I don't like being part of a cultural product - production line - however, I don't see any viable alternative yet." (Corina Vetsch).



Drawing made during the making of the 'FUNDing FACTORY'. (Tina Raffel)



“Through the main questions posed during the discussions we had about the ‘FUNding FACTORY’, I recognised the opportunity of developing a ‘symbolic internship’. I saw the interactions between the individual participants and the group work during our participation as a metaphor of social behaviour in the cultural production line.” (Domenico Muehle).

## The making of the ‘FUNding FACTORY’

### Performative Interviews for the ‘FUNding FACTORY’

Prior to the practical exercise with the students I carried out another series of ‘Performative Interviews’ with professional cultural workers associated with the gallery whom Bal had suggested I meet. This resulted in interviews with six people (including Fahim Amir, Fatih Aydogdu, Barbara Holub, Walter Seidl as well as Bal and a written response). The artist Barbara Holub, for example, contributed by performing a script she wrote based on an imaginary ‘New Collector’ who would solve the problem of funding political and critical art. In some of the interviews the issue of how and if the interviewees could participate came up, for example, the theoretician and cultural producer Fahim Amir described why he did not want to participate in the project and an anonymous written contribution describes why they could not participate publicly in the process due to their conflict of interest as a journalist. These filmed interviews with

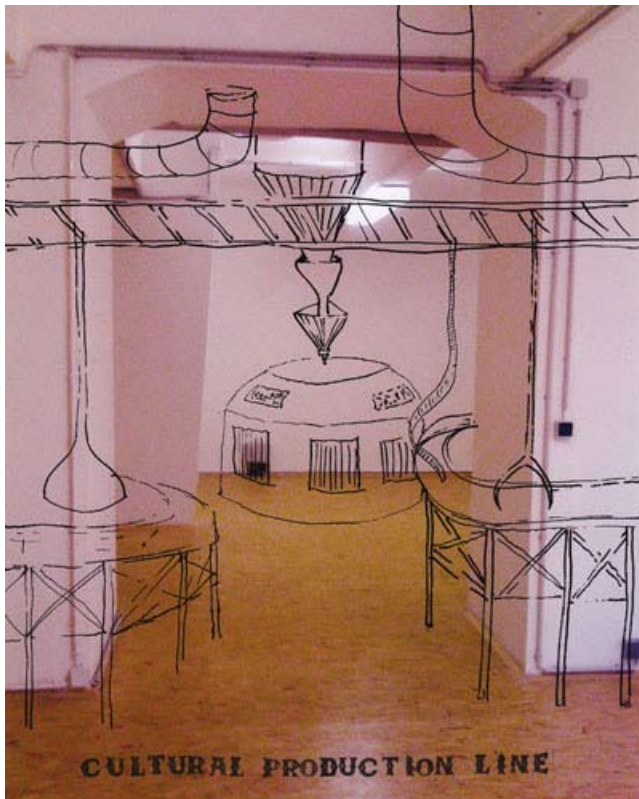


Drawing made during the making of the ‘FUNding FACTORY’. (Tina Raffel)

the professional cultural workers were screened on monitors embedded in the cultural production line I created with the students which objectified their testimonies and became critical positions on issues of survival, negotiation and compromise, strengthened in their performative guise, acting as cogs, sand and lubricants to the machines of cultural production.

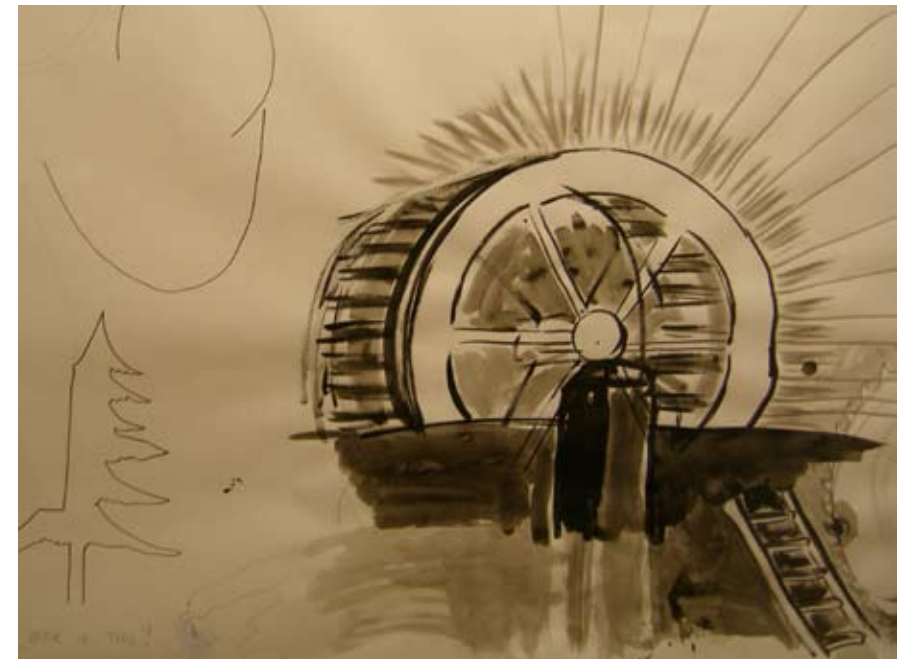
### An experiment in collective production

After having collected these six stories of professional cultural workers based in Vienna, I put an open call out to students from the Universität für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna to participate in the 'FUNding FACTORY'. Domenico Muehle, Tina Raffel, Christoph Srb, Corina Vetsch and



Drawing made during the making of the 'FUNding FACTORY'. (Sophie Hope)

Reinhold Zisser responded and worked with me on creating the 'FUNding FACTORY'. I hoped the building of the production line would be a means for the students to consider their relationships to work and/as art practice. We spent the week during the run up to the opening of the 'FUNding FACTORY' building and reflecting on our roles in this process. This was not a group show format and I wanted to see what would come out of us trying to build something together. I hoped to encourage the students to find ways of supporting and intervening into this process as we went along and during the exhibition. The factory necessarily evolved using found materials, mainly thanks to Domenico Muehle who worked in a large theatre set design and constructing company, which he arranged for us to visit and collect material from. The usage of discarded remnants of old theatre sets and the detritus of building replica environments for the stage seemed entirely fitting to the re-created fantasy environment of symbolic production: a cultural production line precariously stuck together with Gaffa tape.



Drawing made during the making of the 'FUNding FACTORY'. (Corina Vetsch)

The process of working with the five students raised questions about the tensions and power relations between collective productivity and individual authorship. As well as the conversations and physical activity of making, the students' input also involved drawings and ephemeral contributions by Tina Raffel (who made a video documentation of the making of the factory) and Corina Vetsch (who did a hair-cutting performance on the opening of the exhibition) and a series of physical interventions by Domenico Muehle (a wall installation of a network of connected bicycle wheels), Christoph Srb (who installed CCTV in the gallery to document the making of the production line), and Reinhold Zisser (who managed to introduce a length of very heavy railway track into the factory installation). I also invited my sister, Fran Hope to respond to the concept remotely with an illustration. As a graphic designer she has recently returned to college to rethink the design-as-job process and where her passion lies in the act of production. Her drawings acted as inspirations rather than instructions on which to build our factory. Without being prescriptive about what the factory produces, we continued the factory metaphor to consider the mixing, squeezing, filing, filtering, testing, rejecting, slicing, wrapping, packaging and distributing that goes on in all different kinds of cultural production. In the end, it looked the way it did because of the materials and people involved, the need to



Making the 'FUNding FACTORY'.

intervene and make our mark, erase our marks, record our marks and the decision to be part of a process.

These different approaches to participation created parallel experiences, frustrations and awakenings in the group. The participants did not know where the parameters of the project lay and kept trying to find out by testing each other's reactions. The group working on the production line tried to resist presenting themselves or products of themselves, but rather something produced collectively. Despite this, there was still the urge to discretely tell others 'I did that bit':

*Tina Raffel:* Many people at the opening asked me, 'Tina, what's your part?'...

*Corina Vetsch:* When we started the production line, I knew this question would be coming, if I invite people, people will ask, what did you do, what is your special part? I did not want to have a special part but when the point of the opening came nearer I thought I have to do something of which I can say, I did it! Because I knew the question of the people and I could not get through it with not having something special there and so I did some drawings – but in the beginning I did not want to have a special object ...



Tina Raffel filming the making of the 'FUNding FACTORY'.

The 'author' returns as the individuals in the group reclaim their authorship and abandon collective ownership before performing the expected role of artist by evidencing individual, authored expression. When asked if they considered themselves to be authors of the project, some of the students replied:

"I see my involvement as a protagonist in the factory similar to an actor in a movie. So in this case I am not an author because I just reacted to the pre-formulated theme of the 'FUNding FACTORY', although the role of an artist's work in the cultural production line is that of an author" (Domenico Muehle).



Domenico Muehle installing bicycle wheels in the 'FUNding FACTORY'.

"Definitely yes! Because I shaped/thought about things and/or talked about them with my co-workers. Moreover I think that there were more authors than just the people whose names were on the flyer" (Tina Raffel).

"Somehow, yes. I consider 'FUNding FACTORY' as a whole, a part which are Sophie's and our contributions in Open Space. Even though it is a small part, our work will go down in the history of 'FUNding FACTORY'" (Christoph Srb).

"I would consider myself as a part of it, perhaps something like a co-author" (Corina Vetsch).

### **Making a Living**

Following the 'FUNding FACTORY' in Vienna, Veronica Restrepo and I facilitated the 'Making a Living' event at the Austrian Cultural Forum and the Carrot Workers Collective carried out a performative mapping exercise to capture "a year of your life in the cultural field". We facilitated this event in a way that enabled the different voices in the room to be heard, reflecting the exercises aimed to reflect the convictions and contradictions among us and to capture the different ideologies behind the decisions we make



Reinhold Zisser and team installing railway tracks in the 'FUNding FACTORY'.



and the positions we take. The act of exposing the process of generating ideas, discussing and collective decision-making (using majority voting, spectrum voting and then consensus) highlighted the potential of alternative and collective organisation and facilitation and avoided the one-way transaction of applying for or giving funding. During the 'Soap Boxing' session, for example, attendees were encouraged to share experiences of artistic survival and tell us about their fantastical and realistic proposals for making a living. A concoction of majority, spectrum and consensus voting then lead us to a decision on how to spend the £500 funding from the Austrian Cultural Forum. Following this initial 'Making a Living' event some of the attendees met again in November at the Hungarian Cultural Centre to continue the discussions and make a final decision on how to spend the £500 funding which we voted to give to the Carrot Workers Collective to go towards the printing of their counter-internship guide.



Christoph Srb installed CCTV cameras to monitor the making of the 'FUNding FACTORY'.

## Manifestation



Installation shot of the 'FUNding FACTORY'.

'FUNding FACTORY' – press release

### 'FUNding FACTORY'

7 May | 8 May–30 May 2009

Open Space gallery will be temporarily transformed into a factory during May 2009. This three-week 'FUNding FACTORY' will be a site for staff, funders, associates and visitors of the gallery to put their limits of art production to the test by exploring the tensions between producers, consumers and funders of 'critical art practice'.

The 'FUNding FACTORY' aims to bring together different agencies in the funding and production of public/socially engaged/political art to ask what happens when this work is funded. The factory offers an analogy for funding systems (public and private) that commission art and questions the mechanisms of that system that we rely on, supply and continue to challenge. If it is the case that 'anything goes' and artists are now paid to be critical, what does it mean to be critical and/or political in an industry

that churns this practice out? Do the boundaries of what it means to be critical continually need to be redrawn?

The factory will be a site to reflect on the issues of the cultural production line we are a part of and how we understand our work to be relevant and critical. The factory becomes the setting for critical reflections on Open Space itself by the people 'behind the scenes' who make it happen. Instead of a group show of existing artworks, the mechanisms of cultural exchange and production are exposed, inviting debate about negotiating the production, packaging and consumption of art.

The proposed installation will be the interior of a factory, with machinery, production line, canteen, managers office, loading bay, stores and rejects bins. Found, discarded and donated material from skips, studios and galleries will be recycled to make the walls, floors and parts of the factory. The blue prints for the design of the factory will be drawn up and during a 'team-building' exercise a group of staff and associates of Open Space will build the factory installation. This exercise will be filmed and shown as part of the installation. On monitors dotted around the factory there will also be films of 'performative interviews' with these staff and associates of Open Space about their experiences, both positive and negative, of how 'critical' and/or 'political' art practices are supported.

Using different forms of disguise to hide the identities of the interviewees, these films will explore questions such as: What are your motivations for working with art? How do these connect with your political views? What are the limits of critical and political art? How does public and/or private funding affect those limits and understandings? Is it important for you to support and/or practice 'critical' art? Have you had any experiences of censored, abandoned, unfinished or 'failed' art?

During the opening event, the factory will be a site for collecting more stories, reflections and experiences of the 'cultural production line' as the factory becomes a repository for expressing the perceived limits of practicing and supporting critical and political art. It will be an occasion for visitors to consider the politics and ethics of funding – who are the managers of the funding factories? What are the products they are trying to sell? What is the value of defected and discarded art?

Students at the University of Applied Arts will be invited to take over the factory in May to reflect on their own positions as future 'creative industry-workers'. They are invited to make use of the factory as a site for interventions, performances, discussions and sit-ins!

#### THE 'FUNding FACTORY' SOUNDTRACK

1. Pure Imagination - Anthony Newley, Leslie Bricusse & O.S.T.
2. Computer game music
3. Just Dropped in (To See What Condition My Condition Is In) - Kenny Rogers & The First Edition
4. Just an Illusion - Imagination
5. Working In a Coalmine (Original) - Lee Dorsey
6. Computer game music
7. Money - Pink Floyd
8. Material Girl - Madonna
9. Computer game music
10. Musclebound - Spandau Ballet
11. Information - Art of Noise
12. Radioactivity - Kraftwerk



Installation shot of the 'FUNding FACTORY' showing two 'Performative Interviews' made for the 'FUNding FACTORY' ('The Horse's Mouth' by Walter Seidl and 'The Bat' by Fatih Aydogdu)



## An anonymous contribution to the 'FUNding FACTORY'

### Who are you?

I am a person whose workplace is based in Vienna. I try to write understandable (but nevertheless critical) texts about (critical) art and to communicate those written documents on various channels, be it professional, be it non-professional channels. On the one hand I am earning money with writing, on the other, I am writing a lot without getting money. Even if the working process and the workflow are identical between those two activities, there is one fundamental difference, which - for me personally - is the key issue about professionalism: money.

### What are the issues for you of getting involved in the 'FUNding FACTORY'?

My main issue for getting involved in this project is not to get involved. I do not see myself as part of Open Space, nor do I see myself as a part of the 'FUNding FACTORY'. As a person who earns money with writing texts about art, I think it is necessary to keep - at least - some professional distance. As I already did a lot of professional writing for the art space, I



Installation shot of the 'FUNding FACTORY' showing a 'Performative Interview' ('The New Collector' by Barbara Holub)

think, this distance has to be kept.

### Can you tell me more about the importance of maintaining a 'professional distance'?

Professionalism is not related to the amount of output or the quality of projects - as I already pointed out, the only criterion for classifying something as professional or not, is the salary someone gets. The distance is easier to keep if you are not getting paid: once, there is some money circulating, the psychological concept of the initial commitment turns into something like bondage and obligation. This is another form of responsibility, which manifests itself in form of capital.

### How do you balance your two professional lives - is it important you keep them separate?

Indeed, it is important to keep those two lives separate. Even though, the non-professional (read: un-paid) part of my two professional lives could, some day, become professional (read: paid) as well. The balance between the two lives is quite clear until now.

### Is this contribution an artwork or piece of journalism? / What do you consider this contribution to be?

As I would never call myself artist, this small piece of writing is not an



Installation shot of the 'FUNding FACTORY' showing a 'Performative Interview' ('The Office' by Fahim Amir)

artwork. But, at the same time, it not a piece of journalism as well. In general I am the one who poses questions and who gets answers and not the other way around. This small paper is just a collection of thoughts which came up to my mind, reading your questions. It is open and free for you to use (but, only in case if you do not mention anything that could be related to my name, e-mail-address, nickname, etc.).

### What motivates you to do your 'other' job?

Which one is the 'other' job? If you are referring to my professional activities, my main motivation is money and the possibility to distribute my work via commercial communication channels. If you are referring to my non-professional activities, my main motivation is learning and canalising knowledge without being under the pressure of commercial issues, which means: money.



Corina Vetsch cutting hair at the launch of the 'FUNding FACTORY'.

## Critical reflections & key questions

### Authorship

By offering an open invitation to the participants of the 'FUNding FACTORY' was I actually inscribing my presence through my reluctance to take on a directorial artistic or curatorial role even more so than if I had been more prescriptive? In avoiding taking a leading role and attempting to share the curatorial and artistic responsibility such openness could be interpreted as oppressive. In the case of the 'FUNding FACTORY', the participants are artists; self-prescribed authors and agents of creativity. Any attempt to question that position and suggest collective, co-production which implies losing some individual authorship is understandably met with some confusion and hostility. To question an individual's authorship could be interpreted as an insult as it is seen to reduce one's position to a non-artist, relegated to the position of disempowered participant. The different approaches to group work and defining ones own voice in the process became a significant issue to the participants and perhaps reflects the contradictory notion of developing individual authorship (becoming an artist at art school) and the possibility of working collectively on establishing a common goal. Muehle, for example, describes how there are two kinds of group work:

"that of different people who put everyone's work together and the other is a group that works together on one thing. The idea is to strike a balance between individual work in the group and the group working as an individual...Up until the opening of the 'FUNding FACTORY', we were clear that everyone of us had different understandings about group work and participated with their own skills. Everything just grew from the circumstance of open individuality serving the one production of the 'FUNding FACTORY'." (Domenico Muehle).

For some, the challenge was about negotiating a collective process of production and for others it was about carving out an individual presence from that collective appearance. Zisser raises this when he refers to how while the process was open to co-production, it was also 'authored' by the five students when "there were many other people we talked to".

He notes how it was those five students who were then invited to travel to London to take part in 'Making a Living', so there was already a hierarchy of authorship. Zisser took this to be a game:

"So this whole thing showed me a right way how to work on art, creating a game. It's not about having the same way; it's about the same goal, and creating a scene where everyone can take part. I think the quality of this exhibition only shows if we put the progress in right words. I really want to know how much of that was intended by you, how much it was your concept, and how much of it just evolved during the progress." (Reinhold Zisser).

For Srb, while he could see the benefits to working as a group, when working on your own, "both the production and the authorship are in your hands... Basically, to sustain one's position in the world alone is the challenge". Vetsch and Raffel, by contrast stated:

"[I find it] easier and more satisfying to work in groups with different people, ideas and suggestions. Needless to say, difficult situations, conflicts, power struggles, etc. etc. influence the working process and can trigger anger or fear. In the final analysis, group processes are more satisfying and more often better developed and stronger than the work of the individual... For me the most exciting thing was how we worked together and how the collaboration worked – who got involved and how and there were small disappointing things but at the end there was a stopping point and somehow everyone could agree and be happy with that stopping point ... Not only thinking about art industries but about this collective work and the social processes that went on was to me the most important thing..." (Corina Vetsch).

"a group like us, it's hard to get fast targets, fast results... you don't know where it's taking us yet... like you do know when you work alone... What interested me was there was more of an element of chance in this group way of working... Although I never think you ever really work alone..." (Tina Raffel).

## Team Building for Artists?

While the 'FUNding FACTORY' holds significance with the actors in the experiment, the group was left asking, what relevance does it have to audiences beyond those who took part? Just as a team building exercise benefits those employees to perform better at work, the 'FUNding FACTORY' could be seen as an exercise in improving the self-critical capabilities of the staff of the cultural industries. This could mean an increased capacity to critically reflect on one's roles and responsibilities in the career one has chosen. To this end, however, one might talk oneself out of a job, and find ways of halting or refusing production rather than finding ways of perpetually surviving it and ensuring its continuation. This method could also be accused of being a navel gazing exercise, a therapeutic, escapist self-help technique that offers a safe haven for people disenfranchised with their workloads, colleagues and modes of production, but which does little to move beyond wallowing in self-pity. While there is a danger of this, this collective act of self-reflection can also act as a trigger or reminder to take action, collectively and/or individually.



Taking a break from building the 'FUNding FACTORY'. From left: Christoph Srb, Sophie Hope, Corina Vetsch, Domenico Muehle and Tina Raffel.

The 'FUNding FACTORY' could be seen as a number of mini-protests by those who took part. It is difficult, however, to gauge the extent to which people beyond those who directly took part entered into the spirit of the factory in order to identify their own realities. A comment from a fellow student remarked to Zisser, for example, on receiving my initial invitation how he thought it was "an ideological shot into the knee", which Zisser interpreted as meaning "how much can you reflect on a system you're so much in":

**Sophie Hope:** well, that was the point of the whole thing...that was one of the starting points, maybe that is naïve... how do we negotiate the systems we are in?

**Tina Raffel:** I think it can't be naïve. If you're part of a system and you don't question your relationship to the system that is even more naïve...

Srb also mentioned a piece of feedback he received from the final installation – that it was not developed enough and should have taken more time to develop such a huge project which led to following dialogue:

**Tina Raffel:** Was it really meant to be such a finished piece?

**Domenico Muehle:** No, no, no. I see it more as a beginning point that gives stuff for rethinking and questioning...

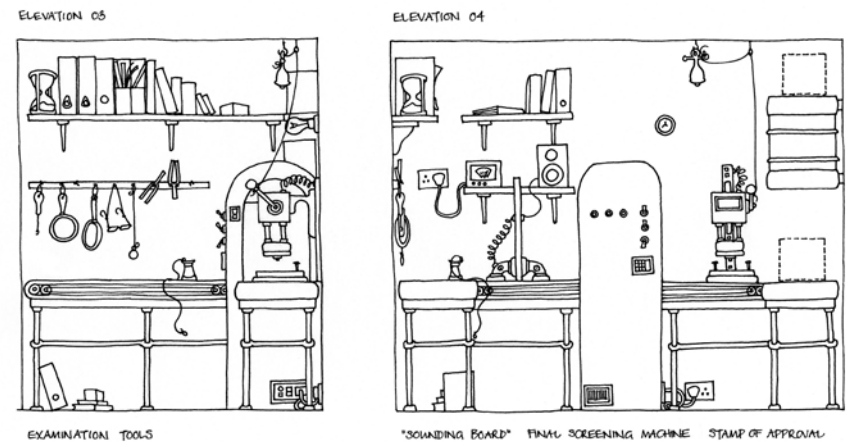
**Sophie Hope:** The problem is, with making an exhibition it looks like a full stop...

**Corina Vetsch:** I think it was like a playground, not taken too seriously. It was to play with.

**Eve Kuppelwieser:** It was an experiment.

Muehle asked, "Is it possible to have the correct opinion about what the 'FUNding FACTORY' is?" The final exhibition of the cultural production line might come across like a conversation only the group involved have been party to. The workshop was an excuse to have a conversation with a group of practitioners, a temporary intervention into a given structure. It was not so important what the final installation looked like, rather it documented a process (of team building for artists) during which the participants worked towards a common goal whilst questioning their individual and collective relationships to the task in hand as it progressed.

The 'FUNding FACTORY' was a practical experiment that created a space for the production of critical reflection and action on the issues of labour and power from inside the social and economic relations of art. The fact that the framework of the project was contested and negotiated by its participants; that my own expectations and parameters that I brought to the project were challenged and thrown into question through the actions of those I invited into the project is perhaps testament to the fact that acts of cultural democracy can occur in ways that test or subvert the limits of prescribed attempts at democratising culture. By setting a framework I was able to open up a process for participation in the 'wrong way' that contested the value and limits of that framework. The metaphor allowed us a version of critical distance with which to play with, creating a dialectic relationship to the job in hand by both participating and not participating in the process. As participants we had to constantly renegotiate and articulate our own terms of engagement in ways that at times contradicted each other, perhaps learning something about how we might each approach art as labour in the future.



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#### FURTHER READING & LINKS

Austrian Cultural Forum, London: <http://www.acflondon.org>

Carrot Workers Collective: <http://carrotworkers.wordpress.com>

FUNding FACTORY Blog: <http://fundingfactory.blogspot.com>

Making a Living: <http://makingliving.blogspot.com> (to request permission to view the site email: [makingaliving@live.co.uk](mailto:makingaliving@live.co.uk))

Open Space, Zentrum für Kunstprojekt: <http://www.openspace-zkp.org/2009>







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