
... are you one of those people
who doesn't drink water?

On & For Production And Distribution

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On & For Production and Distribution (On & For) is a European cooperative project that is conceived to advance and strengthen the field of artists' moving image. On & For brings together a team of four partners: Auguste Orts (BE), Kaunas International Film Festival (LT), LUX/LUX Scotland (UK), and Nordland School of Arts and Film (NO). Each partner represents different contexts under which moving image is taught, produced, exhibited, distributed and collected. From 2018 to 2021, On & For has created events that bring together the various professionals who nourish the field: artists, students and teachers, producers and distributors, curators and programmers, representatives of arts and film organisations and funds. On & For is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

‘On & Off? On & On? Off, Off?’ Points of entry to On & For

Rebecca Jane Arthur

On & For Production and Distribution (2018–2021), the European project that’s called ‘On & For’ for short, always appears to confound, somewhat, those who have never attended or taken part in one of its events. Even the nearest and dearest of those who work at the helm and listen to those two seemingly insignificant words flying around their households, day in day out, are guilty of calling it otherwise: ‘On & Off’, ‘On & On’, ‘Off, Off’? I’ll admit, I also had to experience it myself for those slight words to gain some weight and for the concept of On & For to land.

My first encounter with On & For was back in 2015 at the cinema of BOZAR—the Centre for Fine Arts—in Brussels. Nestled in the well-worn, wine-red, soft-pile theatre seats, I sat watching artists and their so-called ‘producers’ (who were, in fact, art workers enacting that traditionally film-related role) come on stage and talk together candidly about the ‘making of’ their projects. In this ‘palace of the arts’, as the building’s architect, Victor Horta, had envisaged BOZAR to be, there I was attending a public event to discuss the peaks and pitfalls of artistic production—something one would imagine unbefitting etiquette for a royal court of the *fine* arts, where things tend to be positioned to look masterful or made without worldly (or monetary) cares. The event was named ‘How We Made it Happen’,[1] and was comprised of a number of case studies in which two of the three polished-off film projects that would be screened were unpacked, with words. On the podium, in front of the screen, they were carefully removed from their casings, picked up, handled, turned upside down or onto their sides, so

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How We Made it Happen (17 December 2015, BOZAR, Brussels) consisted of two case studies and the screening of three projects that had participated in On & For Work Sessions: *Yar Bana Bir Eğlence*: *Notes on Parrhesia* (2015) by Eleni Kamma, presented and discussed by the artist and Katrien Reist; and the screening of *Lili* by An van. Dienderen (2015), presented and discussed by the artist and Natalie Gielen and Steven Op de Beeck; and the screening of *Solo for a Rich Man* by Beatrice Gibson (2015). The event was moderated by Anna Manubens.

that the audience could see angles of the works that usually aren't on display: the funding journeys, the production hiccups, the exhibition and presentation prerequisites. And yet, with all of the challenges that were thrown at these artist–producer combos, the audience was invited to watch their finished works, projected on screen, for the sake of collective learning, not merely for show or sale.

As an art student then, I left that buzzing crowd inspired to imagine how *I*, too, could make my own films happen outside of the well-equipped school confines. The realisation, however, that 'we' was the operative word in that event's title seeped into the fibre of my practice by completing an internship at the artist-run production and distribution platform Auguste Orts. I soon became aware that the project title which had once appeared to me—on paper as in the air—as bizarrely abstract or meta, something hard to wrap one's head around, was in fact highly functional. In reflection, 'on' is of course what one would call a 'function word', part of a set of words that speak to syntax rather than meaning. A function word rather directs one to meaning: to the positionality of something or other, for instance. The position of something in contact with something else, unavoidably touching it, its surface, rather than skirting around it. In short, 'on' creates a relation to something or is about something or other. And, in the most prominent of dictionary definitions, 'for' is used to indicate a purpose, a goal. Some collaboratively spent years later, both prepositions, miniature in size as all prepositions are, have maximised in meaning for me while learning by doing at, for, and with Auguste Orts—who, through their action-based learning strategies, initiated the project On & For.

In compiling this publication of thoughts and reflections *on* the subjects of the On & For happenings of late, I hope to open the door *for* you, too. This is the purpose of this publication: a selection of essays, conversations, studies and visuals. These texts are especially for those who want to make films happen—behind the camera or behind the scenes—and for those who are already busy making moving images happen, in all of the guises that you must assume to do so. By reading, one can engage with the questions and findings behind many of the 'content words' (e.g., nouns and verbs) that are at the core of

this project: 'production', 'distribution' and 'presentation' for starters; and how they transform into the verbs of our daily practices (producing, distributing, presenting, and so on). In this introduction, I aim to outline the path of this event-based project over the last three years, which has taken some sharp corners and unexpected detours along the way. Further with the help of the contributors here, artists and art workers alike, I hope to invite you into the workings of On & For Production and Distribution, demystifying its abbreviated title and allowing you, too, to discover how the project that is On & For opens spaces of dialogue on artists' moving image creation and dissemination and how it actively works *for* the field, from within the field, encouraged and supported by countless peers in the field.

So, who are these peers I speak of? First off, I'll look to my immediate surroundings. The core team that constitutes the 'we' of On & For are from spaces that nourish the development, education, production, distribution, presentation, and archiving of artists' moving image: the project partners, namely Auguste Orts (BE), Kaunas International Film Festival (LT), LUX/LUX Scotland (UK), and Nordland School of Arts and Film (NO). When I use such plural personal pronouns here, I write on behalf of the project with gratitude for all of the individuals from communications, the technical support assistants, the carers of the people in each team, and especially the interns and assistants that make everyone's jobs doable and worthwhile, as we decidedly aim to pay our learning forward in this project.

In order to move forward and contemplate the current project, let's first cast our glance even further back to recall the beginnings of On & For and those who've paved the way. On & For Production and Distribution builds upon an initiative set up in order to address the specific conditions of artists' moving image production that was launched in April 2014 in Brussels by Auguste Orts, together with partnering organisations Art Brussels (BE), Contour (BE), LUX (UK), and with the kind support of local funding and venues. The 'pilot edition' held a public roundtable on video art acquisition, a curated roundtable event to support artists' moving image projects in-the-making, and a public workshop to reflect on production strategies.

After a second pilot edition the following year, in April 2015 in Brussels, the project that was then known as On & For Production (similarly 'On & For' for short) gained the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. With two years of European funding, the project consisted of the partners Auguste Orts (BE), LUX (UK) and Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (ES) in 2015–16.

During the project's first term, On & For created 4 public workshops, 1 symposium, and 5 roundtable events that supported 21 international artists' moving image projects and invited more than 150 professionals from 15 countries to participate. Encouraged by the successes of that project, the need for such discourse to be had and union to be felt in the field of artists' moving image, a new project that would add to its objectives a focus on artists' moving image distribution was born in its wake. At present, as the 'second term' of On & For draws to an end, it's now time to tally up On & For's latest accomplishments: 6 workshops, 6 seminars, 2 symposia, 1 online exhibition, multiple screenings, and 5 roundtable events that supported 16 international artists' moving image projects and invited more than 180 professionals from 25 countries to participate. Thus, switching from 'on' to 'off' once more—from different angles, with different partners, from different places in Europe—we'll be looking at 'How We Made it Happen' again, as most texts in this publication offer a reflection on the events that have been produced in 2018–21; however, in the latter part of the publication, a number of texts do address the foundations of On & For, too.

Offering a comprehensive understanding of the lie of the land on which On & For is laid, we are delighted to have the reprinting permission of film curator and author María Palacios Cruz and commissioner Flanders Arts Institute (BE) to share the text 'Let me be your guide: Artists' Moving Image in Flanders' with you. This text provides a historical perspective and invaluable insights into the Belgian audiovisual landscape, where Auguste Orts is to be found. The text 'Building Blocks: A Conversation Between Auguste Orts and Helena Kritis' further highlights the structures upon which this European project rests by reconstituting an extensive conversation between the founders and facilitators of On & For and curator

and film programmer Helena Kritis, who asked them to both reflect on what they've built, how they did it, and what will come next. The final text of this publication is written by independent curator Anna Manubens, who managed the founding project and has curated three roundtable events in this project. Manubens holds up the structure of On & For that she helped to shape against the backdrop of the current world health crisis. In her text, 'Look at and Look After Infrastructures', she sharpens her pencil and writes of the importance of support structures, or indeed 'infrastructures', especially now—when things have been turned upside down—and recalls the 'maintenance' that was required to get On & For up and running, behind the scenes.

Setting off from the back office with a brand new 3-year project laid out, On & For Production and Distribution was launched in 2018 at Kaunas International Film Festival (Kaunas IFF) in September and at CINEMATEK, Brussels, in November. Our very first events invited artists who'd taken part in the On & For roundtable events during the project's first term (2014–2016) to share their production journeys through case studies and their creations at screenings. The films in question were as varied in subject as they were in methodology, style, form, structure, length... You name it! The binding element was that their makers—from both arts and film backgrounds—had been offered the platform to discuss their films-to-be with prospective co-producers and potential project collaborators at the On & For roundtable events labelled 'Work Sessions': specific, carefully structured situations made for works that fit under the roomy umbrella of what we call 'artists' moving image', AMI for short.

In the opening text, 'From *What* to *How*', Ilona Jurkonytė addresses this second, sometimes troublesome, abbreviation by recalling the On & For panel discussion *Defining Artists' Moving Image Production and Distribution* (2019, Kaunas) where a representative of the Lithuanian Council for Culture posed the question: 'What happened during the past several years that now everybody seems to want to talk about AMI?' As co-founder of Kaunas IFF, partner of On & For, Jurkonytė explores this three-lettered concept and its relation to funding structures and screening venues in Lithuania and its place in

‘global art cinema’ at large. She proposes, however, to move the investigation of her article from its outset, i.e., ‘what is AMI?’, to radically break away from *genrefication* (a term on loan from the writings of film scholar Azadeh Farahmand), and to instead think about *how* to fund, create, and share the plurality of audiovisual language that is AMI. Thus, accepting some degree of ambiguity in such abbreviated titles, especially ones that leave us ample room for manoeuvring inside and outside of strict boundaries, we’ll take our cue from Jurkonytė and read from ‘what’ to ‘how’ in this gathering of thoughts: focusing first on questions of what production and distribution are in order to enter the discourses on how AMI is supported, funded, produced and distributed, which appear as the publication progresses.

This journey into On & For therefore begins with peers and audiences who provoke reflection on the most rudimentary of notions: defining language, defining roles, questioning goals, posing questions. Peers and audiences met, for example, at the *Dummies workshops—Distribution for Dummies* (2019, Brussels) and *Production for Dummies* (2020, Brussels). Upon registration, we asked of the participants to put forth questions that they’d like for our presentations to address. Their questions helped, therefore, to shape and co-author the workshops. However, before they were divided into subcategories and brought into relation with one another, as stand-alone ponderings, as raw material, they offered unfiltered inspiration and information—direct access to the needs and wants of the field, specifically of those just entering the audiovisual landscape and of those looking for access. We asked two of the workshop participants, artist-filmmaker Juliette Le Monnyer and curator-researcher Maxime Gourdon, to respond to this collection of questions. Especially for this publication, they created a photographic series that places the fellow participants’ questions at the fore of the images. They decided not to manipulate the questions but to embed them, just as they are, in their daily lives. The questions appear pinned on the fridge, attached to a post, or hung from a washing line (my absolute favourite)—‘How can a filmmaker/moving-image artist sustain her practice financially?’ Hanging out to dry, this question is typed alone, on an A4 sheet that is, for the most part, blank: awaiting answers.

Question Marks

E.g.

The texts that ensue don’t provide one-way solutions to the questions posed; however, they do provide avenues of investigation. For instance, in filmmaker and writer Jue Yang’s text, ‘We Do Not Travel Alone: A Reflection on Film Production’, she explores such questions as ‘What is a producer?’ and ‘How to work with a producer?’, sharing knowledge derived from the *Dummies* workshops and drawing from her own experiences as a recent art college graduate. In Maxime Gourdon’s essay, ‘To All the Lost Tapes’, which is a companion to the aforementioned photographic series, he questions what it means to have your film lost and found. In other words, what is recognition and how to free yourself from a ‘prestige economy’ (a term on loan from the author of *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*, James F. English, in Jurkonytė’s text) whilst reaching your ultimate goal: sharing your artwork with others.

From the many fundamental *Dummies*-questions posed, we zoomed in on ‘How to diffuse artistic films?’ during the seminar *Distribution Models* (2019, Brussels), which put the focus precisely on decoding modes of dissemination by taking a closer look at some concrete examples. Speakers from a variety of platforms handling distribution—with small catalogues or huge collections, with online or analogue screening methods, operating with or without cultural subsidies, with or without staff, and so on—were asked to share knowledge of the inner workings of their operations before a crowd. Thus, from a distributor representing a national collection to an artist doing her own distribution, the gamut of distribution forms was on display, ready to be dismantled, again for collective learning.

Before taking the stage, representatives of each of the distribution models were asked to fill out a questionnaire that we compiled together with LIMA (a platform for media arts preservation, distribution and research in the Netherlands) on the conditions of their operations. The results were presented as infographics on stage at the event, a component we called the ‘DATA SWAP’: a discussion and debate with the speakers and audience on the outcomes read from such data.[2]
In ‘A Motley Landscape: How Films Travel’, filmmaker and writer Nina de Vroome invites you inside of the event by incorporating

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Available online via the documentation page of onandfor.eu.

her very own illustrative analysis of the data shared and reflections of each speaker into her report, while asking you to imagine how films travel today.

At the time of that event, some two years ago now, LIMA were embarking on a research project into the state of and future of digital art distribution. Their focus led them to uncover and pinpoint needs in their surroundings: needs of artists at varying stages of their careers. They've chosen to share their findings with you here in the text 'The Importance of Digital Art Distribution' by project manager and researcher Rachel Somers Miles. At this time, they are releasing propositions—as aims, waiting to take further form—in the hope that their research can provoke thought on strategies that you, too, may wish to employ, and/or reform and/or build upon.

It cannot be ignored that our project, along with the rest of the world, had to be restructured to adjust to the conditions of the pandemic. As an event-based project, when consciousness was raised over the effects and impact of the COVID-19 virus, we shut down operations completely in order to try to get to grips with its affects: what was occurring outside and how to cope within our own inner circles. After all, behind the widespread partnership, the mechanisms of On & For are operated by but a few individuals. Only with survival strategies in place at home, On & For went to work at rerouting pre-fixed plans and reimagining ways to compart knowledges on production and distribution and support projects in-the-making, even if they were, in fact, projects on-hold for the time being.

After eight live Work Sessions editions in the history of On & For, in 2020, we set about creating the first online edition. In the text 'Building Blocks: A Conversation Between Auguste Orts and Helena Kritis', in-depth reflections on the Work Sessions of both the pre- and post-pandemic era are volunteered, but the gist of the event's original structure is that these roundtables would usually take place simultaneously over the course of a day. In most editions, four tables (consisting of the artist–producer combination and a handful of guests per table) convene on the topic of an artists' moving image project. Yet, digital conditions called for the rethinking of this

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event where people would characteristically *close* any physical gaps by travelling to a set venue, sitting next to one another in an aula or auditorium for the artists' project presentations, adjoining the closed-door roundtable for the duration of near over two hours, and socialising among each other over coffee or finger food in relaxed refuelling moments. Just one year prior, in 2019, we had three such editions! One Work Sessions event at the arts centre Beursschouwburg in Brussels, another at Nordland School of Arts and Film in Kabelvåg, and one special outing to Nyon, for a two-table edition that was co-curated by the film festival Visions du Réel. But with many of the event's characteristics made unthinkable last year—travel, physical proximity, confined spaces, gathering in numbers—we had to reduce the event to its principal goal: helping to forge connections by facilitating meetings. With a little restaging, we staggered the event by inviting the artist–producer combinations to a date that would suit their production schedule and went to work with rallying their tables. Needless to say, with ever-more digital demands put upon everyone's waking hours, not to mention the life–work balance thrown completely off keel, it was a great feat to win over invitees to attend the online roundtables, and we are all the more indebted to them for their participation in this digitised event.

Recalling live events such as the case study seminars, screenings, roundtables, and workshops, a stark contrast emerges between rooms filled with participants and audiences engaging in high-tempo exchanges, and our current efforts to connect, learn, and share the project's findings, whilst each of us operates from our own domestic spaces, our own bubbles, or small islands. In the text 'In Between the Cracks', author and freelance producer Nathalie Gielen reflects on a travel to the spectacular setting of the On & For Symposium, Work Sessions, and Funding Bodies Workshop and Roundtable in 2019: a small village of the archipelago Lofoten, where partner Nordland School of Arts and Film is situated. From her own island, her desk at home in Belgium, Gielen takes us back to the college auditorium, where we are seated in the dark, listening to producers, programmers, and artists discuss how they operate between the fields and funds of the visual arts and film. She opens a peephole onto discussions taking place inside and at the fringes of the funders' meetings, and provides

a window onto her own experiences as an art worker who's often operating in between the cracks.

Stationed at our make-shift home offices in 2020, instead of the live workshops and gatherings that we had hoped to embark on with UK partners LUX and LUX Scotland, we diverted to digital means of collaboration and knowledge-generation. We supported LUX with online media creations such as an artist's talk by Jamie Crewe, a video called *PEOPLE HAVE COME* (2020) in which they discuss 'courting and avoiding publicness' in their practice, and the online presentation of commissioned works by d/Deaf artists, *Captioning on Captioning* (2020) by Louise Hickman and Shannon Finnegan, and *Silence* (2020) by Nina Thomas. This initiative stems from a desire and need to explore 'access in artists' moving image, not as an afterthought, but as a creative impetus which does not presume sighted or hearing audiences' (LUX). In each commissioned work, we learned a thing or two about the digital shift—inventive ways to deliver content and to foreground access to content. With partner LUX Scotland, we supported the commissioning of their series of online resources covering such notions as distribution, how to work with festivals and the commissioning of artists' moving image.[3] In this publication, we are thrilled to republish the resource 'Online Contexts for Artists' Moving Image', which asks the artists Jenny Brady and Jamie Crewe, and curator Shama Khanna to reflect on questions of visibility, access, and the functionality of online platforms for showcasing artwork, reaching audiences, and receiving feedback. This resource, in particular, addresses the unique possibilities (and warns of the perils too) of this moment, when faced with the drive for artists to be digitally present, in digital exhibition and digital distribution.

Continuing the path of e-learning into spring 2021, On & For worked in collaboration with Kunstnernes Hus Kino in Oslo to commission a series of online videos that highlight distribution needs and concerns by proposing case studies of particular film distribution strategies. The series *Mapping Distribution: New Norwegian Initiatives*[4] asks questions about how distribution is handled: with a defined strategy, with a marketing or PR agent, with a physical tour or by placing all

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All of which can be found via the LUX Scotland website by signing up to their free-of-charge membership programme, SUPERLUX (membership.luxscotland.org.uk).

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Available online via the documentation page of onandfor.eu.

bets on online modes? Although the digital shift undoubtedly provides many solutions in terms of reach, horizontality and access, the students of Nordland School of Arts and Film remind us that digital flatness can't compete with analogue audiences in the video *Hallway Conversations* by Katja Eyde Jacobsen, filmmaker and director of Nordland School of Arts and Film. At her institution, the students lament their fatigue of screen-based lifestyles and long for the connections that are made possible by shared cinematic experiences—from the making of films to collective viewing. They talk from the position of students embedded in a small village, where they think about, try out, make and present films, noting that members of their local community are often part of their productions, in one manner or another, from being an extra to offering a set location or a lift for their small crews or being an audience member. They remark, thus, that they are not 'doing something isolated, but involving others from the beginning', highlighting how they have learned first-hand the importance of not only sending films out into the world, unaccompanied, but of sharing them, in person, with audiences, as it's those moments that generate conversation, challenge ideas, and create community. Echoes of de Vroome's text that asks 'how films travel' resound here, in these halls.

Before the health crisis took hold, we had our last live event in the hallowed halls of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon: a case study—*From Scratch to Film*—of the work of Manon de Boer, together with the artist, curator Rita Fabiana of the museum's Modern Collection, and film programmer Nuno Lisboa of Doc's Kingdom, who had selected a number of de Boer's most musical, physical, and rhythmical works to unfold elements of her practice with the audience. The event was held in parallel to de Boer's solo show at the museum, *Downtime,*[5] which showcased four films that captured 'suspended time' and 'free time', as an accompanying text by Fabiana described so astutely. In these works, de Boer explores experiences of time and leisure through creating playful images and images of play; images of actions that appear to 'let go' of control, such as the filming of a group of youngsters improvising with their instruments, dismantling them, unlearning their training and surprising themselves with the sounds they make; or in a

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Downtime/Tempo de Respiração (31 January–13 April 2020), the solo show by Manon de Boer at the Modern Collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, was curated by Susana Gomes da Silva and Rita Fabiana, exhibiting *The Untroubled Mind (2016)* and the trilogy *From Nothing to Something to Something Else* (2018–2019).

set of colourful daily ‘sculptures’ made by the artist’s young son (documented on 16mm, without sound), denoting his developing dexterity and carefree hand; or the observation of a girl sitting idle, alone, with only some objects before her as companions; or a group of dancers moving unchoreographed in space. In these works, time appears to be, indeed, encased in the images, suspended, drawn out, slowed down or sped up, depending on the fancy of each protagonist when left without agenda, without instruction, without aim. ‘Downtime’ is defined as ‘time during which production is stopped’ or ‘inactive time’ (in *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*). Little did we know then that the matters at hand were to be the precursor of a sharp halt to production as we knew it, an exercise in losing control and shifting perspectives.

If I was to let go of this book, to let it drowsily fall from my hand, I imagine it opening, rebelliously, not in the exact middle but with the page containing a number of sleepy looking z’s, strung together, holding one another up, like so: ‘zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz…’. These pages are from the speaker of *Distribution Models* (2019, Brussels) who proposed that one should ‘walk away’ from distribution tropes that do not serve artists well. In response to the request to think of a preamble to the event *Production Models* one year on (2020, Brussels), Niels Van Tomme, director of ARGOS in Brussels, took action in non-action instead: opting to sleep deeply. In the text ‘Deep Sleep’, he turns off his alarm clock and proceeds to illustrate why, in an economical number of pointed paragraphs. Not for the sake of productive capital, not in order to recharge and keep up the good work. No. He proposes to rest without any intent but to defiantly subvert capitalistic logics. In praise of inactive time.

With production intermittently suspended in 2020, and alarm bells switching on and off with each crisis update, we took the time to take a good look at production methods, finding out how production peers from all different backgrounds operate and how they were coping with the unprecedented rhythms of the year. We set about making a questionnaire for representatives of various production models: artists-filmmakers and researchers, a film festival, an arts institute, an artist-run production platform, and an independent producer.

This information, compiled and graphically visualised, provided the starting point for an online conversation on artists’ moving image production, that would then be transformed into a reflective text by the conversation’s moderator, María Palacios Cruz. In her article, ‘How many employees in the organisation? Notes from a Conversation on Producing Artists’ Moving Image’, she provides a thoughtful and thorough study of *Production Models*, evoking the production experiences of greats of the past, like Maya Deren and Hollis Frampton, and interweaving their quips and lessons with the knowledges and experiences exchanged at the digital gathering. The text elaborates on ideas grounded in varying landscapes—linguistics, logistics, geography—that Palacios Cruz makes further tangible by providing an analysis of the data collected, thus highlighting the specifications of each producer. By each participant opening up their books, we could approach the conditions of labour, economy and production in each of their organisations. In this text and on our online documentation page, you can draw nearer to this content yourself. It’s published as an all-access learning tool, for you to distil, from the disclosures, a sense of how AMI production is being supported in varying contexts and what kind of supports provide the foundation for these contexts.

Structures, infrastructures, building blocks, cracks. Architectural references ripple through the texts before you, evidencing the need to hold onto something, to rely on something, the ambition to build upon something, to see spaces between and through something, and to break certain things down. In the coda of this publication, Manubens’s text leaves us with a reflection on structures that fortify: ‘production’, she writes, ‘is a support structure’. What we’ve learned during this project is how to build onto that notion by deconstructing the workings of distribution in order to imagine ‘alternative circuits’ for distributing films: starting with reaching audiences.

The question of how to build an audience travels through this project, and a number of the writings found here, but it was underlined in the aforementioned video series of Kunstnernes Hus Kino that culminated in an online conversation: *Distributed Futures: Alternative Circuits for Alternative Films?*[6]

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A collaborative event with Kunstnernes Hus Kino in Oslo, held on 20 April 2021. Moderated by Mike Sperlinger, with the participation of Anne Lajla Utsi (The International Sámi Film Institute/Sápmifilm), Nicolas Siepen (The Arctic Moving Image & Film Festival), Lene Berg & Mariken Halle (Jack Film Agency), and Silja Espolin Johnson (Kunstnernes Hus Kino). Available online via the documentation page of onandfor.eu.

The conversation brought us to an apt close of events, returning to notions of language and *genrefication*, reflections on how production and distribution are inextricably linked, on diffusion modes ranging from intimate, small-scale screenings to the anonymous uploading culture of the world-wide web. The latter, of course, raising the question: what is distribution *without* an audience?

Filmmaker Lene Berg said about the term 'audience' that it is often used as a code word for 'market', something that is calculated through such film industry metrics as ticket sales. However, she reminds us that there is no such thing as *an* audience: audiences are plural, diverse, multiple, and as such are reached in multitudinous ways. In the case study *Distribution and Neighbouring Fields*, for instance, artist and teacher at Nordland School of Arts and Film Knut Åsdam invites researcher Louisa Olufsen Layne to relate her knowledge of text publication to audiovisual distribution, in which she highlights informal networks, 'bottom-up distribution', and the importance of fan culture: word of mouth. Something unquantifiable. Quite out of step with the 'bums on seats' method of evaluation that's been previously used in cinema culture. Filmmaker Mariken Halle in many ways incited the audience-oriented focus of the talk through her video *Home to the Audience*, in which she repeats the term being thrown at her—'audience, audience, audience'—by market forces. But to her, and we concur, audiences aren't just passive receivers of information that can be tossed around like numbers. They are like structures: they need to be built and, to return to Manubens's fitting vocabulary, *maintained*.

Switching 'Off, Off', for a second time now, I'm certain that the work that's been put in motion by On & For will continue, 'On & On'... The partners and peers behind this project will continue to operate: teaching, producing, distributing, presenting, archiving. From the Work Sessions projects, all but one are, to date, in-the-making, at varying stages of the process before meeting their very own distributed futures. The legacy of this project is to ensure that audiences, met and unmet alike, have free access to all of the project's findings in these texts and on the website, in the hope that this audiovisual field will, itself, become fortified by your engagement with them: concrete analyses of data,

reflections on ways of doing, propositions for future forms. In *Home to the Audience*, Halle recalls advice imparted to her as a student at film school. She said, they said: 'You do not have to be afraid to "get into" the film industry; you are the industry'. As an artist and as an artist-organiser, this affirmation journeys with me now, further, and it's exactly the kind of whisper—the 'she said, they said' kind of rumour—that this project hopes to circulate through the corridors and on the pages here by exploring and exposing structures. As a reader, you don't have to worry about having been on the inside of the events described, on stage or in the crowd, as you, our audiences, are the future of this project. The door to On & For is now wide open for you.

The author would like to thank Marie Logie for her guidance and camaraderie throughout this project and Elizabeth Dexter for her care and candour when helping to compile this publication.

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From *What* to *How*

Depending on who is speaking, you are likely to hear the evaluation of the phenomenon known as ‘artists’ moving image’ (AMI) either as an inevitable future of filmmaking or as an ailing film industry subfield with insufficient funding. Meanwhile, institutions participating in the funding of moving image production and the culture that surrounds it have deemed it, on numerous occasions, an area that lacks substantial definitions. Despite divergent emphasises, AMI works are increasingly present across film festivals and other types of filmic events. In fact, AMI is not just passively present in film exhibition sites, but it is actively changing the landscape of audiovisual production. I, for one, am particularly pleased about how AMI is challenging the format of film events as such. Temporal and spatial boundaries get contested and redefined. Or rather, one could say, rigid film industry produced definitions are loosening up.

Time works differently when it comes to AMI. The length of work, the age of work, its newness vs. retrospective modes, and even such formations as ‘distribution windows’ become relativised. To a large extent, in the face of AMI, the way space is ‘constructed’ in the film industry crumbles as well. The ability of such work to be installed in a venue allows it to get detached from the theatre space. The geographic spatialising tendencies that are prevalent in EUropean[1] film co-production schemes, in the case of AMI, can be overcome to a certain degree. These and many more redefinitions, which I have no ambition to thoroughly list here, are impacting moving image production, its economy, and film culture in the broadest sense.

Such challenges and questions that lead to redefining effects seem to be unable to stem from within the film industry itself. Film festivals as showcase and film industry events often lack the introspection which in the arts has been known for decades as *institutional critique*. I appreciate how AMI brings into film culture valid questions of redefinition by surpassing

1
I use EUropean when I mean political entity of the European Union as opposed to another capacious geographical category of Europe.

Ilona Jurkonytė

film industry obstacles which to a great extent pertain to the 20th century's distribution and exhibition business models. In this sense, AMI is not a creative area lacking defining criteria, but a premonition of a paradigmatic change in film culture.

During the panel discussion *Defining Artists' Moving Image Production and Distribution* that took place during the Kaunas International Film Festival on 27 September 2019, an event organised under the canopy of On & For Production and Distribution, one of the participants, Mindaugas Bundza, who represented the Lithuanian Council for Culture, asked a strikingly simple question: 'What happened during the past several years that now everybody seems to want to talk about AMI?' Participants eagerly joined in thinking together and trying to answer this question.

Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė

'This is not an exclusively Lithuanian issue. What happened, happened worldwide. There is this expanding field of artist-film production that is not an experimental line of work. It is a growing line of production with different content and expression than that of mainstream cinema.'

Lene Berg

'In addition, as opposed to video art of the 1980s–90s, there is a huge amount of people working with moving image outside of cinema contexts. I think that one of the reasons is as curator Asta Vaičiūlytė mentioned earlier, artists are trained to work much more openly with the medium. While cinema, as a space, has excluded so many. The possibilities for distribution in cinema have become more and more narrow. Whilst at the same time, the technology to make work is more and more accessible.'

Ilona Jurkonytė

'I also would not underestimate the impact of there being fewer and fewer cinema spaces that are not multiplexes. Simultaneously, there is a very strong dictate from the side of multiplexes, working through what they include in their programmes and how they define success in exhibition. If we speak from a Lithuanian perspective, I would say we have come to see a languishing cinema culture: there are not enough cinema venues, no progressive forms of moving image education, and yet we have the technology which allows us to produce more work and more diverse work. Meanwhile, society does not have enough access nor necessarily the tools to collectively engage with audiovisual content. To foster such thinking, we need public cinema spaces. There is a lack of spaces for collective cinema experiences.

Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė

'Not to sound apocalyptic, but please don't think that this is not the prevailing tendency in museum spaces also. Museums are becoming places of entertainment: Be more flexible! Entertain your audiences! Involve something which is "cheesy" but otherwise edible. This is the same trend, which only certain established institutions are still trying to resist. In Lithuania, state funding offers some security because state money can aid you in resisting this profit-based entertainment drive.'

Ilona Jurkonytė

'That's a great point! I would add that this is the reason why already, back in 2007, Kaunas IFF was founded in tandem with its efforts to rescue Lithuania's oldest cinema theatre, Romuva. From its beginnings, there was an interest in bridging the gap between the film culture of the past and the current moment—and beyond. The organisation remained true to the vision that, in order to sustain an independent film culture today, we need not only publicly funded cinema events but venues as well.

I observe the paradox of how in its current state, both in art and in film culture production contexts, in western(ised) parts of the world, a re-evaluation of notions of cultural institutions' 'independence' is taking place. The market impact on cultural production seems to be more visible than public funding's.[2] We need resistance to the market-drive in spaces designated to cinema. In Kaunas IFF's case of rescuing Romuva, although I thought we succeeded in saving it, as a cinema, we can see now that it has been turned into a multipurpose cultural house, sharing its function with dance theatre. At this point, the multifunctionality of cultural venues, for me, has become a cursed word. Sadly, multifunctionality is what is expected both from buildings and from artists too.'

2
When discerning public funding and market contexts, I do not mean that public funding does not participate in markets. I seek to emphasise the different mandates that public funding and market impulses carry.

‘I understand your points, but to proceed along the lines of the devil’s advocate, when we speak of new technology, why do we still speak about old technology, about cinema theatres, to show the work that has been created with new technology?’

Needless to say, the discussion developed nicely further. Though soon enough it became obvious that, yet again, when answering such questions, we cannot linger in the area of stabile defining criteria, rather, we’ve got to shift our attentions to the flexible intersections of multiple, simultaneous, and at times even contradictory tendencies such as new technologies in old spaces. Such ‘old’ spaces that, while being state-supported, have the potential to foster film culture and take it into the future. Let me put emphasis on the venue and support that, when combined, can render space for fostering new forms of cinema.

Attempts to define AMI are often situated in the discourse of global art cinema. We are not trying to delineate AMI’s specificity in relation to the USA’s big studio productions. This means that, from the get-go, we are basing AMI definitions in the realm of film culture production, which itself is defined, by default, by non-stable parameters of circulation patterns and their relations to national cinema funding. One important caveat to bear in mind, though, is that once we find ourselves in the area of global art cinema, we have no choice but to deal with issues of *genrefication*. Here, I want to draw on some of the visionary scholarship of Azadeh Farahmand,[3] who insightfully grasped existent and at times utterly unspoken tendencies in the global art cinema circuit. Farahmand exposed how national funding and exhibition circuits (in her case study, she specifically focused on the film festival circuit) create ‘new cinema waves’ along the geopolitical lines drawn by funding bodies through constantly chasing after new content.

The usefulness of Farahmand’s analysis of *genrefication* is twofold. She not only warns of the pitfalls of *genrefication* but also offers a methodological shift in focus from what to how. In her words, ‘The theoretical model of *genrefication* replaces the question of what constitutes the characteristic qualities of a genre with how generic types are conceived.’[4]

3
Azadeh Farahmand, ‘Disentangling the International Festival Circuit: Genre and Iranian Cinema’, *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*, ed. by Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 263–285.

4
Ibid. p. 268.

While inspired by Farahmand’s methodologic gesture of ‘from what to how’, in the context of AMI, I insist on resisting the proclivities of *genrefication* which are so present in global art cinema and that come with the ‘discovery circuits’ of the film industry environment. I want to warn against possible perils of *genrefication* which in the film industry may manifest themselves through national funding structures, and prosper in the absence of institutional critique. The treacherous tendency that I observe in attempts to turn AMI into a fundable activity is an impulse to turn AMI into a genre with stabile definitions. I would caution against that. Instead, I suggest that we should leave AMI on a meta level in relation to discussions of genre; let’s even leave it out of discussions on typology: the aged ‘documentary vs. fiction’ talk. Let’s turn AMI into a methodological device. A device that should amply impact the patterns of audiovisual works’ funding, production, distribution, and exhibition by creating less rigid and less prescriptive modes.

I am aware that the phrase ‘artists’ moving image’ is at odds with my proposition that points at the potentials stemming from this type of production and this is why—at least temporarily—I am so eager to accept the code name ‘AMI’, because as an abbreviation, of course only on a surface level, it loses constant emphasis on the professional definitions of the term ‘artist’, especially as embedded in the economy of prestige, in the way James F. English has defined it.[5] I argue that such a way of grounding definitions of phenomena is an attempt to parse them out, which brings in issues of essentialism. It drags you into debates over who qualifies as an artist, how one becomes an artist, when is one deemed an artist, what institutional frameworks issue the status of an artist, etc. And all these questions are at odds with both institutional critique and certain freedoms that many makers, especially those coming from what we identify as art backgrounds, are attracted to in the film industry.

The question remains, how do we, as producers of film culture, avoid sacrificing the creative potentials stemming from different (non-film industry) patterns of production and, simultaneously, how do we negotiate different aspects of freedom that are available through different production paths?

5
James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2005).

This is why I suggest that audiovisual culture is living through a paradigmatic shift, and one that is not only technological. It is institutional. Institutions have to reinvent themselves. They have to move beyond the 20th-century narrative approach and seek to incorporate institutional critique, which to film funding bodies could come in the shape of a developing literacy in the politics of form and an examination of positionalities. This is why I propose that we should think about AMI as a strategy to impact funding and production patterns by taking the best of film culture production tendencies from the film industry and from the arts, and merging them. We need a more diverse, more interesting, less micromanaged and less extractive audiovisual culture. Particularly, the new film culture could benefit from finding the intersection that encompasses the scale of production and budgets deemed eligible in film industry contexts, and the approaches to production, exhibition and circulation as they tend to be enacted in institutional contemporary art contexts.

We hear yearning and hopes from diverse sides concerning AMI. To return to that first-of-its-kind panel in Lithuania: the film producer Dagnė Vildžiūnaitė's motivation to work with AMI is, as she put it, because 'cinema is stuck'; Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė's motivation to work with AMI is because it constitutes part of art production today and, for many artists, the motivation to apply to a film fund is, simply put, that in film funds there is a potential access point to the required budgets... In the end, as Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė put it, 'we [art and film producers] still don't know each other enough.' Meaning that the problems Dagnė Vildžiūnaitė identified in the cinema sphere might yet be lurking in the operational patterns of museums. The most exciting outcome of this event, as part of a EUropean project, was the unprecedented conversations that branched out among local producers of film culture and public funders in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland focused on creating an AMI production support platform in (& For) the Baltic region.

For real change, multiple work table discussions among the makers and funders are needed. Maybe then better-attuned representatives of institutions will not have to waste time finding the institutionally unacknowledged but possible ways to

foster film cultures of today. Curator in Chief of the Lithuanian National Art Gallery, Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė, laid down her cards when she said: 'As a visual arts institution, we take part in this audiovisual field in three ways: production, dissemination, and collecting. All three of them are complicated. However, I am troubled to talk about this with colleagues from the Cultural Council of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Film Center being present. I am just scared that we will be caught out in *how* we find ways to fund all the three directions...' Isn't it surprising that even major art institutions are forced into 'clandestine' production situations? I am convinced that actors participating in film culture should find a common denominator in these yearnings, that signal moving image work production as being too claustrophobic or 'dead-ended', to use producer Vildžiūnaitė's succinct diagnosis. My proposition is to avoid looking for a stabile genre, typology, or definition and focus on taking AMI as a method, which means concentrating on diversifying the processes of production and reclaiming and radically redefining notions of success.

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We Do Not Travel Alone: A Reflection on Film Production

1. The conundrum of self-production

I am writing this text in my living-room-turned-studio, which I share with my flatmate, a visual artist who also makes videos. I consider myself a writer and filmmaker—and a 'dummy' when it comes to film production. During my Master's studies, I mostly filmed with my own camera and edited on the computers at the academy. After graduation—and exacerbated by the uncertainties thrown up by the emergence of the COVID-19 virus—my home became my ad-hoc studio. The only production with which I am familiar is self-production: a process where the maker assumes responsibility for all aspects of the work, from researching to writing, from assembling a crew to clicking the 'export' button after a third 'final' edit.

Ellen Meiresonne, the production manager at Atelier Graphoui and one of the presenters at the *Production for Dummies* workshop, captures self-production in pragmatic terms: to self-produce is to 'provide your own logistic support on top of artistic effort and build your own platform of production and distribution.'

In self-production, 'you have quite a lot of freedom, but also quite a lot of work beyond the artistic practice,' says Andrea Cinel, curator at ARGOS Centre for Audiovisual Arts and another presenter. Over time, self-production can become unsustainable for the artist and filmmaker. Apart from my own experiences, I have witnessed many artist friends spending days, if not weeks, applying for funding and submitting to festivals by themselves. It is easy to talk about success when someone receives a positive decision from a funding body or a letter of acceptance from a partner institution. What we do not acknowledge—at least not enough—is the constant, invisible work and the reality that artists are undervalued and un(der)paid.

Jue Yang

Within arts education we have glorified the image of the 'do-it-all artist', who is expected not only to research, make, and reflect, but also to self-organise, self-distribute and self-promote. Film schools might offer structure and encourage more teamwork. However, once a person graduates, the shelter of the institution disappears and the network, as well as access to necessary equipment, dwindles. Some of us have not worked with producers because we don't know where to start.

It's a paradox: the artists are dying for support without knowing what support looks like. The workshop bridges this knowledge gap. Ellen Meiresonne and Andrea Cinel, along with Alice Lemaire (a producer at Michigan Films), share their experience as producers with generosity. As we gain a more transparent and concrete picture of production and the relationship between the filmmaker and the producer, we start asking ourselves what the producers are encouraging us to think about throughout the workshop: to what extent do we want to be independent?

In Ellen's words, 'producing a film is a long journey.'

When I think of the ingredients of a physical journey, I think of planning, detours, discovery. I think of times when I just had to board a night bus and spend the night sleepless, wondering why on earth I was still on it. On the journey of production, the producer is a knowledgeable travelling companion. (Myself and others accustomed to self-production? The inexperienced travellers.)

Andrea and Ellen summarise the producer's support in four areas: artistic, logistical, financial and legal. One of the case studies produced by Atelier Graphoui, *Un Amour Rêvé* (Arthur Gillet, 2018), demonstrates the lengthy and diverse support a film requires. The production period of this hybrid film lasted six years. Other than offering support during its initial development, the producer helped re-orient the project when an early funding request was rejected and when filming in relevant locations was no longer possible. Such obstacles would be difficult for a filmmaker to handle without guidance.

Both Ellen and Alice emphasise the 'relational dynamic' between the filmmaker and the producer. 'It is important to seek understanding with the producer, not to view them as an antagonistic "money person". Most producers of artists' moving image are idealistic and are willing to be constructive across the stage of the project,' says Ellen.

I find the following remarks from the workshop illuminating:

Alice — *I would like to [review a project] with care. A production can be 2, 3, 4 years.*

Ellen — *2, 3, 4 years working with one person. It's not a commission of the ministry. It's a personal, long-term relationship.*

The producer invests in a project over numerous years—I had not realised this until now. In self-production, I have not worked (or have not been able to work) at this scale.

I pause to elaborate this realisation:

The producer invests care, resources, tangible and emotional labour in a new project—and the filmmaker—over multiple years. Under this framework, the relationship between the filmmaker and the producer is a mutual commitment.

However, other than new, high-stake projects, a producer can also support projects-in-progress based on the filmmaker's needs. For instance, Atelier Graphoui offers 'creative human resources and a production space' and '[provides] the project leaders with equipment or audiovisual facilities.'[1]

Knowing the different kinds of available support, we can reflect on the relationship we want to have with a producer. Regardless of the answer, the conversation starts with our understanding of the producer's work. To that end, Andrea suggests '[getting] to know the field, checking out who's producing what and who's funded by Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds/Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) [and other funding bodies].'[2] Ellen underlines the importance of sending out emails in a personal way, showing awareness of the potential match between the filmmaker and the producer.[3]

1
As cited on Atelier Graphoui's 'About Us' page (graphoui.org).

2
Funding has implications on the types of projects the producers are capable of supporting. A list of different funding bodies in Belgium can be found on On & For's webpage, which also hosts the video of the workshop. (onandfor.eu).

3
Open calls provide structured, equal access to a producer. Atelier Graphoui posts an annual open call for production focusing on novice filmmakers. ARGOS started an open call initiative in 2020 and has produced works proposed by artists who are new to single-channel films.

Through the production process, the project takes on a life of its own. Rather than the solitary author, the filmmaker becomes a contributor. The shift from self-production to working with a producer requires the filmmaker to stay flexible and, if not already, learn to work through changes.

'We see production as a pedagogical process,' says Ellen, '[first-time filmmakers] see the budget and make choices accordingly.'

These choices can take form in 'shooting media, camera, sound, data management and software.' Some choices—such as shooting media and sound—are both logistical and aesthetic decisions. When discussing how much impact the producer has on the aesthetics of a project, 'dialogue' is a keyword. 'The producer is not your enemy,' says Alice, 'the producer provides options and we make artistic choices together.'

While allowing for more options, new resources can mean new constraints and negotiations. Most funding comes with conditions; examples include hiring a local crew or spending a percentage of money in a certain region. In the case study of *OJO GUAREÑA* (Edurne Rubio, 2018), produced by ARGOS, the filmmaker hoped for a scene filmed with snow, which meant waiting for the right weather conditions and subsequent accommodations in the filming and reporting timeline.

The producer helps keep track of the progress of the project and, necessarily, safeguards its intention. Ellen highlights the importance of a 'fundamental dossier' which documents the filmmaker's intention in the beginning of the production process. The filmmaker and the producer can thus refer back to this document when developing materials for different potential partners.

In the production process, the filmmaker also learns to navigate through the ensuring distribution of the film, to give value to that time and labour, aspects that are often murky in self-production. 'It's not a matter of finding a large public, but a good public, for your film,' says Ellen.[4] ARGOS, as a distribution platform and an archive, also maintains its relationships with filmmakers.

3. Production as education and dialogue

4
On & For has organised a separate session on distribution in 2019, including the workshop *Distribution for Dummies* alongside the *Distribution Models* programme. See website onandfor.eu for further details.

4. Towards a more sustainable practice

As for valorisation, Ellen says, 'I try to valorise time. If a project comes to us at the post-production stage, I will valorise what the maker did before. I like to give value to things.' In *Un Amour Rêvé*, for example, the filmmaker was compensated for the archive materials and research conducted prior to the production.

In fact, we can all probably do to give a little more value to things. Exploitation in the arts comes from a lack of transparency and a (perceived) power hierarchy. Self-production based on working for free, or very little, leads to more exploitation in the system.[5]

Alice advises filmmakers 'to have different projects moving on different scales.' While one project would require a producer, other smaller projects can act as showcases. Working with a producer enables us to produce on a larger scale—it educates us about how the system works and, more importantly, updates our agency to participate in it critically.

On the journey of producing films, we—artists and filmmakers—do not travel alone. To strive for fair pay for artistic labour, we need to involve ourselves in building and maintaining fair practices. And the producer, our travelling companion, extends a welcoming hand.

5
Those who can afford to work this way are in a privileged position. Artists who cannot afford to work for free do not have as much time for getting visibility and external support due to other commitments. This is a form of inequality to which many of us unknowingly contribute.

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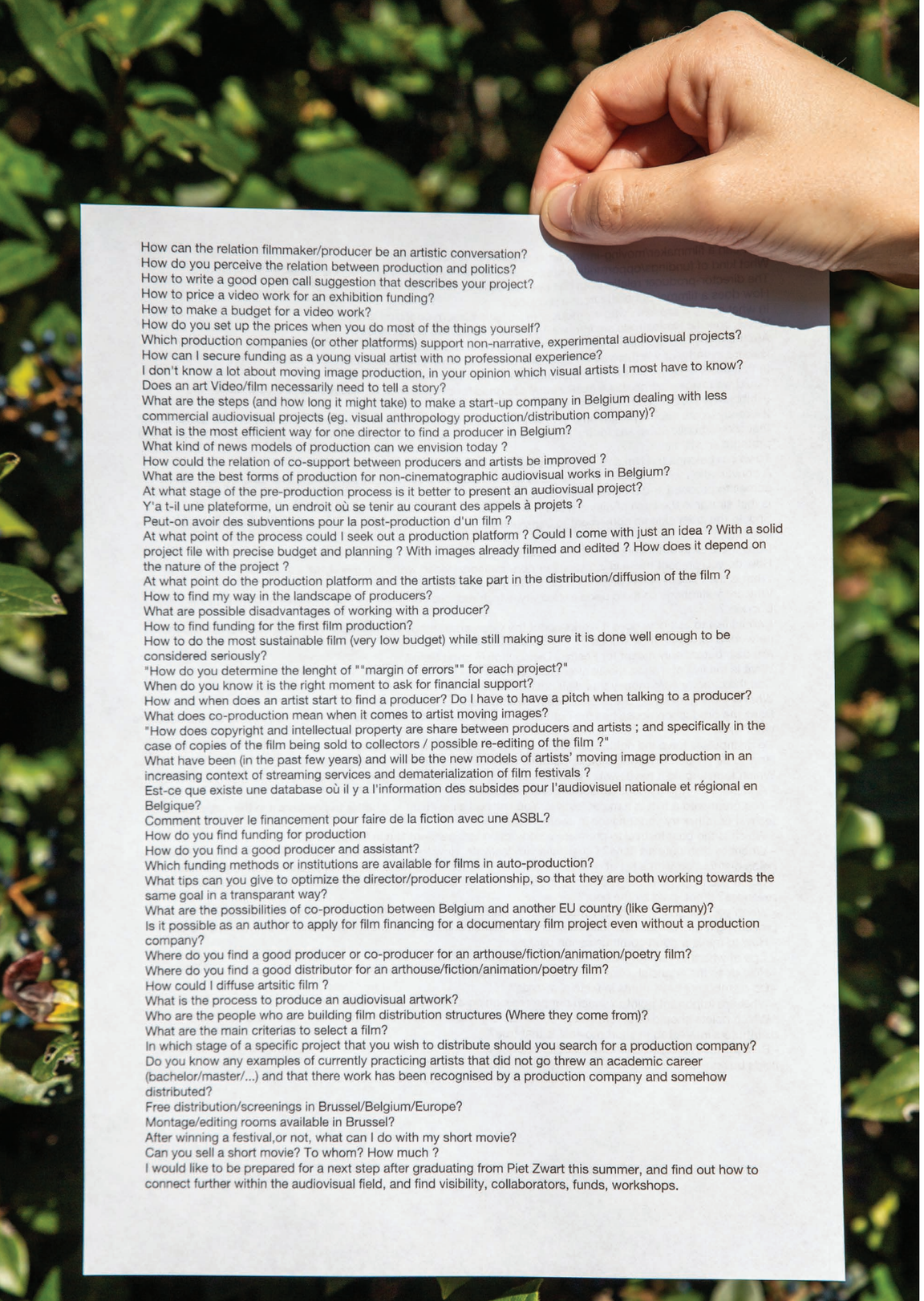

To All the Lost Tapes

To all the films that were made and lost. To the failing hard drives, lost tapes and cassettes, unreadable with today's technologies. Erased memory cards and overwritten memories. To the films stacked on archive drives, burnt on DVDs, scratched by the years. To the copy–pasted Vimeo links and their lost passwords. To a film's shorter and shorter lifespan.

To all the films yet to come, shot and edited, which will be lost soon thereafter. To those neither selected nor shown, to those which will never meet their audience. To the films that are only seen within close circles, and those that will never cross borders. To the films that only knew international festival networks and never came back to their native roost. To the V1, V2, V3 edits, to the multiscreen projects that remain invisible without a space to show them. To the first, second and third films hidden behind a *properly* produced first film. To the lost tapes yet to come.

A term often used in the music industry, LPs labelled 'lost tapes' are re-releases of previously published material. They are (re)discovered by digging into crates and drawers—all in order to give a second life to tracks that didn't meet success in their time. Particularly cherished by aficionados, collectors, and vinyl-diggers, the lost tapes end up not being quite so lost for those who look for them. They might, however, remain lost and forgotten to a wider audience for the reason that they were released too late to still be expected or too early to be anticipated. The lost tapes' fate came to mind when reading the questions posed by the *Dummies* participants, lost and found questions. Those that did not find an answer. The kind of questions one used to have to solve on one's own, years ago now, do you remember?

From the outset, it might be tempting to see the lost tapes syndrome as a two-sided *pharmakon*—a blessing for films

Maxime Gourdon

that were saved from dusty cupboards and shot to stardom years later, and a curse for the tapes that remained 'unfound', seemingly unfit for our times. For the lost tapes to be able to speak for themselves, they require us to lend an ear to the stories they tell. Beyond their stories, however, the *Dummies*-questions similarly make interrogations to unfold and attend to.

Indeed, when approaching these questions, there lies a temptation to read them as fragments of a bigger picture. When sequenced, ordered into categories that fit, these questions assemble a landscape of the current context of creation for young filmmakers.

However, one should not transform these questions into something other, and let them speak for themselves: 'which funding methods or institutions are available for films in auto-production?' does not necessarily mean 'I want to keep working by myself and I don't trust production'. Instead, it may suggest that one does not wish to wait for years for a green light to be able to make a first shot; that perhaps one has networks of collaboration at hand that bypass institutional ways of production; that one might have invented for oneself solutions to prevent funding from being the deciding factor for a project. Additionally, these questions stem from the questioning of whether to remain 'independent', a desire encountered many times in the pool of questions; a desire to be able to shoot as soon as possible.

Through 'How can I diffuse an artistic film?', you might read, 'I made a film on my own, but how do I show it beyond the circle of my peers?' 'How to make the most sustainable film (with a very low budget) while still making sure it is done well enough to be considered seriously?' might sound like, 'How can I access the visibility I aim for without changing the way I make films?' Through these questions, however, blows a fresh wind for a third way between the cracks, a defiance in an established system of visibility. That is to say, finding some help to film what needs to be shot, and be able to present it whenever it's finished and whenever it makes sense—visibility, recognition, expectations, notions that seek to be challenged through these questions, and alternative routes to be found by the upcoming generation(s) of filmmakers.

'What kind of new models of production can we envision today?' As the collected *Dummies*-questions indirectly look back on and crystallise a state of affairs, in a similar fashion, films encapsulate the conditions and accidents that led to their making. Material means, travelling expenses and insurance, extra rolls of film, unpaid collaborators and actors paid only for a few days. A film is the product of both contingency and given material/emotional conditions, in short: production means. The *Dummies*-questions carry a similar burden. These questions (like the lost tapes) are affected by the tremendous efforts required for bringing them into being. They further solidify—and thus reveal—the social relations of a precise moment in history, helping us to retrace the making of a cultural narrative. At a very peculiar time in filmmaking (due to the production shutdown enforced by the pandemic), the *Dummies*-questions find a shared space to learn from and to give voice to in the On & For workshops. The *Dummies* workshops aim to be a place of exchange between filmmakers, and for anyone who wishes to participate and assemble. They attempt to untangle the convoluted routes to funding and open up the complex logics of access, to make room to reassess what help, support and funding really means.

How does one know if a tape is already lost when finishing one's film? As most of us know, or might just even guess, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get into international festivals. One who is eager to send their tape takes the risk of being turned down, and must comply to have their film concealed if selected, keeping the international premiere label untouched and intact for however many months until then. The lucky ones this year were screened online, under lockdown circumstances, before a wide, international (that is, if the festival isn't geo-blocked) but anonymous audience—the trade-off for the reward. Is this really the most gratifying outcome for filmmakers? This festival system has produced such a turnover in festival applications that tapes end up having a tacit two-year life expectancy for festivals; waiting their turn at the expense of screenings in smaller venues, online or in the flesh, and making festivals compete between themselves to get international premieres, assuring success only for more 'career-driven' filmmakers.[1] This poses a real question about visibility and recognition, and asks for a new positionality.

1
Read Collectif Jeune Cinema's statement after the withdrawal of one of their competing films because of its selection in an A-list international festival requiring international premiere.

Reassessing the value of international festivals themselves as the aspirational prime public, to the benefit of situated and contextualised screenings, could help foster a local community of filmmakers, local scenes and local production structures; shifting priorities might be the response to 2020—and the years to come.

Mechanisms such as these expose the dangers of the ever-expanding factory of lost tapes, for which such trade-offs might not be worth the risk. How can the *Dummies*, then, not wish for a third way to make their tapes seen and their questions heard, narrowly escaping becoming lost themselves? When a tape deemed to be lost is made visible anew (or at all), a particular moment occurs: a sigh of relief stems from this lapse of invisibility, an incomparable joy is to be felt when the tape brings together a venue and an audience. Simply put, a common pleasure lies in sharing a film or a question at the right time and place.

A glance at the *Dummies*-questions through this lens makes it blatantly visible that these mechanisms have been identified by not-so-Dummy filmmakers after all.

From the *Dummies*, we hear the need for spaces without limiting conditions, shifting the rules of visibility, recognition and mutual support towards diverse and viable alternatives. Spaces such as the On & For workshops for production and distribution are crucial in unveiling routes for support and sharing information, so too are DIY groups and workshops for sharing know-how and developing grassroots cooperation,[2] local institutions and organisations for running open screens,[3] film programmes, and supporting artists-in-the-making, semi-private screenings in artists' studios.[4] It is perhaps down to each Dummy, practitioner and organiser, facilitator and participant, to keep the cracks open,[5] in between which we can exchange, and debate how we want our films to be valorised and accessed. Redefining for ourselves what support and funding really mean, what exposure and recognition really entail; how expectations can be plural.

2
Moving Image Atelier organised by elephy and PAM (Platform for Audiovisual and Media Arts) put together by various organisations in Belgium.

3
I'm thinking of Beursschouwburg's Tumbleweed editions, Cinema Nova's Open Screens...

4
Here, a shout out to Potion Cinema and Dagvorm Cinema at Level Five!

5
Natalie Gielen, 'In Between the Cracks' (2020), pp. 126–134.

On and for whom?

It is the semi-visible tapes that we would like to honour through these words, to reflect on film's differential publicness and access points. Tapes that ought to find their way, and eventually shed light on distribution and production blind spots, their flaws carried within the material itself and expanding into its community: there will always be more films created than there will be selected, supported in production and distributed—more questions asked than answered.

Giving the floor to the *Dummies* themselves, and working from their questions, helped to shed light on these entangled issues, and gives a particular traction and actuality to the lost tapes conundrum. There lies a need for such a discussion and a need to create visibility for lost tapes, to negotiate new terms for creation in increasingly deranged times.[6] Here lies my position, alongside that of On & For's initiative, as an attempt to deal with the questions raised. Perhaps not to answer them all, most probably not, but surely to hear them ask other questions in return, so the questions circle back.

The author would like to thank Juliette Le Monnyer for her critical observations and artistic input, helping me to shape this argument throughout countless conversations. Additional thanks to Elizabeth Dexter and Rebecca Jane Arthur, indispensable for their caring proofreading and insightful comments.

6
'Deranged times': I'm borrowing the words of Mirene Arsanios from the article 'Writing in Crisis: A Conversation Between Beirut and New York' (LITHUB, 2020), who in turn borrowed these words from Amitav Ghosh.

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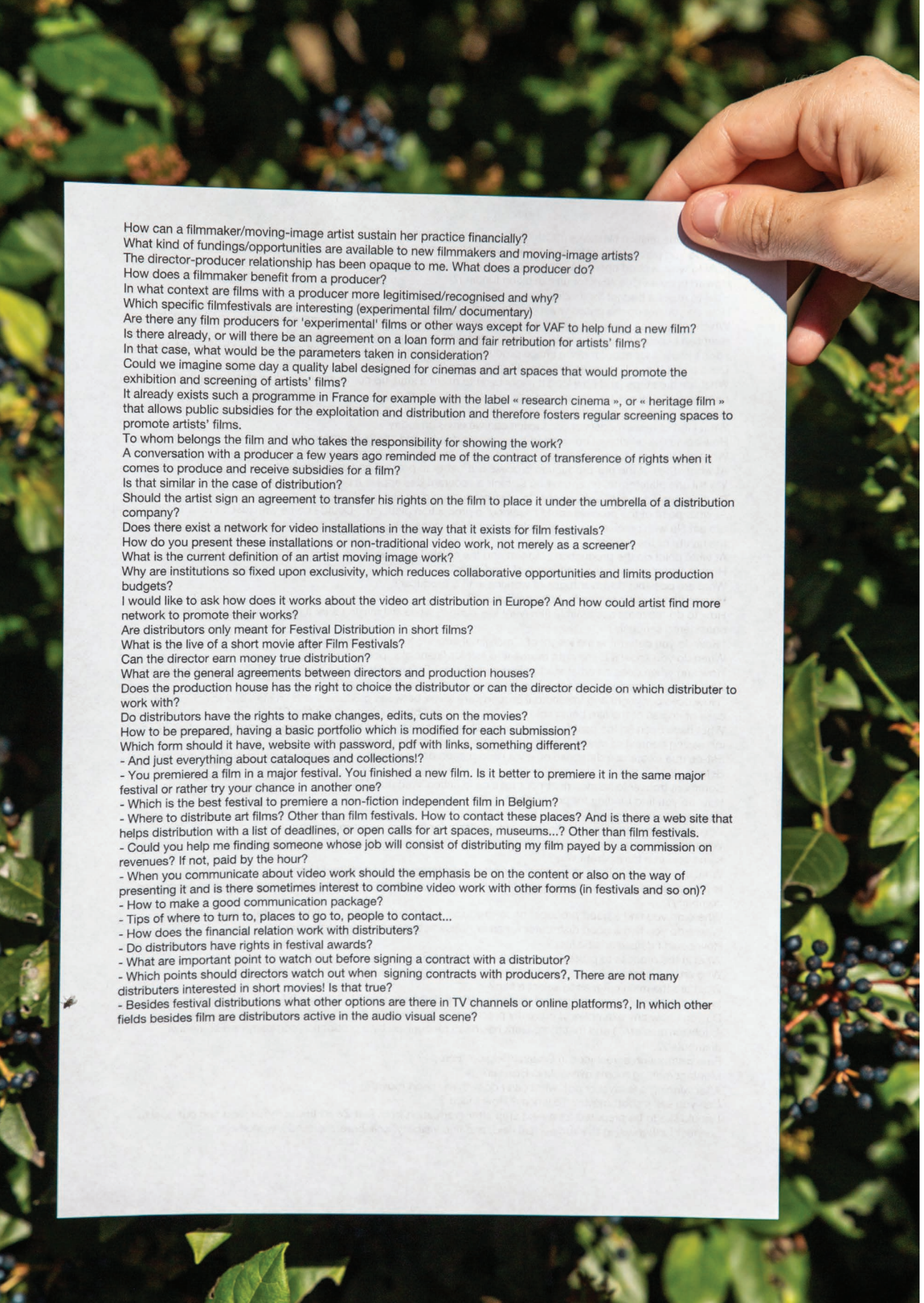


A Motley Landscape: How Films Travel

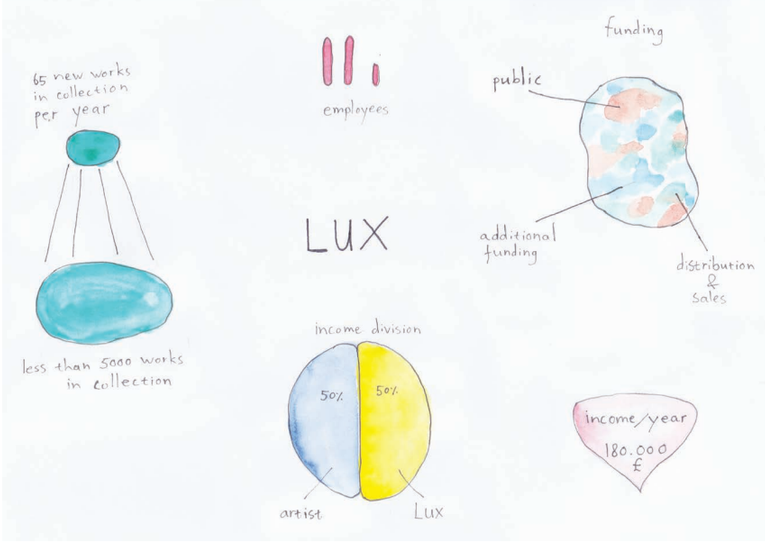
In the early days of cinema, Dziga Vertov and Alexandr Medvedkin embarked on the Agit-train which was equipped with on-board editing studios and a movie theatre. Riding in the early twenties through the remote lands of Russia, they filmed, edited and screened their films to people in the villages they passed. They wanted to democratise the accessibility of cinema with the adage: 'If the people cannot come to the cinema, the cinema will come to the people.'

What is the capacity of filmmakers, almost a hundred years later, to show their films? Are they modern-day pilgrims, who diffuse their work personally, or are there ways to let the film travel for them? A finished film only starts to exist when it can be shown. And what we learned during the On & For *Distribution Models* meeting (April 2019, Brussels) is that there are a multitude of different approaches to making a film present and to preserve its existence in the future.

Five distribution platforms were invited to talk about their work. In this text, I will report on their presentations. The speakers of the day were María Palacios Cruz of LUX, Sirah Foighel Brutmann of Messidor, Gerald Weber of sixpackfilm, Diana Tabakov of Doc Alliance and Niels Van Tomme of ARGOS.

Text and drawings by Nina de Vroome

María Palacios Cruz is part of the British distribution platform LUX. Their building is situated in a park in London, and besides the offices, it accommodates an exhibition space and a publishing house. They support researchers, students and artists.



With glowing eyes, Palacios Cruz explained how most of the work of a distributor is invisible. A lot of what they do doesn't result in anything. Behind the scenes, they write letters, visit festivals or museums and have conversations with programmers. All these actions create a tissue around the films, and even though it doesn't often result directly in a screening or exhibition, the films exist. When people keep hearing and reading about works in LUX's collection, at the right moment it will germinate and something will grow out of it.

LUX started as a filmmakers' collective. That is why they do not distribute a single work. They distribute an artist. This means that the moment they decide to add an artist to their collection, their whole oeuvre will be included, so they welcome masterpieces as well as less successful works. For them it is important to have this bond of confidence with artists, which is more important than with the individual art-film.

For every screening, a fee is requisite. Even though the work of the artist is created with passion, and even though it often feels wrong as an artist to capitalise upon your labour of love, this basic rule is necessary to be able to continue working.

Here, Palacios Cruz quotes Hollis Frampton's letter to the then director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, expressing that his ability to produce art 'cannot continue on love and honor alone'. The director had invited him to present a retrospective saying that 'there is no money involved whatsoever'.

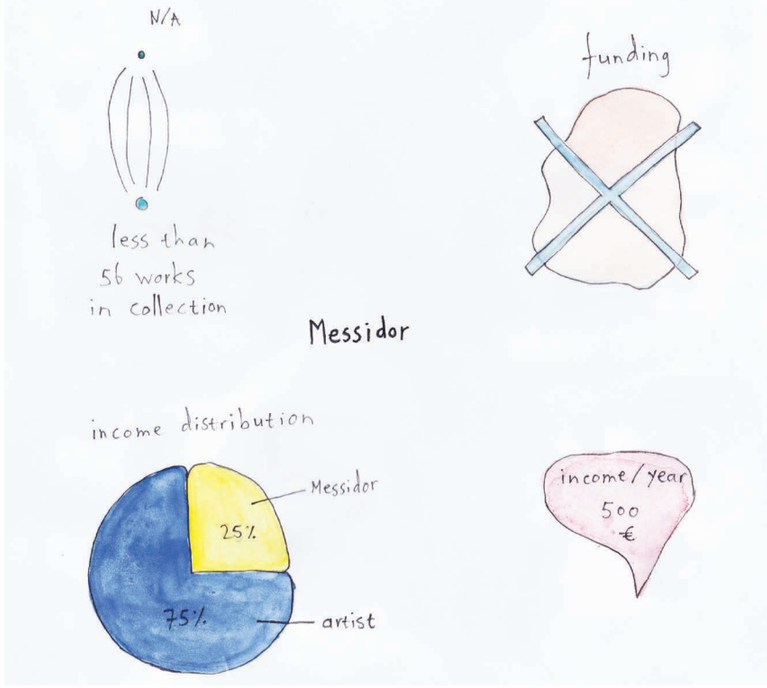
There are not many people working in this economic system who have to struggle with the extreme ambivalence of making a living with work that has grown out of passion other than artists. When an artist wants to survive, they have to learn to exploit their love. And this makes it hard to negotiate something like rental fees without feeling a sense of ill-treatment towards oneself and one's art. This ambivalence is preyed upon by many.

But as Frampton points out in his letter, he generates wealth for scores of people by making his work, so why, he asks himself, should he be the only one not being paid for the show?

> I'll put it to you as a problem in fairness. I have made let us say, so and so many films. That means that so and so many thousands of feet of rawstock have been expended, for which I paid the manufacturer. The processing lab was paid, by me, to develop the stuff, after it was exposed in a camera for which I paid. The lens grinders got paid. Then I edited the footage, on rewinds and a splicer for which I paid, incorporating leader and glue for which I also paid. The printing lab and the track lab were paid for their materials and services. You yourself, however meagrely, are being paid for trying to persuade me to show my work, to a paying public, for "love and honor". If it comes off, the projectionist will get paid. The guard at the door will be paid. Somebody or other paid for the paper on which your letter to me was written, and for the postage to forward it. (Frampton, 1973)

This brings us to the second speaker, the filmmaker Sirah Foighel Brutmann. She collaborates in a collective called Messidor, together with Meggy Rustamova, Pieter Geenen and Eitan Efrat. They found each other through mutual interest in each other's work. They make not only films, but also installations, photographs and other work. They received a working grant to come together as an artist-run organisation, which meant they started working in the framework of a not-for-profit organisation. The artists in Messidor are facing the same problems as Frampton did in 1973 when he wrote his letter to the curator of film at MoMA.

Messidor



In some ways things are worse now than before, as the festival industry has discovered that there are many filmmakers who distribute their own work. Some festivals consider filmmakers as the consumers, even to a larger extent than the eventual audience. They build their business model around the dreams of filmmakers, rather than the love of cinema. In some cases, collecting submission fees has become the sole ambition.[1] With the democratisation of film production, the game of supply and demand has tilted to the disadvantage of independent filmmakers.

Foighel Brutmann said: 'When we started to distribute our own work, we thought that we could just send our films to festivals and they would be screened. But this has changed over the last ten years. Now, small-scale films are being marginalised. Festivals have started to ask increasingly larger submission fees.

1
Claire J. Harris, 'Indie Filmmakers Beware of Scam Film Festivals', *Medium*, June 2019.

We decided that we didn't want to pay festivals just to take a look at our work. So we got in contact with festivals, proposed our films and explained we weren't ready to pay them. We made a lot of friends. We also made a lot of enemies.'

It is not easy to arrange a good premiere, but it's equally hard to keep the film alive. Two or three years after the production has been released, most festivals won't be interested to show the film, when it has lost its novelty. Several of the distribution platforms, like sixpackfilm or LUX, often show films in retrospectives. But as María Palacios Cruz acknowledged, there is an 'undistributed middle' between premieres and the canon. She proposed that the role of the distributor could be to 'undo the canon, instead of trying to introduce new work to it.' The collection of a distributor tells a story besides that of the official canon, which is just another story, albeit one more influential. When making the selection for their collection, LUX addresses the voices that have remained unheard, that are often overlooked or ignored. ARGOS, for their part, observed that films have a longer life expectancy in art spaces, which are less focused on premieres and which also provide more possibilities for an audience to see the work. Instead of one or two screenings in regular festivals, a work may be visible for several months.

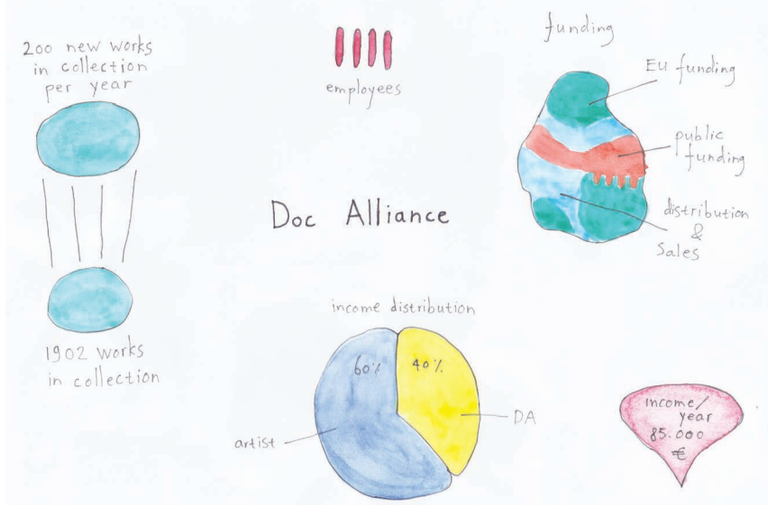
sixpackfilm

Gerald Weber spoke on behalf of sixpackfilm, an Austrian non-profit distribution organisation. Artists can submit their films to an open call four times a year and may be chosen by a committee. Sixpackfilm distributes new and old Austrian films to festivals, but also to cinemas, for exhibitions and for television broadcasting, although the possibilities for broadcasting are diminishing. Television

channels tend to buy films at an early stage of production and are less often willing to invest in a film that is already finished.

Indeed, filmmakers today have witnessed how the age of television has passed. Television channels are rarely willing to take financial risks. They favour safe and accessible works rather than films with non-standard formats or with a personal voice. In this regard the film by Geoff Bowie, *The Universal Clock: The Resistance of Peter Watkins* (2001), in which Watkins takes a critical look at the 'content production facilities' that television channels had become is interesting. While visiting a conference on television formats, the head of National Geographic memorably confesses that they had found the best way to keep the audience glued to the programme without giving them any new information. The structure and editing is optimised for the best 'cliffhanger' before the commercial break. The director has to respect the rules and time slots that are premeditated for each format. As the head says himself: 'I completely respect it if a filmmaker wants to keep *his* own artistic voice. But we won't hire him then.'

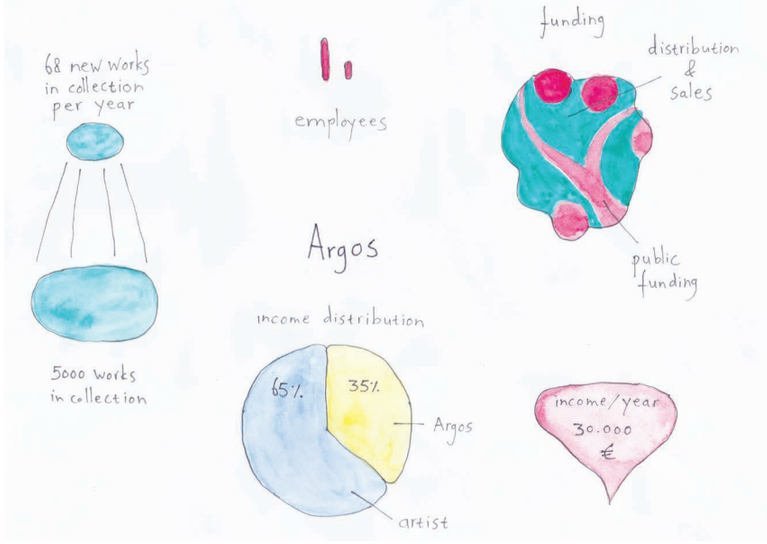
Since 2001, when this interview took place, there are no signs that television has evolved towards a rejection of the 'universal clock'-mode. It even seems keener to cling to formatted content as if it's the last straw. Neither have big players like Netflix created much breathing space for independent filmmakers. But the story of television is not finished. There are still filmmakers who are funded by television channels. Even though it demands a different method of working with co-productions, filmmakers should not turn away from the medium.



While television is regarded as a thing from the past, VOD is widely seen as the future of film distribution. Diana Tabakov came from Prague to talk about Doc Alliance Films. Before she started her presentation, she showed a short trailer, in which film images were projected into cardboard boxes which were folded and composed to create a showing device as delicate as a musical box. It presented the platform as a pliable space, as a soft image-machine. Doc Alliance makes different ways of screening possible, since watching a film online is no longer place-related. Besides the wide screen in a big space where people watch a film in a crowd, a film can also be snuggled on one's lap, it can travel along in a train while landscapes rush by or it can be projected onto an unfolded blanket in the living room. Set free from the cinema hall, film has become something that can be so small as to fit in one's pocket.

Doc Alliance works together with a number of big festivals: CPH:DOX, DocLisboa, Docs Against Gravity FF, DOK Leipzig, FIDMarseille, Ji.hlava IDFF and Visions du Réel. All films that are selected at those festivals will automatically be included in the collection. Besides the selections of these festivals, Doc Alliance also selects other films to be included in curated programmes like 'festival focus', 'retrospective' or 'films of the week'. It is available around the world, but they may also geo-block, for example, when a festival in a specific country demands the film never to have been shown before in their area. So, even in an online environment, locality is still important. Tabakov also observes that audiences mostly look at films that are made in their own country. Despite the American hegemony in pop culture, there is still a high level of interest in national and local film.

But at the same time, it is often difficult to bring films outside of cities. In many European villages, it is much more difficult to mobilise an audience. As Tabakov put it, ‘Because the infrastructure is often not there, but also because there is a lot of work to be done regarding film literacy.’ And here lies a key task for education: to teach children and youngsters from all backgrounds to look at cinema as an art form, and to become acquainted with its multifaceted shapes. So even when an online platform makes cinema available to the most remote lands, reflecting on and exchanging ideas about cinema is a precondition for it to thrive. Several distributors mentioned that they are engaged in this. For example, ARGOS runs weekly film workshops for children from their neighbourhood in the centre of Brussels.



In his presentation, the last speaker advanced another perspective on the work of the artist and the distribution of their work. Niels Van Tomme from ARGOS presented a utopian vision in which he contemplated the strategy of just walking away.

ARGOS is based in Brussels and focuses on art-film. They cover the entire chain of development, production, archiving and preservation (both analogue and born digital), and distribution. They have a large space that hosts multimedia exhibitions. They support artists by putting production and editing facilities at their disposal. Besides this, they’ve built a collection of around five thousand analogue and digital works that can be consulted by the public in their media library. About one third of these are in active distribution, which means that the films are sent to festivals and venues. The other two thirds are available for screening, but will be sent out only on demand.

Revisiting the precarious situation many filmmakers are in when trying to get their work seen, he cited the novel *Walkaway* by Cory Doctorow, which is set in a future where some friends decide to walk away from a dysfunctional society. In their new settlement, they think of strategies to create a new society—and beat death. Van Tomme asked himself: ‘What if distributors would walk away from the distribution models that are dominant today? If they would walk away from festivals that refuse to pay screening fees, and from institutions that “forget” to pay artist-fees?’

In the novel, there is a proposal for a ‘datafication’ and ‘platformisation’ of many aspects of society. The characters develop a digital platform that is designed for mass collaboration. This platform is imagined as an anti-capitalist space for free exchange and free collaboration. There is no centralised power, since everyone shares the same amount of power.

Inspired by Doctorow’s utopia, Van Tomme added, ‘Can we build a collective distribution platform? Go away from the centralised structures we are all engaging in right now, and operate on an equal platform in which artists, distributors, festivals and consumers will benefit equally?’

Before going outside

Just like Van Tomme, most distributors believed in the future of online distribution, even though Diana Tabakov remarked that it has already been the future for the last ten years. But at the same time, the magic of watching a film in the cinema cannot be underestimated. In his text ‘Leaving the Movie Theater’,[2] Roland Barthes describes the intimate and even erotic experience of the audience who ‘slides down into their seats as if into a bed’. After walking through the streets, the spectator can find this sensual yet neutral space where their imagination may glow: ‘It is in this urban dark that the body’s freedom is generated; this invisible work of possible affects emerges from a veritable cinematographic cocoon; the movie spectator could easily appropriate the silkworm’s motto: *Inclusum labor illustrat*; it is because I am enclosed that I work and glow with all my desire.’

2
Roland Barthes, ‘Leaving the Movie Theater’, *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986).

The darkness of the cinema is the absolute opposite of the television, Barthes writes: 'here darkness is erased, anonymity repressed; space is familiar, articulated (by furniture, known objects), tamed [...]: the eroticization of the place is foreclosed: television doomed us to the Family, whose household instrument it has become—what the hearth used to be, flanked by its communal kettle...'

Cinema should not be tamed. It should stay wild, travelling in the open, often vulnerable, sometimes unnoticed. What if an image can become like the fire in the hearth that unites households, but that which can also disrupt domestic spaces, with fierce flames that escape and spread like a running fire? Each of the distributors showed there are many ways to spread film culture, acknowledging the transformative power of context. A film shown on a laptop is not the same as a film shown in an exhibition space, nor is it the same when shown in a community centre. The film resonates differently each time.

And even though a film can lie dormant when it has passed through the momentum of novelty, distributors and artists alike are committed to redrawing the landscape of cinema culture and creating a fertile ground on which films will retain a presence. To walking away from the monoculture of a yearly harvest that leaves bare ground and to cultivating sustainable cinema distribution in which films of all sorts will continue to thrive.

Nina de Vroome is a filmmaker. She is a writer and editor for *Sabzian*. As a teacher she is involved in various educational projects.

The Importance of Digital Art Distribution

Over 2019 and 2020 LIMA, the platform for media arts research and preservation and the main distributor of media art in the Netherlands, conducted research[1] focused on the distribution of digital art. In addition to the main tasks of exploring the current landscape of digital art distribution and the opportunities and challenges afforded by changing contexts and technologies, the work also set out to increase awareness around the important work that distributors of artists' moving image artworks and other digital art forms do. While the distribution of artists' moving image works (whether through a distribution organisation, agency, gallery or done by the artist themself) is integral to the presence, publicity and financial ecosystem of its artists, in the context of most not-for-profit distributors, the work of distribution is often not recognised, undervalued and seldom specifically financed by arts funds.

Distributors play a significant role in supporting the work of artists, and especially for those just emerging. As film historian Helen Westerik writes, of course artists themselves could take care of the distribution and rights, galleries for selling the work, lawyers for legal matters, and curators can search on their own for artworks,

yet, to have organisations that do all of this above and beyond is priceless. There are no other institutions in which the knowledge, the technical, legal, promotional, organisational expertise is coupled with a deep understanding of the material. This leads to a practice in which not just the distribution, but also the conservation of media art works is of the greatest importance. All the knowledge invested so far, will assure that we can

Rachel Somers Miles

1
The Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie provided funding support to LIMA for a broad programme of activities for 2019-2020, of which the distribution research conducted was one item. In our experience it is rare to receive funding that can be directed towards researching distribution.

still access these artists' work in the future. We need caretakers of the past, with a keen eye for the future.[2]

Because of this important role that distributors play, LIMA sought to bring the work that distributors do into a more pressing and public part of the conversation around digital art production and presentation, especially as it pertains to garnering more understanding of, and funding support for, this integral work. In order to raise the profile of distribution through this research, LIMA engaged in knowledge-exchange activities such as collaboration-building conversations and working sessions, interviews, public presentations, and a (soon-to-be-released) research report and publication.[3]

In addition to raising awareness around distribution being an overarching aim of the project, a main goal was to explore the state of digital art distribution beyond the borders of the Netherlands, investigating, analysing and assessing different models: their basic (technological) modes of distribution but also the financial business models attached that are being used for video art, software-based installations, net art and live performance, now and those that might arrive in the future. This, for example, took the shape of exploring VOD platforms, thinking about 'the festival' or 'production' for installations as a model or avenue to distribution in itself, or what new opportunities and needs have arisen for artists' moving image presentations online. Throughout the research, the main set of questions guiding our investigation, and that we returned to repeatedly to reflect on were: what are the best practices and most exciting models we can look towards for inspiration, and what can we learn from those that have been less successful? Additionally, and in particular, the research thought through different kinds of digital artworks, asking what are the different aims or opportunities of distribution for these works, for what kinds of presentation contexts, what kinds of issues/challenges are faced and what kinds of efforts or strategies arise to tackle them?

The results of the research are manifesting in a variety of different ways, from the development of new workflows and working methods for consideration being explored internally by LIMA regarding our own distribution practices and the ways that we might consider working with artists differently, and mapping out the possibilities for distributing software-based installations; to an extensive research report focused on the distribution of more complex works including software-based installations and net art, highlighting potential strategies for distributors as well as the different distribution technologies employed in different art ecosystems; and also a publication that offers different interventions that (re)visit the possibilities and challenges of (the online distribution of) digital art. While the research itself spans a wide range of considerations across different forms of digital art, a main focus of attention was exploring the current landscape of video art distribution and the important role that distributors of these works play. It is in this vein that we found ourselves in conversation and collaboration with On & For.

It was early February of 2019 when the On & For team joined the DINAMO[4] meeting, a gathering of distributors of artists' moving image works that takes place at IFFR in Rotterdam every year. Here it was clear that both On & For and LIMA were embarking on exploring distribution more deeply and began to consider ways in which we could collaborate. While the scope of On & For has been to create spaces of discursive exchange and LIMA's has been to enact more involved research, it was clear that both were invested in knowledge-sharing activities and were in fact seeking to ask similar questions of a range of different kinds of distributors of artists' moving image works. Together we developed a questionnaire, for On & For to use for their upcoming *Distribution Models* event in April 2019,[5] and for LIMA to use in gathering insight and in starting conversations for the research. This extensive questionnaire gathered information on a variety of key topics including how the distributor is structured and how distribution activities are financed, the kinds of time and financial investments they make in distribution and the income received, the number of works they have in their collection and the volume of work they distribute yearly, how they manage negotiations with different kinds of presentation venues, models for promoting works, opinions on film festival submission platforms and VOD platforms, amongst others.[6] In addition to collaborating on the questionnaire, we were also invited to On & For's Distribution

2
Helen Westerik, 'Fly on the distributors' wall', *LIMA*, 2017 (li-ma.nl).

3
Keep your eyes on LIMA's website (li-ma.nl) where we will announce the release of the report and publication.

4
DINAMO: Distribution Network of Artists' Moving Image Organisations is an 'international coalition for distribution organisations supporting and promoting artists' moving images. [Their] goal is to share [their] common expertise in the areas of advocacy, exhibition, preservation and education.' (dinamo-distributors.org)

5
Distribution Models was a public seminar on artists' moving image distribution held on 26 April 2019 at the arts centre Beursschouwburg in Brussels. It was moderated by Helena Kritis (Beursschouwburg, BE/IFFR, NL), and the panel speakers were Sirah Foighel Brutmann (Messidor, BE), María Palacios Cruz (LUX, UK), Diana Tabakov (Doc Alliance Films, CZ), Niels Van Tomme (ARGOS, BE), and Gerald Weber (sixpackfilm, AT).

6
The information gathered by questionnaire from the panellists' organisations was graphically visualised and shared, live, with the *Distribution Models* audience as part of the event's programme called the 'DATA SWAP'. As part of the event's documentation, the figures are freely available online at onandfor.eu.

Models event to publicly launch LIMA's research project.

Using the questionnaire that On & For and LIMA collaboratively developed, we engaged with ten different distributors located in Europe and North America, and followed these up with a number of in-depth interviews to take a closer look at their practices and experiences. We also conducted a series of interviews with artists (at various stages in their career) to see what their different needs are and where their expectations of a distributor lie. While there is not enough space here to go into any great depth regarding a reflection on the responses, perhaps what is more interesting to explore is what kinds of insight the questionnaire and conversations offered LIMA in terms of thinking through and rethinking the kinds of approaches it can take to distribution in its own practices, and how these might evolve, and also as an opportunity for other distributors to consider how these ideas might work, or be adapted, for their own contexts.

In particular, LIMA has been thinking through differentiating its distribution services. Currently, for the most part, and like many other artists' moving image distributors, LIMA has a general approach to the distribution of all of the artists it serves regardless of career level (approximately 540 of them). In very simplified terms, it focuses on the active distribution of new works (taken in within the past two years, of which it acquires about 30 new titles yearly that are submitted for review after their completion), and then the passive distribution of older works by liaising with curators and programmers who contact LIMA directly. LIMA also hosts screenings and events that include works from the distribution collection. With this in mind, LIMA has been thinking through the differentiation of its distribution services in terms of different models for different 'kinds' of artists, specifically asking about the needs of different artists, and artists at different levels in their careers (i.e., emerging, mid-career and higher profile), what can we offer them, and how does this relate to distribution?

For example, while we haven't yet established a formal plan, we have been thinking through 'talent development' as a kind of service for more emerging artists and as a framework through which to support their growing careers and find a pipeline

through to distribution. This, for example, includes creative mentoring on the development of works, proposing potential funding opportunities and supporting artists in grant writing, connecting them to curators and programmers, and setting up mixers with emerging and established artists as a further kind of mentorship opportunity. This work in itself doesn't generate income for LIMA and does require upfront costs that would need to be supplemented a different way, but the idea being that through talent development LIMA supports the creation of works that then can be distributed. Of course, this kind of idea also comes with a set of questions that we don't yet have the answers to, such as who will have access to this kind of talent development support/stream and what are the criteria, how will it be funded, and how does LIMA ensure a variety of different kinds of work is supported through development. While thinking through the answers to such questions is very much still in the works, the desire for LIMA to be part of the creation process at least in terms of feedback and reflection, and part of the promotion conversation at an earlier phase, is important to many artists, according to a number of those reached through our research conversations. Engaging at an earlier moment also allows LIMA to more intimately know the work, develop a strategy and position it at an earlier stage, offering a great advantage in not only its successful distribution but also the developing career of the artist.

LIMA has also been exploring the needs of mid-career artists and what we can offer them, a group who often begins to float away from certain systems of distribution as they establish a name for themselves, and frequently begin working with a gallery. We don't currently focus specifically on their needs, so we are imagining what kinds of services we could offer to support them as they evolve. For example, with a growing reputation comes growing demand. A number of artists we spoke with indicated that they are in great need of technical services, particularly artists whose moving image works also take the shape of installations. While we see this kind of support as being particularly useful for mid-career artists, LIMA wouldn't specifically limit these services to them. LIMA has a great wealth of technical knowledge (both contemporary and historical) and could, for example, offer advice on equipment, support artists in liaising with presentation venues,

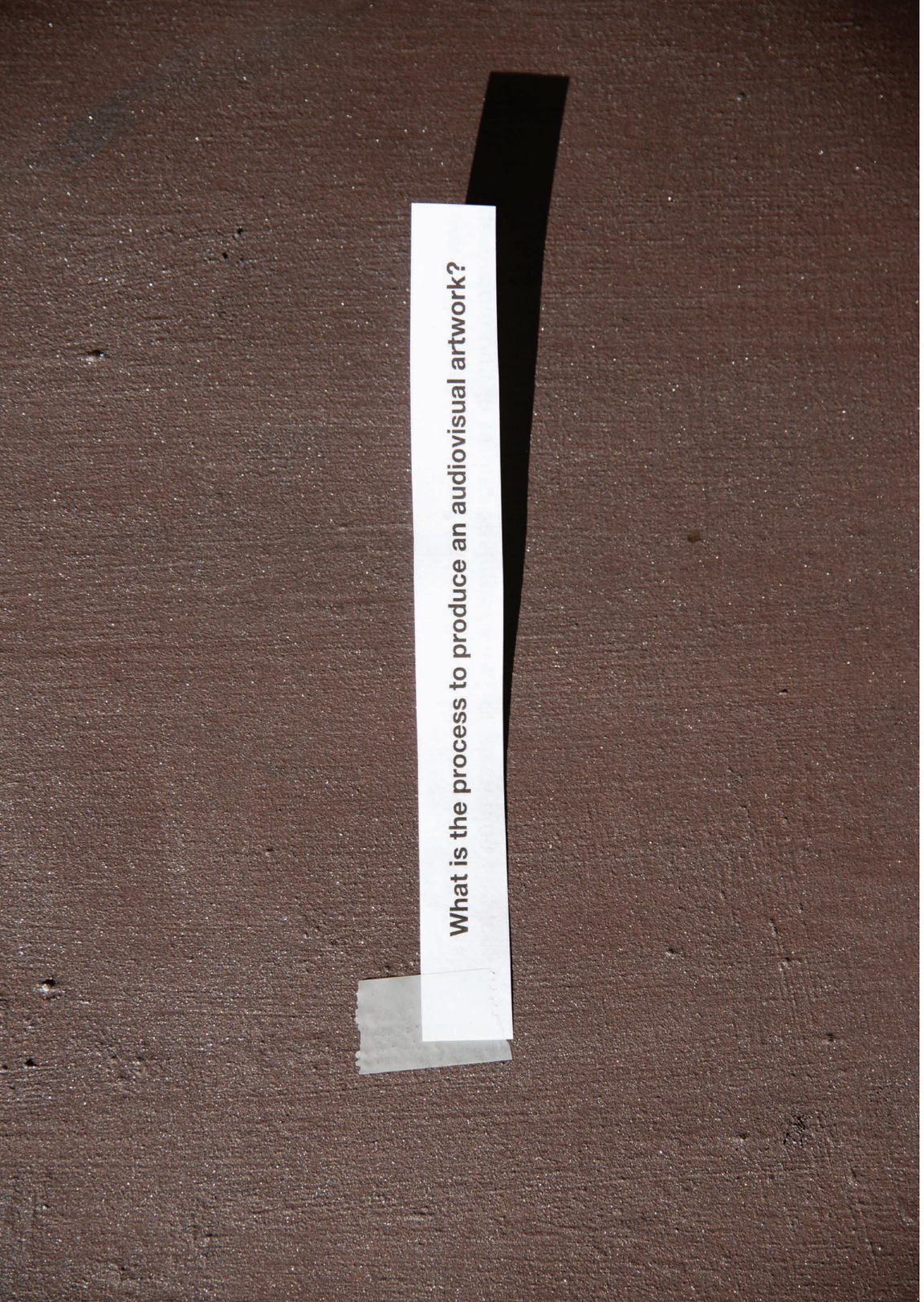
and field technical enquiries. This could also include putting more emphasis on active distribution, such as connecting with galleries, art fairs and festivals to focus on developing specific thematic programmes that would create engaging new avenues into the older works of mid-career artists. And for those artists who have a gallery, LIMA and the gallery could focus on real cooperation, in particular deciding on a model for sharing screenings and exhibitions and identifying responsibility, collaboratively strategising on promotion and identifying opportunities to amplify promotion around exhibition or screening events, and sharing screening and exhibition schedules with each other for cross-promotion and potential buying opportunities. While some distributors do have a kind of relationship with the galleries of the artists they work with, the working arrangement between the three parties is often rather informal, where galleries will pass on screening requests to distributors, and distributors will pass on exhibition requests to galleries, as opposed to a focused, collaboratively strategic approach. Currently LIMA is in the process of devising a collaborative strategy with a specific gallery as a potential base model to move forward with other artist-gallery-distributor collaborations. Of course there is no one-size-fits-all approach and all artists and galleries have different needs, but a kind of base model for potential ways of collaborating is a great starting point for conversation to encourage working together, and one that could be beneficial for all three parties involved.

Another strategy LIMA has been exploring, specifically in terms of generating more income to support its distribution activities (which are solely funded by the fees taken in from distribution itself), is to intentionally try and take on more higher-profile artists. For example, at LIMA a small number of artists make up more than 50% of the overall distribution income earned. The majority of distributors we spoke with have a configuration where a small number of artists (around ten or less) a year (often out of hundreds of artists distributed that year) make up to 50% or more of the overall distribution income generated. In a model where LIMA would seek to bring on board more high-profile artists, the aim would be exclusive distribution of that artist (a requirement LIMA doesn't currently employ, and one that of course is understandably

challenging to implement). The income generated out of such an approach could support the payment of LIMA's distribution activities across its catalogue, and if really successful, could supplement, for example, the funds needed to put in place other distribution activities that require investment, like talent development. The goal would be to bring on a new high-profile artist every four years. Part of the promotion of higher-profile artists is already embedded in name recognition; however, the demand on those artists' work and their presence in other kinds of activities (artist talks, symposia, etc.) is usually higher, thus requiring more dedication, strategising and time, and as such requires additional resources to support this work that would ultimately be covered by the income generated from the distribution of that work.

The research enacted by LIMA, generously supported by the conversations it held with artists and its distribution organisation sisters, has brought forward a number of interesting approaches to distribution practices that LIMA has been internally exploring. In addition to the impact that the ideas generated have had for LIMA's own internal self-exploration, we hope they are useful as a space of imagining for other distributors. While the above offers a small glimpse into one avenue and exercise of the research conducted, we hope the wider report and publication to be released soon offer distributors, artists, programming and curating people and spaces, as well as funders, insight into the important work of, and potential in, the distribution of digital art. Through this research and the important collaborative conversations that practitioners in the field will continue to have, LIMA endeavours to continue to inspire a distribution landscape that develops and fosters impactful and supportive relationships with artists, offer pointed and specific services that match their needs, and support the fair remuneration of their work in a way that also supports the financial sustainability (and hopefully growth) of the distribution services that these organisations can offer.

Rachel Somers Miles works for LIMA in Amsterdam as a project manager and researcher.



SUPERLUX Online Resources

On & For proudly supported partner LUX Scotland to publish four editions of their new SUPERLUX Online Resources. These are a series of newly commissioned written learning resources for artists and curators who are members of SUPERLUX, LUX Scotland's membership scheme. SUPERLUX is a national initiative that supports Scotland-based artists and arts professionals to develop more sustainable practices through professional development events, networking, skills development and training.

These learning resources aim to provide an overview and demystify some of the structures of the art and film worlds that artists working with moving image navigate. Artists, curators and programmers from within and beyond Scotland were invited to share their experience and knowledge with the SUPERLUX membership by responding to five set questions on matters pertinent to artists working with the moving image. The Online Resources are available for SUPERLUX members to access via the members' website. Each individual edition was also made available on LUX Scotland's website, for non-member access, for one month.

The first resource, 'Working with film festivals', was published in November 2020. Artist Michelle Williams Gamaker, curator Myriam Mouflih and curator Adam Pugh responded to the following questions: *How might artists decide which festivals are best suited to their work? What advice would you give to an artist who has never presented work at a festival before? What can artists expect to gain from showing work in this context? How can artists build relationships with festival programmers? If an artist isn't able to attend a festival in person, how can they get the most from the experience of having their work screened somewhere internationally?*

'Distribution' was the focus of the second topic in the series, published in December 2020. Curator María Palacios Cruz, artist Morgan Quaintance and artist Rhea Storr responded

to the following questions: *Through which networks do you encounter artists' work? How can artists find the best routes for the distribution of their work and feel in control of how their work is seen? What impact are new online contexts having on the distribution of artists' moving image? How might artists work together to support the distribution of their work? How can work best move between the gallery system and film festival circuits?*

In January 2021 'Online Contexts for Moving Image', the third topic in the series, was published. On & For is delighted to re-publish this topic from the series here. Artist Jenny Brady, artist Jamie Crewe and curator Shama Khanna responded to the following questions: *How can artists find the online audience that they want for their work? What should artists be wary or conscious of when considering making or presenting moving image work for an online audience? How might curators or artists create the best context for a viewer to encounter a moving image work online? How can artists get the kind of feedback they need about their work when there is no cinema or gallery audience to encounter it in person in a public space? What are the positive aspects of presenting moving image work online for artists (or curators)?*

The fourth topic, 'Commissioning artists' moving image', will be published in spring 2021, including contributions from curators Eoin Dara and Ellen Grieg.

Jenny Brady is an artist filmmaker based in Dublin, exploring ideas around speech, translation and communication. Her films have been shown in many different contexts including recent presentations with LUX, Projections at the New York Film Festival, BFMAF, MUBI, Kurzfilmtage, EMAF, IMMA and IFI. She was co-curator of PLASTIK Festival of Artists' Moving Image and is a studio member at TBG+S.

Jamie Crewe is a beautiful bronze figure with a polished cocotte's head. They grew up in the Peak District and are now settled in Glasgow. They have presented five solo exhibitions and been involved in many group shows and projects, and they hope to do more.

Shama Khanna is an independent curator, writer and educator from London via Nairobi. Khanna is the founder of Flatness, a long-running platform for artists' moving image and network culture decentring unjust narratives of the arts and normalcy from the margins of the online. Khanna has curated numerous artists' projects and commissions both independently and as part of collaborations with a range of organisations from Vilnius to Vancouver. Currently Khanna is a Trustee of not/nowhere art workers' cooperative and a Visiting Lecturer in Curating Contemporary Art at Royal College of Art, London. As a writer they have contributed to Afterall, NANG, Art Monthly, Art Agenda, The White Review, Tongues and Aorist (co-edited with seven other writers).

> How can artists find the online audience that they want for their work?

For me, finding the right audience is really about finding the right platform. It's hard to predict how and where the work will land but finding organisations who are sympathetic to the concerns of the work is a good place to start. Often, with the right organisation comes the right audience. If we're talking about the immediate term, it's worth considering the kinds of audiences and viewing contexts that COVID-19 presents. It seems like this has largely fallen into two brackets—those being the online exhibition or the online film festival. Traditionally, these are audiences with different viewing behaviours, and you could tentatively suggest that the film festival goer is a relatively committed one, but it's hard to know with an online experience.

I think, perhaps, it's more useful to think about the second part of this question—which is to consider what an artist wants from an online audience, and an online presentation more generally. Given the surfeit of online offerings, I think it's critical to question how and why it's necessary for the work to exist in this way. We don't really need more content. So, what is the work 'doing' online? And, in what way does an online presentation challenge the work itself? I think this could be generative for the artist and enrich the experience for the viewer.

I don't know how to find an audience. I felt I didn't have an audience for many years, and I am still a bit surprised that anyone takes an interest in what I do. I maintained a practice through this by trying to build a spine or core to my work that can survive obscurity. This meant making work that rewarded me first.

This risks being solipsistic. It has also allowed me to develop what is distinctive, rigorous, and personally enjoyable about my practice. Audiences I have now respond to these qualities.

I encourage artists to build spines for their work. Online this could be done through a thoughtful website, an email mail out or TinyLetter, or a social media practice (maybe you post certain kinds of videos, or compose certain kinds of Instagram stories, or get very creative with image descriptions). Whatever you do will benefit from a kind of dedication—do what you like, and get deeper into it, and let it transform you.

There's no guarantee that an audience will come to this—in fact I think you must make peace with the possibility of no audience and no appreciation—but if an audience does come, you will be more equipped to share.

Shama Khanna

One of the most effective ways of reaching a wide audience is having your work shown in festivals, which are mostly all online at the moment. Do your research and find a festival that suits the sensibility of your work (i.e. short form, essay, documentary etc.). Additionally, play the long game of contacting and building up relationships with curators with online platforms whose work you engage with—with their agreement, keep them updated with new work.

Networking via social media can be a good way of signposting your practice, but it's not the best way of representing your practice itself. Think of it as a fast way for people to get in touch with you and a way of keeping your followers updated but unless your work addresses this aspect of culture (e.g., branding, digital intimacy, internet addiction, selfie-culture), or you consider yourself to be an Instagram artist, then a constant presence isn't necessary.

Jamie Crewe

In many cases Instagram, Facebook and Vimeo have replaced artist websites which is a shame as there is more freedom to play with formats on your own site. If you can find a designer whose work you like to make a simple to update but distinctive template for you that you can have fun with creatively framing your work, you can trust your viewer will respond to your openness.

> What should artists be wary or conscious of when considering making or presenting moving image work for an online audience?

Jenny Brady

There's potential for your work to have greater reach through online presentation, but with that comes a certain duty of care to those audiences, which may include d/Deaf and blind people and people with hearing and vision loss. Making the work as accessible as possible (within the means available to you) is an important consideration for this kind of presentation. For me, this accessibility question has thrown up really useful questions around the legibility of my own work, but it's also become an incredibly rich site for experimentation.

I also think it's important to put a financial value on your participation in online exhibitions, in as much as you would with a physical exhibition or film festival. If we're looking at a protracted period of disruption to public programming, we need to consider how artists and filmmakers can sustain themselves through this.

Jamie Crewe

I think it's really important to be aware of the platforms we use for hosting moving image work. I've used YouTube for the past few years because Vimeo started restricting access to my content unless I purchased and maintained a paying subscription. However, YouTube has its own challenges: poor compression, algorithmic hell, ads, a culture of monetisation, and corporate ethos. I'm not happy with these options: I would like to host my work on a decentralised platform, and to keep it away from capitalist venture. I don't know if such a platform exists.

I share my work online because I feel a commitment to horizontality and accessibility: I don't want to keep things I make behind paywalls, hidden in collections, or accessible only through mechanisms of esteem and institution. I would like to have this approach reflected holistically in the way my work is made, hosted, and presented.

I encourage artists to be conscious of their principles and think about how these can be embodied throughout the conception, production, and dissemination of work. I'd encourage them to think honestly and gently about where their principles might bend, and where they won't.

Shama Khanna

At the moment internet fatigue is a real issue. Teasers or episodic releases of longer works may be a way of overcoming this. Time-limited screening windows create more of an event around the work and are effective in focusing attention. The internet can also be a distracted space so encouraging viewers to wear headphones, dim the lights or ditch their mobiles in another room can help counter this. I have enjoyed co-ordinating small screening parties with friends making time to discuss thoughts together afterwards.

In terms of framing the work, try and put yourself in the viewer's seat to make them as comfortable as possible: gather and proofread all your materials so that background information or any content warnings are accessible and the viewer has an idea of how long the work is before it begins. Consider accessibility issues for people with impaired vision or hearing who may for example need audio description or closed captions to access the work.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, always double-check your tech! Ensure that sound levels are consistent as, from the viewer's position, not being able to hear or needing to adjust the volume more than once can be off-putting. Equally, bear in mind that the strength of the viewer's internet connection might be unreliable, especially if the viewer is accessing the work on the move through a portable device, so save your super hi-res files for better screening conditions in the future.

How might curators or artists create the best context for a viewer to encounter a moving image work online?

Jenny Brady

I think we really need to invest in this notion of encounter—of staging an encounter online—given where we find ourselves. For many people, the migration of cultural activity online, combined with an (over)abundance of online offerings, has led to a flattening of that experience. Finding ways to at least partially reset this dynamic is the challenge. Otherwise, presenting work online can sort of feel like sending it into the abyss.

This is why context really matters. Showing films online presents a unique opportunity to quite literally situate the work in relation to other ideas, material and discourses that can allow the work to extend itself in new directions. It's a chance to rethink the work for yourself, make some bold editorial decisions and bring other voices into the conversation.

Compensating for this flattened experience is more challenging. I think it's something we'll all be figuring out for some time. But, in the interim, I feel like there are some simple ways to help activate that experience for the viewer. Simple viewing or listening notes with suggested lighting and sound conditions, for example, can generate more intentional viewing and a more embodied experience.

Jamie Crewe

I think the staging of an online viewing experience can be approached as sensitively as that of an installed viewing experience. Considerations needed for this are both spatial and contextual: for example, what colour is the background the video plays upon? Is the background a single or a tiled image? Does the video fill the page, or sit as an object? Does the page tell the viewer anything about the work? Does information sit above, below, or on top of the video? How can an audience interact with the content?

My videos are unlisted on YouTube, meaning they are publicly viewable, but only by following a link. I embed these videos on my website, meaning that most views come via my website, where I have set up a context for understanding them, and where a level of investment is required to find them (accessing

my website, clicking through from the ‘Entrance’ page to the ‘Home’ page, then ‘Selected Work’, then a specific work out of many). I find this strikes a good balance between horizontal accessibility and a certain kind of care that I think my work (and everyone’s work) deserves. I turn off commenting on my videos.

I would encourage artists to explore art platforms that are specifically conceived for online contexts, and approach these contexts with creativity and thought—I like flatness.eu a lot in this regard.

Shama Khanna

Curators spend much of their time working out the best way to frame and contextualise the works in their care. My aim with Flatness, for example, is for viewers to engage with the work on its own terms without the distraction of advertisements, branding or ‘like’ buttons which is particularly important for a durational experience of time-based work. As a purposefully small platform, Flatness aims to work against the model of commercially-led social media platforms by cultivating safer, more attentive conditions for all the specificities of minor, fictional, speculative, embodied and *unbodied* experimental works to be appreciated. I hope this puts forward an idea of communality around art which otherwise feels threatened by overexposure and competitiveness.

Curators are also concerned with developing audiences who follow our work because they find it interesting, progressive or recognise themselves in it. They often write about the work from their own positionality (in relation to the artist’s) or commission other writers to critically contextualise the work which is important in guiding the viewer’s experience of it and pointing to key works surrounding it.

> How can artists get the kind of feedback they need about their work when there is no cinema or gallery audience to encounter it in person in a public space?

Jenny Brady

I’ve always felt that you need to create a structure for feedback in your practice. For it to be really useful, you need a system or setup that allows for this kind of open criticality. I don’t think it happens organically. Yes, lots of useful dialogue can come from in-person encounters at festivals and exhibitions, but I don’t think you can be overly reliant on it. Some of the best (i.e., useful) and worst (i.e., also useful) feedback I’ve received came from showing work with MUBI. The kind of politeness you find at industry events, which by their nature are part-social, part-professional, just doesn’t exist on a platform like this. Personally, I find this lack of opacity really refreshing.

But, building a consistent critical support structure for your practice is really about finding the right people. Over the years, I’ve sought out mentoring/advice sessions with individuals and organisations I have an affinity with or respect for. The kind regularly offered by LUX Scotland (plug!). I’ve found these really generative, in particular at critical points in the development of projects. I also try to build some sort of formalised learning experience into each project. This provides a framework to test out emerging ideas in public, with a group. It’s a really useful way to gauge whether the material has any legs. My last film, *Receiver*, was definitely helped along by a narrative craft workshop Sarah Schulman ran in Dublin.

Over time, I’ve developed a kind of formal/informal network of people whose work I’m invested in and, importantly, who I like. My husband is one of them. I work with him designing sound for the films, and he’s a great sounding board for new ideas or works in progress. You need people who can recognise the good stuff and call out the bullshit.

Jamie Crewe

What feedback do artists need? Do cinema or gallery audiences provide this? When I think about the feedback I have appreciated, I think of emails I’ve received after someone viewed an exhibition of mine; I think of conversations over Zoom or on walks; I think of DMs of mutual appreciation on Instagram; I think of conversations with friends in which they reveal a way they’ve thought about my work that I didn’t know; I think of working with collaborators and closely reading details of a work; I think of tears in my or someone else’s eyes.

I also think about a practice I try to keep: articulating and expressing to people what I like about their work; communicating when I have a productive encounter with someone’s work; trying to nominate artists I appreciate for

prizes or opportunities, and when doing so to write as well as I can about what moves me in their practices.

This is all to say that the richest feedback I get comes from community, which is something to be tended to. Cinemas and galleries are not the only or even primary loci of this kind of community: it happens on margins, interpersonally, in private spaces as well as public. I would encourage artists to give thought and care to the work of others, which is its own reward.

LUX Scotland advice sessions and LUX one-to-ones are great opportunities for professional feedback. More informally, you could gather a small group of friends together and take it in turns to show and crit each other's work. Or why not apply for some professional development funding to be able to invite mentors to discuss your work.

Shama Khanna

What are the positive aspects of presenting moving image work online for artists (or curators)?

Jenny Brady

I think the most exciting aspect of presenting moving image online is the opportunity to set a wider context for it. It can open the work up and potentially change or complicate how it's read. I love this!

Also, it seems like a good time to lean into the specificity of this online encounter with work, which takes place in a more intimate, and possibly more distracted environment. Personally, I'm quite excited about the prospect of designing my new film for both big and small screens, mixing for headphones and thinking on a one-to-one scale.

I think specificity, accessibility, and reach.

Jamie Crewe

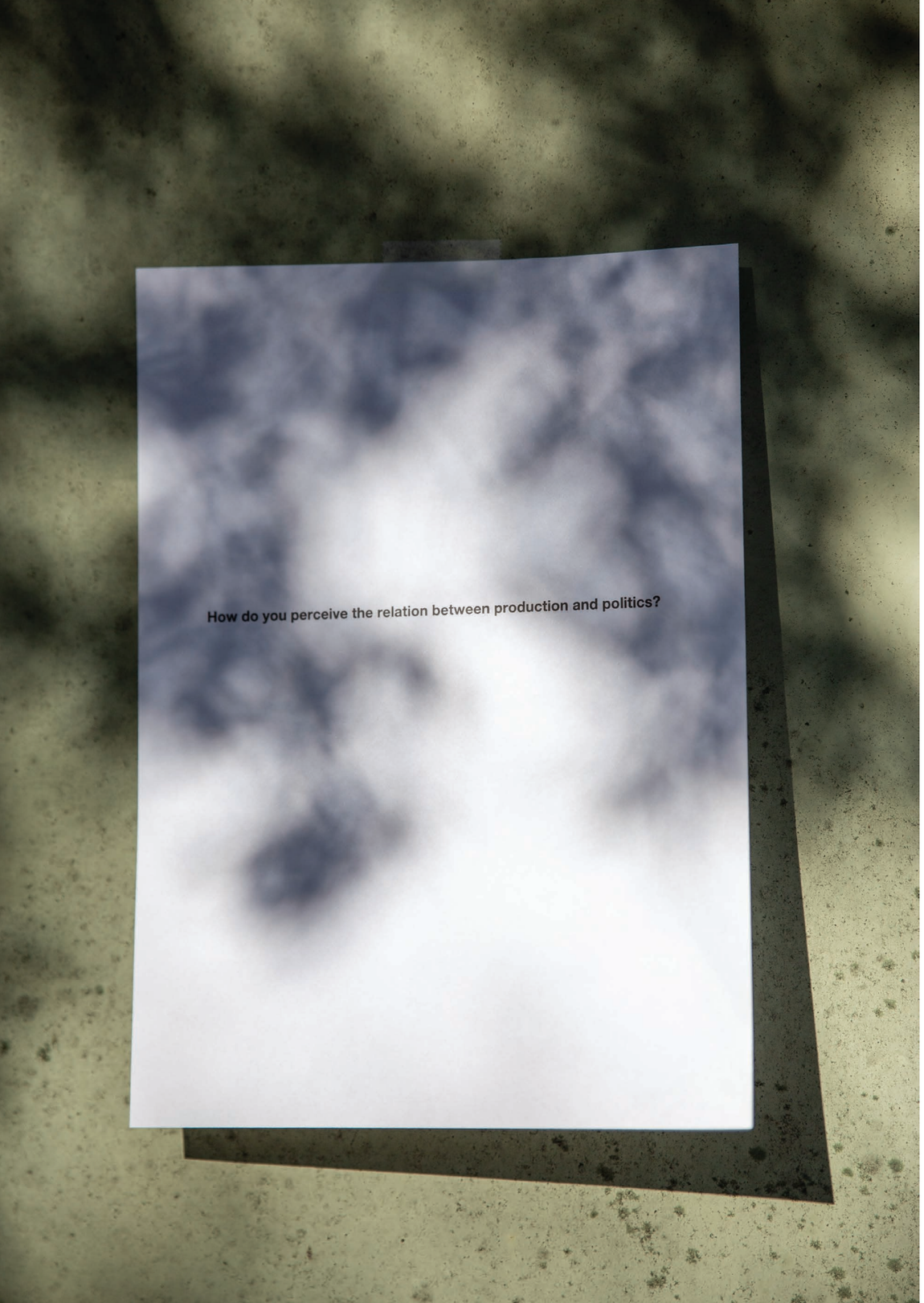
Although you can use online resources to present films, TV, or moving image work envisioned for cinema or gallery, the internet has its own histories and conventions of moving image. Specificity, to me, means thinking about how you can work with this, rather than imagining it as neutral or pushing too hard to recreate another context. This is a rich vein to tap.

On video hosting platforms like YouTube and Vimeo you can add caption tracks that viewers can turn on or off, which allows d/Deaf and hard of hearing audiences to engage with work they might otherwise not be able to. Unfortunately, there's no comparable option to add audio description tracks to videos for blind or partially sighted audiences—I hope this will change, and this is one of the failings of these platforms. Accessibility also means availability: work hosted online can be viewed by people unable to visit physical exhibitions or screenings due to geography, mobility, health restrictions, capacity, cost, or any other reason.

Reach is an aspect of accessibility. More people will be able to see your moving image work if it is available to view online and made more accessible in all senses. If you aspire to have your work seen, this is a good way to enable that; there are also opportunities to think about who you want to see it, and how you want to reach them.

Shama Khanna

Presenting work online provides an invaluable opportunity for people with unconventional working timetables and people with mobility issues—such as those with caring responsibilities, those who are housebound due to illness or disability, or people with limited funds to travel—to be able to access your work. Also, your audience is no longer restricted to those in geographical proximity to the gallery or cinema where your work is being screened—technically anyone anywhere in the world with an internet connection can watch your work which is a great prospect to consider.



Deep Sleep

Recently a colleague asked for permission to sleep in the next day and consequently show up late for work. After carefully considering her request, I realised I couldn't find a good reason to not accommodate her appeal. After all, we all need sleep.

To show solidarity, I decided to also sleep in the next day. And the day after, and the day after... In fact, I'm currently still sleeping in. And to be honest, I don't feel the urge to stop doing this anytime soon.

zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz...

Some of you may be familiar with the TV episode entitled *Never Smurf Off 'Til Tomorrow* (1984). In this favourite Smurfs episode of mine, we find the little blue creatures eagerly preparing for a hurricane. When Handy Smurf, the prolific workman/inventor of the community, heads to the village windmill to check up on Lazy Smurf, he finds him sleeping, resting on the sails of the windmill he was assigned to protect.

As Lazy is rudely awoken by Handy, he is told about the urgency of securing the windmill. Lazy, in a rebellious act that marks him as my all-time favourite Smurf, decides to go back to sleep, before Handy reawakens him with a splash of cold water. Realising the urgency of the situation, Lazy tries to get the windmill shut down, but as the storm is unleashed, he gets hit in the head and falls unconscious. The windmill goes airborne.

As the Smurf community is based on cooperation and sharing, with each Smurf contributing to society to the best of their abilities, Lazy's antics incite outrage and blame. However, towards the end of the episode, Lazy miraculously saves the day by accident and is touted as a hero despite himself.

This basic misrepresentation of Lazy's actions as heroic goes to the core of his emblematic power. By falling asleep,

Niels Van Tomme

he intentionally brushes against the grain of omnipresent Smurf ethics centred on non-stop productivity. His is a knowledge absent from the all too eager Smurfs. It is a knowledge defined by sleep and virtue. The fact that the other Smurfs falsely present his actions, while he is mainly sleeping and doesn't contribute anything particularly meaningful to the events, only reinforces his subversive quality. Only through sleep, Lazy knows, one holds the potential to overthrow the status quo.

zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz...

Like Lazy Smurf, the late Croatian artist Mladen Stilinovíc was a devout sleeper. Stilinovíc famously slept as an artistic gesture. First in his studio, gracefully captured in the now iconic photo series *Artist at Work* (1978), later on in exhibition spaces across the globe. To say it with his own words, he was at all times *in praise of laziness*, merging these two related acts of inactivity.

At the time of conception, Stilinovíc lived and worked in socialist Yugoslavia. Doing nothing, the artist deliberately presented himself as a parasite in a working society. Stilinovíc's non-action should thus be read as a refusal to participate in the fetishisation of labour as a foremost propaganda tool in Tito's Yugoslavia.

However, from a contemporary perspective, *Artist at Work* can just as forcefully be understood as a conceptual critique on capital's relentless demand for production and activity. It is in Stilinovíc's refusal to actively participate in events that many find inspiration to affront late capitalism and to make use of the artist's subtle yet disruptive non-act.

zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz...

To be asked to contribute the opening text to a reflection on models of audiovisual production felt a bit odd at first. After all, I've been uncharacteristically unproductive lately, busy sleeping and napping, inspired by my colleague's initial request.
Why then add yet another motivation to be productive or to be a good producer?

In his seminal book *24/7* (2013), John Crary paints a bleak 'non-stop life-world' of global exchange and circulation in which individuals are calculatedly broken through sleep deprivation. This worrisome reality is only emphasised by hip worker trends, such as 'sleeping on the job': the quick nap that makes us more efficient and thereby boosts productivity even further. Sleep, in this way, gets fundamentally detached from its potential as a gesture of resistance to corporate work ethics. Instead, it becomes activated within the workplace similar to other forms of leisure, from work meetings disguised as communal coffee breaks to organised game sessions meant to unleash the flow of creative thoughts.
In an attempt to move away from this dystopian reality in which all conceivable forms of inactivity get tied into yielding tangible results, I'm wondering if it would be possible to reclaim sleep as a necessary tool to make space in our shared neoliberal sphere for something other than productivity. As such, it would be a way to undo capital's elimination of what Crary describes as the 'useless time of reflection and contemplation,' with napping and resting providing a meaningful variant to non-activity.

Perhaps we can discover in Mladen Stilinovíc's and Lazy Smurf's deep sleep the secrets necessary to counter omnipresent productivity. Sleep thus becomes a means to be awake only when it truly matters, vehemently subverting society's relentless demand to place everything at the service of efficiency, including states of unproductiveness.

The author would like to thank Sonja Simonyi for her invaluable editing input throughout the writing process of this text.

Niels Van Tomme (he/him/his) is the director of ARGOS centre for audiovisual arts in Brussels. As a curator, lecturer, and critic, he works on the intersections of contemporary culture and critical social awareness.

How many employees are in the organisation? Notes from a Conversation on Producing Artists' Moving Image

A preamble

"I am making a 16mm film. I understand that in order to use a tripod in Central Park, I need a special permit."

"That's correct," the girl at the information desk said. "You can pay your fee and get your permit at the third office down the hall."

"Oh, I didn't know there was a fee."

"Oh, yes, all commercial photographers must pay a fee."

"But I am not a commercial photographer."

"Amateurs don't need permits, as long as they do not use a tripod, clutter the walks or frighten the animals in the zoo."

"But I have to use a tripod for these shots."

"What kind of films are these?"

"I suppose you could call them experimental."

"About what kind of experiments?"

"They are not about experiments. They are themselves experiments—experiments with the form of film itself."

"Whom do you work for?"

"For nobody. That is, I work for myself."

"Then it is a hobby?"

"Well, not exactly. The films are shown at universities and other places."

"Then they are educational documentaries?"

María Palacios Cruz

“Well, no. They are certainly not documentaries. Or rather, they are documentaries of the interior, in a sense. And they are educational only in the sense that art is always educational.”
“What did you say?”

Thus begins Maya Deren’s ‘Magic is New’, published in *Mademoiselle* in January 1946.[1] The scene doesn’t stop there—Deren is sent on to the educational department, where a similar conversation at cross-purposes unfolds… Deren and the girl at the desk simply cannot understand one another and Deren refuses to make any concessions to her position and beliefs. When asked about the subject of her films, she replies that they are ‘about the inner experiences of a human being.’ When the city officer retorts, ‘What is the story about?’ Deren responds, ‘I believe that cinema, being a visual medium should discover its own, visual integrity—in cinematic terms.’ After she’s somehow managed to fill in the questionnaire and is about to leave, she’s called back: ‘Miss Deren, do they wear… normal clothes?’ ‘Yes, everything will be quite normal’, she assures them.

I recalled this scene as I listened again recently to a conversation that took place in September between representatives of five production structures that work with artists’ film in Europe: Leonardo Bigazzi (Lo schermo dell’arte, Florence[2]), Mason Leaver-Yap (KW Production Series, Berlin[3]), Marie Logie (Auguste Orts, Brussels), Anže Peršin (Stenar Projects, Lisbon[4]) and Reem Shilleh and Mohanad Yaqubi (Subversive Film, Brussels/Ramallah[5]). I chaired the conversation, which had been convened by Rebecca Jane Arthur (On & For Production & Distribution).

Whilst the exchange between Maya Deren and the unnamed city clerks would appear to take us back to a different time and place, it will be painfully and comically recognisable to anyone who has tried to secure funding or permissions for an artist’s film production. Deren keeps falling between the cracks of language, of conventions, of forms and regulations. During our conversation, we recounted similar experiences. We spoke of mutability and adaptability; of the necessity to assume different personas depending on the interlocutor—unlike Deren, who famously played several roles in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, but was unable to speak the city clerk’s language when trying to secure a filming permit. Mason Leaver-Yap described production as opportunism where the differences between the values of the stakeholders and the values of the work need not be unbridgeable.

We spoke about the space between ‘film’ and ‘art’ modes of practice and production that we inhabit and some expressed a radical desire to think beyond both film and art.

The conversation, which took place on Zoom—with participants speaking from Brussels, Florence, Glasgow, Lisbon and London—revolved around the idea of ‘production models.’ Deren had also attempted to establish and promote a model for independent film production—albeit one of complete independence. The filmmaker as producer, as distributor, as curator, as exhibitor—as everything. She used friends and non-professional actors, interesting landscapes and locales (‘naturally lit, and all free for the asking’[6]). She operated within a no-budget mode—revindicated the freedom of the filmmaker as *amateur* (from the Latin *amator*, ‘lover’). This romantic image of the artist—penniless, alone, hungry, sacrificing everything for art’s sake—perdures and its legacy is problematic for contemporary artists seeking sustainable models of practice. The enduring confusion of love and labour that Hollis Frampton alludes to in his notorious letter ‘For Love and Honor’ (1973)[7] continues to throw artists and cultural workers into a position of precariousness. In his letter to the Curator of Film at MoMA who had offered to show Frampton’s work at the museum without any financial reward, Frampton describes his living conditions as a ‘standard of living that most other American working people hold in automatic contempt.’ Frampton goes on to deconstruct the myth of art for ‘love and honor’, detailing all the expenses that artists incur in the production of their work (labs, equipment, raw stock, etc.). Furthermore, he points out that the MoMA curator is being paid—to show films by artists who are not—and so are the projectionist, the guards, everyone else who works in the museum. Deren, too, haunts Frampton’s letter: ‘Well Maya Deren, for one, died young, in circumstances of genuine need.’[8]

1
Included in *Essential Deren*, an anthology of writings by Maya Deren edited by Bruce R. McPherson, 2005.

2
Lo schermo dell’arte (schermodellarte.org) is an annual film festival in Florence, Italy. They have also developed a number of training programmes and initiatives to support artists’ film production including Feature Expanded and VISIO.

3
KW Production Series is a commissioning project, at KW Berlin (kw-berlin.de) organised in collaboration with the Julia Stoschek Collection and OUTSET Germany_Switzerland. It is dedicated to artists’ moving image works and concentrates on two new productions per year. The commissioned artists have been: Beatrice Gibson and Jamie Crewe (2018), Andrea Büttner and Rachel O’Reilly (2019), Onyeka Igwe and Lin+Lam (2020).

4
Stenar Projets is a production platform for artists’ moving image based in Lisbon, founded by Anže Peršin in 2015 (stenarprojects.com). They produce primarily Portuguese artists and artists with a connection to Portugal.

5
Subversive Film was formed by Reem Shilleh, Mohanad Yaqubi and Nick Denes in between London and Ramallah in 2010. It’s currently based in Brussels and does not have a website.

6
Maya Deren, ‘Magic is New’, op. cit.

7
Hollis Frampton, ‘For Love and Honor’ (letter to Donald Richie, Museum of Modern Art, New York), 7 January 1973.

8
Ibid.

The question of labour relations was central, too, to our discussion. Anže Peršin explained that the more pressing ideological question for him—more so than the political content or inclination of a film—is that of the labour relations in the production, especially when the project is ideologically charged, as is often the case with the films that Stenar produces. There is a discrepancy if we are unable to translate the idea(l)s within our work models—a discrepancy perhaps best summed up in the difference between 'making political films' and 'making films politically' that Jean-Luc Godard outlined in his 1970 manifesto, 'What is to be done?'[9]

Levels of funding for the moving image in the visual arts are generally lower than those provided by traditional film funds and mechanisms. Too often, they don't necessarily correspond to the project description. It is not easy to operate in the in-between of artists' film—for instance, how to pay everyone a living wage when working with institutions that finance differently? How to operate ethically within production models that are informed by the funder?

The objective of our discussion was to contrast production models for artists' film, but there was a reluctance to name them so. Instead, many spoke of 'ways', 'reactions' and 'opportunities'—responses to specific situations that could not necessarily be replicated, the implicit question of sustainability was ever-present.

The five 'organisations'—Auguste Orts, KW Production Series, Lo schermo dell'arte, Stenar Projects and Subversive Film—represent a range of positions between public and private funding, 'film' and 'art', projects that are 'curator-led' and others that are 'artist-led', structures that are securely subsidised and others more precariously reliant on production income. All five were originally set up in response to a lack, and have continued to evolve and shape themselves to address needs and opportunities.

Leonardo Bigazzi gave the example of the Artists' Film Italia Recovery Fund,[10] directed at artists in Italy and financed through crowdfunding earlier this year. He insisted that he doesn't think that crowdfunding constitutes necessarily as a model for

9
Godard's 'What is to be done?' was written at the request of Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury for the first issue of *Afterimage*.

10
Of Lo schermo dell'arte (schermodellarte.org).

artists' moving image, and that the fund was a response to a very specific situation of emergency in Italy at the time. For Mason Leaver-Yap, there is no 'model' at the heart of the KW Production Series; there is opportunity that is either taken or not taken. They outlined the format of the series, modelled on a previous project—the Walker Moving Image Commissions—that Leaver-Yap had developed as well.[11] The KW Production Series is time-limited (3 years) and entirely funded by private partners: Outset Germany_Switzerland and Julia Stoschek Collection. Rather than a 'model' per se, it appears to be an 'experiment' in transplanting a US philanthropic paradigm to continental Europe and Leaver-Yap was very upfront—and self-aware—about the neo-liberal nature of its set-up.

Subversive Film, which is not even a legally registered organisation, is the most resistant to being pigeonholed. A collective that Reem Shilleh described as a 'research and production body that works very specifically with archive material and particularly with militant cinema, and cinema produced during revolutionary times', they alternatively apply for funding as individuals, as a collective (when applying for funding from art institutions, the collective behaves as the 'artist') or via other structures such as Idioms Film, a more traditionally structured film production company Mohanad Yaqubi also co-founded. Shilleh and Yaqubi spoke of the urgency of much of their work and how transgressing conventions (such as those imposed by funding bodies) is a necessity for artists in general, but more specifically for those working in the Palestinian context. As Shilleh explained, Palestinians grow up without a sense of a strong connection to a state; with a sense that it's 'ok' to cross lines.

The question of funding seems to be key to the issue of 'models'—where money comes from determines the shape of the production. Whilst the KW Production Series and Lo schermo dell'arte exist in the much more unregulated and elastic field of the visual arts, Stenar Projects and Auguste Orts need to replicate an 'industrial' film mode—with conventions of budgeting, insurance, health & safety—because of the funding they receive. Also, the level of public funding organisations receive (or not) reveals national differences rather

11
The Walker Art Center is a contemporary art museum in Minneapolis (US). Leaver-Yap ran the Moving Image Commissions programme in 2015, 2016 and 2017, producing works by James Richards, Moyra Davey, Leslie Thornton, Uri Aran, Shahryar Nashat, Yto Barrada, Marwa Arsanios, Renée Green and Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz.

than a deliberate strategy. Though Stenar Projects is a private company, public funding is its primary source of income. This contrasts with the structural funding that Auguste Orts receives and which does not exist in Portugal.

For Marie Logie, the fact that Auguste Orts does not need to fund the totality of their own salaries out of their productions means that she can spend more time seeking out partnerships, advocating, and building up networks—such as On & For. This was reflected in the preparatory research produced by the On & For team ahead of the discussion, which drew on responses to a questionnaire that was circulated to the participants. This text borrows its title from one of the questions in the questionnaire.[12]

Do numbers tell different stories than words?

Looking at the 'pie charts' ahead of the discussion I had learnt that:

- Of those surveyed, Auguste Orts has completed the largest number of productions. (It is also the longest running.)
- Auguste Orts, Stenar Projects and Subversive Film produce a variety of short, mid-length and feature films whilst KW Production Series has never produced a feature and Lo schermo dell'arte has overwhelmingly supported the production of short films. This appears to signify a divide between those that operate with film funding and therefore work with the more conventional form of the feature, and the two commissioning structures more identified with the visual arts whose preference is for shorter forms which are more suited for gallery presentation.
- The budget figures provided by Auguste Orts, Stenar Projects and Subversive Film are higher than those given by KW Production Series and Lo schermo dell'arte. The budgets for feature films are consistent across Auguste Orts, Stenar Projects and Subversive Film (between €163,000 and €175,000). The budget for shorts is also more comparable (between Subversive Film's €5,000 and Auguste Orts' €20,000). Budgets for mid-length films appear to be more revealing of the art/film funding gap with the largest difference (from €10,000 to €43,000). Subversive Film figures look 'art-like' for the shorter works and 'film-like' for the features.[13]
- Auguste Orts and Stenar Projects appear to be the two most comparable organisations across many fields: from the point of view of average budget per project, the producer's fee (around 10%), the number of employees involved in production in the organisation (3 part-time for Auguste Orts, 2 full-time for Stenar Projects). The main difference between them is in funding—whereas Stenar Projects is a private company, Auguste Orts receives structural funding from the Flemish government, and whilst Stenar Projects relies heavily on grants from national film funds for their productions (70%), Auguste Orts has a more diversified income stream for their productions.

If 'labour relations'—who gets paid and who doesn't and how much—was one of the principal threads of a discussion that largely revolved around ethics, the other main subject was 'transparency'.

The pie charts were an attempt at transparency too; but there are limits to what numbers and charts can tell, especially when simple questions can be interpreted so differently from divergent positions and cultural practices. The resulting analysis does not account for differences in language—such as the differentiated roles of curator, commissioner and producer that can overlap but not always.

The diversity of money sources for Auguste Orts' productions can be read as a reflection of the diversity of their projects (shorts, long form, documentary, experimental, animation, music, video installations...). Structural funding allows the organisation to spend time seeking diversified sources of income but, as Marie Logie pointed out, cultivating so many networks and partnerships also represents a significant time investment. Many of these partnerships were already in place, even before the organisation began. Founded by four artists (Herman Asselberghs, Sven Augustijnen, Manon de Boer and Anouk De Clercq), each already well-known and established, Auguste Orts didn't have to start from zero—Logie had access to the four artists' address books from the beginning.

12
As cited online at onandfor.eu.

13
In her text 'The Conditions For Artists' Moving Image Production In London Today' (May 2016), British producer Kate Parker proposes the following scale of budgets for artists' moving image: Pre-Budget ('works and people totally excluded from production', Low Budget (funding from £500 to £30,000) and 'High' Budget (£30,000 to £100,000). Whilst Low Budget is, according to Parker, the 'most widely populated category, representing artists with no or little production support, as well as projects commissioned by a gallery or institution. The upper funding limit represents the maximum that Arts Council England will currently give to an artists' project', High Budget, a relatively small budget for filmmaking, only represents 'a tiny proportion of work.'

An underlying question in our discussion on transparency was that of honesty; how to be honest to all the partners involved, the funders, the audience, the artists, the works themselves? How to negotiate the ethical difficulties in relation to ownership, to rights, to living wages?

For Leaver-Yap, the ethics of ownership have been a sticking point since the beginning of KW Production Series. Whilst it had been more straightforward at the Walker, in the sense that it's a museum with a collection, KW is not a collecting institution and because the Production Series is financed by private money, the private funders expect something in return. Outset expect an edition of the work that they can gift to a national institution (which for all six works is going to be Museum Abteiberg). Another edition goes into the Julia Stoschek Collection. This has proved to be a very complex conversation to have with potential artists, and which occasionally constrained artists' trust in the project.

Logie spoke about Auguste Orts' model of openness and commitment to transparency. Wages are openly discussed, information is open to the whole crew, there's no hierarchical secrecy. She pointed out that this results in a shared responsibility with the artist—who has ideas and desires but is also aware of the restrictions of budget. Leonardo Bigazzi described clarity and transparency as a strategy, pointing out that there shouldn't be a hierarchy in which someone is being paid and someone isn't.

As we were momentarily brought together, in spite of travel restrictions and local lockdowns, many reflected on the working conditions of the past year. For some, working transnationally, lockdown hadn't yet had such a big impact on their work, which was already remote. Others pointed out that continuing to produce 'online' (with international partners) has become more difficult, slowed down now that everything and everyone was online, and more demanding in terms of time and effort. There were varying degrees of optimism and pessimism. Optimism about the potential of resilience of the moving image, pessimism about the reliance on public funding at a time when budget priorities will necessarily lie elsewhere. Successful streaming experiences had demonstrated the

moving image's capacity to move beyond the limits of an exhibition space in order to reach larger audiences than a contemporary art exhibition. On the other hand, this shift online risked endangering established streams of income such as distribution and exhibition. Working with museums and galleries, which have been able to re-open more quickly and effectively than cinemas, has prevented the distribution systems for artists' moving image from collapsing completely.

In a time when the industrial mode of production is in crisis, the relative 'smallness' advocated by Deren decades ago would appear to be a strength. As she wrote, 'Cameras do not make films; film-makers make films. Improve your films not by adding more equipment and personnel but by using what you have to its fullest capacity. The most important part of your equipment is yourself: your mobile body, your imaginative mind, and your freedom to use both. Make sure you do use them.'[14]

Our smallness is our strength but also our weakness. Artists' film can more easily fall through the cracks—both positively and negatively. Smallness might guarantee survival, but does it also decimate any hope of sustainability? Are we, as a sector, being pushed towards further marginalisation?

As with so much this year, these are not problems created by the pandemic—but rather conditions that were already present and have been intensified and brought to the surface by these recent disruptions. The conversation had been planned long before the pandemic hit, at a time when On & For wanted to rethink itself for the future. The issues at stake are of course larger than On & For itself, but the motivations and ideas that have driven On & For since its beginnings—the importance of building networks, the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and experience, the visibility of artists' film production as a professional field with a common language—are as pressing now as they were back in 2014, if not more.

The author would like to thank all the participants of the roundtable—Leonardo Bigazzi, Mason Leaver-Yap, Marie Logie, Anže Peršin, Reem Shilleh and Mohanad Yaqubi—for their contributions and feedback, Mark Webber for proofreading and Rebecca Jane Arthur for copy-editing. The pie charts were prepared by Jan Costers.

14
Maya Deren, 'Amateur versus Professional', originally published in *Movie Makers Annual*, 1959. Reprinted in *Essential Deren*, op. cit.

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Let me be your guide *is a series of articles that are commissioned by Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute on the Flemish art scene—on chamber music, contemporary jazz or dance, photography, audiovisual arts, and more. The articles are available on their website (kunsten.be) in Dutch and English. We are delighted to have the permission of both the author and the commissioner to reprint the text here.*

Let me be your guide: Artists' Moving Image in Flanders

Artists' Moving Image is a rich field in Flanders. Whilst many of Flanders' internationally recognised artists place the moving image at the centre of their practice, there is also a plethora of publicly funded organisations, both large and small, committed to supporting and showcasing moving image art. The complex network formed by these organisations, together with artists, curators, writers, art schools, universities and public funding bodies, constitutes the basis for a sustainable culture of artistic experimentation for the moving image.

Long-time caught between a rock and a hard place—the fields of 'art' and 'film'—artists' moving image encompasses experimental film, essay film, video art, installation and performance art practices. This inclusive, elastic term can be used for works made for exhibition in the cinema, in the gallery, on television and online. Works may be the personal expressions of one individual, made collaboratively or with professional crews, and all stages in between.

This breadth is apparent in Flanders, where artists' moving image spreads from the artisanal, analogue DIY practices of

María Palacios Cruz

filmmakers Floris Vanhoof or Els van Riel and initiatives such as the Brussels LABO, De Imagerie and Cinéma Parenthèse, to the lavish gallery installations of artists including David Claerbout or Hans Op de Beeck. From the essayistic and political to the narrative and performative. From the cinematic to the resolutely digital.

Such pluralism is hardly surprising when one looks back to the idiosyncratic histories of Belgian cinema and video, in particular the fertile tradition of video art in Flanders. From the early 1970s, Antwerp constituted an important centre of gravity for artists' engagement with video, with many (including Lili Dujourie, Gary Bigot or Hubert Van Es) working around the ICC (International Cultureel Centrum), the first public institution for contemporary art in Flanders. Over the next two decades, video art would be strengthened as a field of practice by the country's supportive institutions and numerous private collectors. In 1989, Frie Depraetere and Koen Van Daele set up ARGOS in Brussels in order to 'stimulate and promote the then still emerging Belgian audiovisual arts scene'. To this day, ARGOS distributes the work of Belgian video artists internationally, including the many visual artists who use video in addition to sculpture, installation and other media, such as Edith Dekyndt, Michel François, Ana Torfs and Joëlle Tuerlinckx.

Whereas artists around the world took to video cameras in the 1970s and 1980s as a way to critique television, by direct intervention and subversion (often by working with public-access television networks), in Flanders a distinct practice was developed from within mass media instead of in opposition to it, fuelled by the openness of public broadcasters. This would give way to the pioneering work of Jef Cornelis[1] (which has recently received international recognition through an exhibition at the Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art and screenings at Tate Modern) and Stefaan Decostere. Across the linguistic border in Wallonia, Jean-Paul Tréfois also commissioned Flemish artists to make work for the legendary programme *Vidéographie* on RTBF.

Video technology had also been used by artists as a tool to uninterruptedly document live performance. The so-called 'Flemish wave' in contemporary dance and theatre of the 1980s had its own effect on the country's audiovisual production, producing a distinct tradition of dance films and videos that resulted from the collaboration between choreographers, dancers, video artists and filmmakers—such as the partnership between Eric Pauwels and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker in Violin Fase and that of Walter Verdin and Wim Vandekeybus in *Roseland*. The relationship between the theatre and the moving image is also present in the work of Jan Vromman and that of Frank and Koen Theys, who took Wagner's *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* as the point of departure for a number of video works, whilst Harald Thys and Jos de Gruyter's farcical videos stem from the 'klucht' tradition of theatre that dates back to the Middle Ages.

Long before artists used video, Marcel Broodthaers was one of the first visual artists to use film in the gallery space. His gesture was prescient of contemporary moving image installation and also pointed towards the idea that exhibition-making is a cinematic act. Belgium's long-standing tradition of artists' engagement with film in fact began with the surrealists; René Magritte made a number of amateur films with friends and family as cast and crew. Avant-garde films such as Charles Dekeukeleire's *Histoire de detective* (1929) and Ernst Moerman's *Monsieur Fantômas* (1937) were made under the Surrealist influence. Another pioneer of Belgian cinema, Henri Storck (a co-founder of the Royal Belgian Film Archive) is known for his social documentaries, but also shot impressionistic portraits of his native Ostend. Close to figures such as James Ensor, Constant Permeke or Léon Spilliaert from his early youth, Storck made a number of documentaries on painters that challenge the distinction between artists' films and films on art, and which prefigure the work that Jef Cornelis undertook decades later at the VRT.[2]

The narrative of avant-garde cinema in Flanders, or more widely in Belgium, is not as neatly unified as in other countries. As a 'small' cinema and a relatively well funded one, Flemish filmmaking was already more prone to artistic experimentation, less constrained by a market logic. There was perhaps no need, to use Jonas Mekas's famous words, 'to free the cinema'.

1
Jef Cornelis' entire body of work is in distribution at ARGOS.

2
RTBF (Radio Télévision Belge Francophone) is the public French-language Belgian broadcaster. Its Flemish counterpart is the VRT (Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie).

Though it did not develop an underground cinema as significant as its buoyant video art scene, Flanders was home to one of the most important events in the history of international avant-garde film: the EXPRMNTL festival which took place in Knokke (in 1947, 1963, 1967 and 1974) and once in Brussels during Expo '58. Occupying the week between Christmas and New Year at the Casino in a semi-deserted Knokke, EXPRMNTL has become the stuff of legend.[3] An international gathering of avant-garde artists from all disciplines (film, video, music, poetry, installation, performance), EXPRMNTL is yet another example of an officially sanctioned avant-garde practice in Flanders. This state-sponsored celebration of the counter-culture was organised by the Royal Belgian Film Archive and was the vision of its curator Jacques Ledoux. The significance of EXPRMNTL is not lost on the contemporary artists' moving image scene in Flanders; its legacy is still felt by contemporary artists, filmmakers and curators across Belgium. The Royal Belgian Film Archive continues to hold many key works from the history of avant-garde in their collection and has a special acquisition policy for experimental film.

Artists' moving image has emerged as a relatively recent term, one that can heal past divisions between the fields of art and the cinema—where audiovisual artists have previously been situated. Whereas the distinctions were greater in other countries, creating completely separate disciplines, quasi ghettos that had little to say to one another, in Flanders there was always less of a gap between an artists' cinema and the mainstream, as well as between video and film, with artists and filmmakers moving freely from one medium to the other. Filmmakers such as Annik Leroy and Chantal Akerman would elsewhere have been 'relegated' to the avant-garde, but in Belgium their work was not only celebrated, it was produced within the official film funding structures and distributed and broadcast on national television and film theatres.

In 1993 Chantal Akerman reconfigured her film *D'Est* as an installation for eight triptychs of video monitors spread across the gallery space. It was presented in an exhibition organised by Bruce Jenkins and Catherine David for Jeu de Paume, Paris, later travelling to Brussels' Palais des Beaux-Arts and other international venues. It would have a profound effect on a new

A Cinematic Turn

3
For an extensive study on EXPRMNTL see Xavier García Bardón's PhD thesis as well as his many articles on the subject, and Brecht Debackere's documentary *Exprmntl* (2016).

generation of artists for whom it opened up the possibility of thinking about film as an art medium and not as something separate—as film and art had been considered until then. *D'Est* demonstrated a place for documentary and cinematic practices in the gallery or museum. Akerman was not alone in exploring this possibility—other filmmakers such as Agnès Varda, Atom Egoyan, Abbas Kiarostami, Harun Farocki and Chris Marker had also turned to exhibition practices in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In 1997, Johan Grimonprez's *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* was presented at Paris Centre Pompidou and at Documenta X in Kassel. By this time, advancements in video projection technology had enabled artists' video to become 'cinematic', allowing audiovisual art to break free from the limitations of the TV monitor and to occupy screens of a much larger size. Grimonprez's found-footage documentary essay on the history of airplane hi-jacking was groundbreaking, in part because it demonstrated the possibility for cinema, in its conventional form, to inhabit the museum. *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* is not a multi-channel installation, there are no expanded elements that require the white cube of the gallery space instead of the black box of the cinema. As a 68-minute single-screen video, its worldwide success helped create a space in the museum for the presentation of single-channel works that require time and attention conditions not dissimilar to those of the cinema. The contemporary works of other Flemish artists such as Sven Augustijnen, Herman Asselberghs, Vincent Meessen, Isabelle Tollenaere, Sarah Vanagt and Manon de Boer continue to inhabit the space that was opened up by *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* over twenty years ago.

Johan Grimonprez and Chantal Akerman are emblematic figures of the shifts that occurred in the 1990s. This changing landscape would see a cinematic turn in video art, and a blurring of traditional distinctions and hierarchies between art and film.

Working Together

2019 marked the 30th anniversary of ARGOS. Having been identified for decades with a particular history of 'video art', the scope of its collection has widened in recent years as the field opened up and diversified. ARGOS now also represents

the work of artists and filmmakers engaged with digital and analogue film practices; the ambition of the collection is decidedly multicultural and international. It's also an archival collection intended to preserve important works by Belgian artists.[4] ARGOS' public programme includes exhibitions, screenings and other events that seek to expand the notion of the 'audiovisual arts.'

In December 2019, ARGOS hosted—with the support of Flanders Arts Institute—the first meeting of the 'Platform for audiovisual and media arts' (PAM), an assembly of organisations working 'with artists', film sound art, or media art'.[5] This meeting was a formal acknowledgement of what has been for many years an informal network of mutual support. The artistic and the socio-cultural have always been intertwined in Belgium, and many of these initiatives represent socially engaged practices. For instance, Cinemaximiliaan, which began in an improvised refugee camp in Brussels' Maximiliaan Park, and has grown into a vast network of volunteers who organise film screenings for newcomers in Belgium, particularly in asylum centres. The 'Platform' attests to the breadth and diversity of the sector and the important role that smaller, artist-run structures play. If there is one distinctive trait of the artists' moving image landscape in Flanders, it is precisely the proliferation of artist-run initiatives, collectives and other collaborative groups.

In 2006, four artists joined forces to start the production and distribution platform Auguste Orts. Although their work was formally very different—each typical of different traditions within artists' moving image practice—the four recognised a shared position between the fields of contemporary art and cinema. They identified a need for an organisation that could help artists navigate the intricacies of film production mechanisms whilst understanding the demands of exhibition presentation. A structure that could adapt itself to the logics of both the art world and the film industry, or in the artists' own words, 'to generate a specific context that would be conceived in response to the very specific modus operandi of artists' film production.'

4
ARGOS is not alone in its efforts to preserve the Flemish audiovisual arts heritage. It works closely with other initiatives such as PACKED and VIAA, which have now merged into Meemoo—Flanders Institute for Archives. A notable example of research-based preservation and public programming was the collaboration between ARGOS, MuHKA and Objectif Exhibitions on the work of Hugo Roelandt (1950–2015), a pioneering photographer, performance and installation artist.

5
aifoon, ARGOS, Art Cinema OFFoff, Auguste Orts, Beursschouwburg, Centre Vidéo de Bruxelles CVB, Centre de l'Audiovisuel à Bruxelles CBA, Cinemaximiliaan, Constant, Contour, Courtisane, elephy, Escautville, GLUON, Graphoui, Imagerie, iMAL, Jubilee, Lab-au, LABObxl, Messidor, Out of Sight, Overtoon, Qo2, SIC, Werktank.

In the years since Manon de Boer, Herman Asselberghs, Sven Augustijnen and Anouk De Clercq began Auguste Orts, Flanders has witnessed a rapid multiplication of similarly-minded structures: Jubilee (Justin Bennett, Eleni Kamma, Vincent Meessen, Jasper Rigole, and Vermeir & Heiremans), Messidor (Eitan Efrat and Sirah Foighel Brutmann, Pieter Geenen and Meggy Rustamova), Escautville (Wim Catrysse, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, Ria Pacquée, Frank Theys, Koen Theys) to name a few. Elephy (Rebecca Jane Arthur, Chloë Delanghe, Eva Giolo and Christina Stuhlberger) are the new kids on the block, describing themselves as a 'moving image atelier' with a holistic approach that also encompasses public engagement through public programming and workshops.

Labo (Jen Debauche, Khristine Gillard, Séverine de Streyker, Els van Riel) is an artist-run lab devoted to film processing and a key organisation for all those working with analogue film. Van Riel is also a founding member (together with Wendy Evan, Nicky Hamlyn, Daniel A. Swarthnas and Arindam Sen) of Cinéma Parenthèse, a collective of writers, programmers and filmmakers that organises experimental film screenings in Brussels. Other collective structures, such as manyone (Juan Dominguez, Mette Edvardsen, Alma Söderberg and Sarah Vanhee) or Black Speaks Back (Emma-Lee Amponsah, Christopher Daley, Heleen Debeuckelaere and Burezi Turikumwe) are more multidisciplinary but retain a strong connection with the moving image. All of these groups highlight sustainability as a reason for togetherness and often have a very self-reflexive position that also brings into question their own existence as a collective. As the Messidor artists put it, they came together 'in order to discuss, to question and to practice the value of joining forces in today's artistic realm, in Belgium and abroad.'

Auguste Orts always understood its mission as being broader than just supporting its founding artists and a number of guest productions each year (these have included Aglaia Konrad, Dora García, Sammy Baloji and Annik Leroy, amongst others). Auguste Orts is the driving force behind the European project On & For Production and Distribution. Originally intended to facilitate the production of artists' moving image by bringing together artists, producers, curators, institutions and

collectors, On & For has gradually built a European network of organisations involved with artists' film, placing Flanders at its centre. Its international partners include LUX (UK), CA2M (Spain), Kaunas International Film Festival (Lithuania) and Nordland Kunst- og Filmhøgskole (Norway)—whilst also working closely with organisations in Belgium including Art Brussels, VAF, ARGOS, Cinematek, Beursschouwburg, Contour, RITCS, ERG and Atelier Graphoui.

That collaborative spirit is present in similar endeavours in Flanders, whether they are shaped as collectives—Cinema Nova, the Courtisane festival, cinephile online platform Sabzian or workspace De Imagerie—or the result of joining forces in order to be able to produce ambitious projects, such as the 'DISSENT!' conversation series organised by Auguste Orts, ARGOS and Courtisane. After all, 'Unity makes strength' is the country's motto.

Institutional alliances are regularly formed to facilitate production and presentation, with most audiovisual arts organisations, including ARGOS, Courtisane and Contour, being involved in coproduction and commissioning. Beursschouwburg, a multidisciplinary arts institution with an emphasis on performing and audiovisual arts, not only coproduces many of the works it presents, but also facilitates the production of artists' moving image through residencies. Other organisations not specifically devoted to moving image—such as Netwerk Aalst, Z33, WIELS, STUK and Het Bos—occasionally coproduce and present artists' moving image.

The most recent Contour Bienniale in Mechelen (2019, curated by Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez) placed a special emphasis on collaborative practice, featuring the work of Coyote, Call It Anything, Black Speaks Back, Black(s) to the Future and Greyzone Zebra. Founded in 2016, Greyzone Zebra comprises artists, curators, educators and researchers working on contemporary forms of the transmission and rewriting of histories. Its particular concern with Belgium's colonial period has been reflected on through the study of home movies made on the African continent before and shortly after the colonies gained independence.

Many artists in Flanders have engaged with the colonial archive through the moving image. Sarah Vanagt, who has made a number of works in the border region between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, shot *Baby Elephant* in the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, before the institution was revamped in an attempt to undo its colonial and racist legacy. Vincent Meessen questions the writing of history and the westernisation of imaginaries, often adopting strategies that 'undermine the authority of the author and emphasise the intelligence of collectives.' For his presentation at the Belgian Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale, Meessen invited other research-based international artists to create work in response to Belgium's colonisation of the Congo, and also reflected on the particular history of the Belgian Pavilion and the international context of the Biennale.

Although aesthetically diverse, many of these works stem from an essayistic, documentary impulse. An van. Dienderen and Laurent Van Lancker—both working at the intersections between documentary, anthropology and visual arts—initiated SoundImageCulture (SIC) in 2007, together with Rudi Maerten. Mentors for the SIC programme have included Didier Volckaert, Eric Pauwels, Els Opsomer, Pieter Van Bogaert amongst others.

Whilst SIC is an example of an innovative educational programme outside academia, Flanders has excellent moving image degrees in its art schools, notably LUCA Sint-Lukas in Brussels and KASK in Ghent, where Edwin Carels (one of the field's most influential curators, and a long-time programmer for the International Film Festival Rotterdam) teaches, along with artists including Jasper Rigole, Anouk De Clercq, Mekhitar Garabedian, Elias Grootaers, An van. Dienderen, Sarah Vanagt. The Courtisane festival, which has become a key international gathering place for the expanded field of moving image practice, is also based at KASK. Auguste Orts founder Herman Asselberghs has taught at LUCA Sint-Lukas for over twenty years, where the film and photography departments count amongst their faculty Robbrecht Desmet, Ana Torfs, Aglaia Konrad, Els Opsomer, Ludo Troch, Flo Flamme and Sofie Benoot.

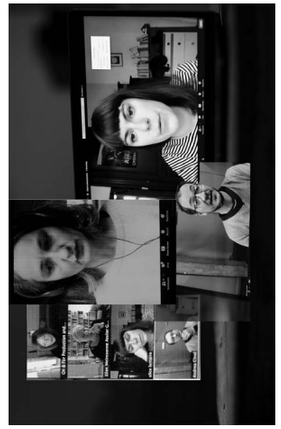
The organisations (workspaces, festivals, cinemas, collectives) mentioned here above receive—for the most part—public funding from the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) and the Ministry of Culture (via its Art Decree). VAF funds the development, production and promotion of single-screen audiovisual productions (narrative shorts and features, documentaries and experimental work), and also supports training and fellowship programmes.[6] The Art Decree supports the production of multi-channel audiovisual and media art works, and subsidises arts organisations such as Auguste Orts, Escautville, Jubilee, ARGOS, and others. The Brussels region (Vlaamse Gemeenschaps Commissie, VGC) is also an active supporter of moving image projects and initiatives.

Although the focus of this text is on the public sector, and the thriving culture that it enables, a word is necessary on commercial initiatives that also contribute to the ecosystem of artists' moving image practice, particularly private galleries such as Jan Mot, Harlan Levey Projects, Dépendance and others. Mot's long-standing commitment is unique and the majority of the artists that he represents (including Francis Alÿs, Sven Augustijnen, Manon de Boer, David Lamelas, Pierre Bismuth, Joachim Koester and Sharon Lockhart) place the moving image at the centre of their practice. Art Brussels, the country's biggest art fair has also in recent years devoted a parallel programme to artists' cinema.

Artists' moving image is always interstitial: between disciplines, between trajectories, between aesthetics. And yet, it appears to have coalesced into a rather stable form in Flanders. Flemish moving image art has been internationally recognised—at art biennials and festivals such as Rotterdam, Berlin, FIDMarseille, Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin. In order to sustain this level of activity it is vital that small and non-commercial initiatives are allowed to flourish. Those who are always more at risk—the small structures, the artists themselves—are those who are more directly responsible for the sector's dynamism.

The organisations, institutions, art schools, artists and curators who constitute the landscape of artists' moving image in Flanders, including the many not mentioned here, form a complex but fragile constellation which relies, despite its many

6
VAF's FilmLab has a budget of €400,000 and funds an average of 19 artists' film productions per year.



strengths, on stable public support. At a fundamental level, it also relies on artists' inventiveness in navigating uncertain times and making the most of available opportunities. Togetherness, now as ever, seems the only sensible way forward.

The author would like to thank Dirk De Wit, Niels Van Tomme, Marie Logie and Sirah Foighel Brutmann for their precious feedback and Mark Webber for proofreading. Additional thanks are due to Xavier García Bardón for all his work on EXPRMNTL over the years, to *L'art même*—for commissioning her in 2009 to write an article on Belgian experimental cinema which provided a useful base for this text—and to Erika Balsom and Lucy Reynolds whose book *Artists' Moving Image in Britain Since 1989* was an inspiring model when approaching the plurality of artists' moving image practices in Flanders.

María Palacios Cruz is a film curator, writer and educator based in London. She is course leader for the Film Curating course at Elías Querejeta Zine Eskola in San Sebastián and was previously Deputy Director of LUX, the UK agency for artists' moving image.

Building Blocks: A Conversation Between Auguste Orts and Helena Kritis

On a mild autumn day in October 2020, the team behind On & For at Auguste Orts in Brussels meet up for a conversation led by curator and film programmer Helena Kritis. Around the table sit the 4 founding artists—Herman Asselberghs, Sven Augustijnen, Manon de Boer and Anouk De Clercq—the director, Marie Logie, the financial director, Pepa De Maesschalck, and the coordinator of On & For, Rebecca Jane Arthur. After years of working together, a relaxed sense of familiarity fills the room. Yet Kritis tries to provoke new thought with her line of questioning. She asks them to reflect on their practice, as a platform, to provide insights into the workings of On & For, and probes for their ambitions for the future of On & For as the project (2018–2021) begins to draw to a close, once more, again 'for now'.

The conversation that takes place is held in Dutch, recorded, and later transcribed and translated into English. The material is edited by Arthur as a simulation of the sprawling conversation had during that afternoon together at Auguste Orts. Below the voices of Auguste Orts appear alongside one another, unnamed, without hierarchies, as an accumulation of the voices and thoughts behind the happenings of the platform.

The question I want to start with is, after 15 years, does it—Auguste Orts—still work and why?

—One of the surprises has been that it has lasted so long with

Rebecca Jane Arthur

four artists, each with their own trajectory, and each with their own ego. No mutual manifesto or mission statement was ever written, and yet we all had a similar idea of what we wanted.

—I think that it has to do with the fact that all four of us are quite different from one another, thus we all feed into the organisation in a different way.

—As each artist works at a different rhythm, a different pace, there's always someone who is producing a little less, themselves, at any given time, and can assist a little more with other parts of Auguste Orts, e.g., dossier writing, events, etc.

—Our own practices are also quite different from one another, but Auguste Orts has always had room—rather, has actively created the space—to look at what is needed for each project. As a result, we have also been able to continue to develop and make different kinds of films—short and feature, analogue and HD, documentary and experimental—and have collaborations with other artists, other arts producers, other platforms. This evolution or expansion in Auguste Orts' catalogue has grown in the last decade together with our practices. We've never 'stayed still', so to speak.

—Or maybe it's because we don't have so much 'to do' with each other—that we don't collaborate on artistic projects? I'm not meaning to be negative, but there are often tensions in other collectives or platforms that arise from 'working together'.

—Doesn't it mainly have to do with the fact that we all find it important to be engaged with more than *just* our own practices; that we all look beyond our own paths? For example, we all think it is important to help build an audiovisual community. We teach. We sit on so many boards of directors. Our commitment to the field, therefore, goes further than just our own work.

—It's also important to add that we never had the ambition

to receive a wage from the platform—people are often surprised by that. For most of us, our salaries come from teaching, which slows down the production process and has a major impact on the organisation because projects take longer to realise. But 'taking time' isn't necessarily negative, although it's often read as such. Both financially and in terms of time, there is less 'pressure on the boiler', so to speak. That also gives us a kind of freedom.

—That is an important point: people think that 'artist-run' implies that we are paid for it, the running of things. However, we aren't 'running' the show on a day-to-day basis. We have a director, financial director, even a technician!

In that case, 'artist-run' is an interesting choice of words. With a team running the show, is it fitting to say that Auguste Orts is artist-run?

—'Artist-led' could be another option. But it sounds more top down, while we actually work horizontally. We make the decisions together—with our director, for one.

Auguste Orts invented a kind of model that has been copied and adapted by other organisations, and its lobbying activity has also had a striking influence in the field. Is that now also an essential part of the organisation—the aim to influence policy?

—First off, we didn't 'invent' the model exactly. At least, we didn't create it from scratch.
The model of Auguste Orts—a structurally-funded audiovisual platform—was conceived as an adaptation from other fields, namely podium arts: theatre, dance, performance.

—Perhaps we should define here what model we are discussing? We are referring to the arts platforms that are structurally subsidised by the Flemish Government's Arts Decree, Department Culture, Youth and Media (Dept. CJM), we call it the *Kunstendecreet* in Dutch. Arts organisations with a legally verified non-profit status can apply to Dept. CJM to receive project funding of 1 or 2 years for their artistic

operations. After establishing a place within the field, the Flemish art field that is, an arts organisation can apply for what we call 'structural funding', which now covers a period of 5 years.

—Yes, so in order to access that fund, we did our homework when starting out. We went to speak to structurally subsidised platforms in order to understand how they functioned, how they created a structure that is sustainable, with both subsidies and commercial exploits, and how they legitimised their place in the Flemish arts field in order to become subsidised. Then, we went to work at creating that same space—the space for an artist-run production and distribution platform of artists' moving image—to be structurally funded. In order to create that space, we had to lobby for it.

—I recall our first meeting with members of the administration of Dept. CJM. We had to explain to them what a platform for the production and distribution of artists' moving image could mean; we had to help them envisage it, and its (cultural) worth. Back then, we talked about 'alternative management bureaus.' It was a term that came from the live arts. We used it in order to be able to fit into the box within the existing system, which supported live arts platforms in their production and distribution activities. After a few years, we dropped this term, 'alternative management bureaus', and applied the term 'platform for production and distribution'. We explained to the administration of Dept. CJM what working together could mean, what tasks could be shared, how money could be invested to do more for more people, what the role of artists, the gallery and the platform could be... It was very early in the development of the organisation, but we went there together and drew them into the debate because we felt that communication with the authorities was necessary. And still do today.

—And then the audiovisual field began to grow! We gained colleagues, other artist-run audiovisual platforms, who too gained structural funding. We must point here to María Palacios Cruz's text 'Let me be your guide: Artists' Moving Image in Flanders':[1] a commissioned article on our field,

1
See pp. 89–99.

the Flemish audiovisual landscape. She describes the local fabric and its history so well; how the audiovisual arts are interconnected, from gallery to festival, via whatever 'bureaus' you can think of!

—And, today, represented by Marie or Pepa, we are part of many independent platforms that create space for thinking together on the development of our field, forums such as oKo[2], PAM[3]. Further, we are even engaged in reflection groups at the local arts council (Kunstendecreet, Dept. CJM) and film fund (Flanders Audiovisual Fund/Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds, VAF).

—I think that this has to do with a sense of responsibility that arises from having structural funds. During the Production Models (2020, Brussels)[4] conversation with different producers, Marie expressed that, precisely because of the structural funding Auguste Orts receives, there's an impetus to 'pay back' the trust that has been given into the (audiovisual) community: to share knowledge, to help educate beginners, to be visible, etc. I appreciated that reminder of the stance that one chooses to take; it's a decision to be generous in one's working. Although there aren't any official demands from structurally subsidised organisations, there is a kind of inherent responsibility that's felt. One must decide then how to act.

Did you have funding from the get-go?

—No. Not at all. We started without a penny. However, we did have a long-term residency of 5 years (2007–2012) at the time at the arts centre Beursschouwburg, Brussels, located on Auguste Orts Street, where we found our name. Having that residency, which Beursschouwburg names their 'Associated Artists' programme, provided us with a location—essentially, a free space, a free office, with all of the infrastructure that comes with it and with the overhead costs taken care of. Not to mention a public platform that gave us visibility, a space to host events, and a budget allocated to events of our choosing, with money to invite people to participate and pay screening fees.

2
oKo stands for *Overleg Kunstenorganisaties* in Dutch, which roughly translates as 'the consultation of arts organisations'. It is an independent network currently 'consisting of more than 200 members, all professional arts organisations in Flanders and Brussels, engaged in the creation, production, distribution, participation and/or the support of arts' (as cited on overlegkunsten.org website).

3
The Platform for Audiovisual and Media Arts (PAM) is a diverse assembly of Belgian arts organisations working with artists' film, sound art, or media art who regularly meet to discuss common issues. This informal platform shares its knowledge with the broad community of artists, curators, producers and organisations active in this field through public events called PAM p.m. Member are ARGOS, Auguste Orts, Courtisane, elephy, Escautville, Gluon, Jubilee vzw, Kunstenpunt, Messidor, Overtoon, Q-O2, STUK, WERKTANK, and many more.

4
See pp. 79–87.

—It's important to add that Marie worked without pay for the first year—that is also a part of the story. It was slow and precarious to start off with. Not everyone can do that.

> Marie's role as director has just been mentioned. Could Auguste Orts still exist when Marie says, at a certain point, 'it's been a good run'?

—Then someone else would have to take that role; there would have to be a new director. But I fear it would become something completely different.

—I think there was another question hidden in that question: not what if a member quits, an artist or director, but what if the constellation were to change? What if an artist was to join our core group in the future?

> Indeed. Are there any conversations about adding artists?

—In the beginning, we made an agreement that an artist could leave and that the project of Auguste Orts would continue to exist. But we have never really been able to imagine the platform with 3 or 5 artists, or never really wanted to. The constellation of 4 artists, and 1 director, 1 financial director, and 1 technician all working part-time has created a balance that has kept us steady for 15 years. It's a dangerous thing to rock that boat...

—But if we ever would decide to expand the core group, it needs to be carefully thought through as part of an overall recalibration of the platform's workings and organisation. We'll continue to have this conversation...

—I'd say the most pressing conversations we have, in this vein, stem from the fear of becoming stale, of becoming stagnant! That said, however, we try to open up our operation by inviting others inside, to work with us on specific projects. On & For being one of them. A project that is defined by collaboration, with other artists, other cultural workers, other arts organisations, other funding bodies, etc. In the first term of On & For, we worked in close collaboration with

the independent curator Anna Manubens, who managed the project for us. Now that's Rebecca Jane Arthur, who started working for us as an intern in 2015–16 and has never left her desk for long since! Whilst developing as an artist, she's been around on a project basis assisting Marie and learning from her. Thus, we have the internship programmes that bring young minds into our folds and also the 'Guest Productions',[5] which allows us to connect with a variety of artists, young (in their careers) and established. Then, for each production, we require to work with a team: always varying in size. But, by now, we have created close ties to talented cinematographers, sound engineers, editors, post-production technicians, colour graders, sound mixers, and so on, and on-set or behind-the-scenes production hands.

—As Marie is at the core of these relationships, being in charge of the employment, the funding, the communications, she takes care of these collaborations and ensures that they thrive. They are also her relationships, thus, and not just Auguste Orts's.

—In any case, we'd all prefer to reflect on how we can engage with more people rather than how to cope with losing one person.

> But you do invite other artists to produce their films within Auguste Orts. Can you tell me more about the Guest Productions; how does that decision-making process go?

—Auguste Orts is set up to produce, primarily, our own works. However, we always wanted to learn together with other artists about the various shapes of production, so we started to produce and distribute what we call 'Guest Productions'. Thus, apart from building our production catalogue, by helping our peers get their productions off the ground and supporting them throughout their individual production journeys, we strengthen relationships with our peers, our networks grow, our experience deepens, our capabilities strengthen.

5
To date, Auguste Orts have invited 16 guest artists to (co-) produce their projects (Sammy Baloji, Sofie Benoot, Boris Debackere, Robbrecht Desmet, Sirah Foighel Brutmann & Eitan Efrat, Dora García, Eva Giolo, Elias Heuninck, Joachim Koester, Aglaia Konrad, Annik Leroy, Ina Luchsperger, Sophie Nys, Wendelien van Oldenborgh, and Olivier Zabat).

—I want to add that this grew out of a need. Since starting up, we were often approached to facilitate the productions of our peers. Both as producers or co-producers. Thus, the need for producers operating in the way we do, with such a varied catalogue of film productions—from short to feature length; from high-tech animation to experimental analogue film—was overwhelming. It still is. And we, alone, can't satisfy the demand.

So how does it work?

—We agreed that, when we would take on a Guest Production, each of us would be responsible for the production that we have introduced. This is akin to what some might call a godmother or godfather position. Basically, the aim is to support and facilitate the artist, their production, and to ease or share some of the burden with Marie, who is not only the director of Auguste Orts but also the head of each production.

—We gather the names of the artists, their projects, and the requests we receive and find interesting, and then we discuss together if the particular project is something that we'd be keen to take on. Does it excite us? And then, apart from desire, there are also practical considerations to be had. Mainly, the decision boils down to a question of time: can we afford to add this production to our schedule at this moment? It's more often about feasibility, rather than it is about creating a particular catalogue as such, with any tangible artistic vision.

—Everyone has to agree in the decision for the next Guest Production(s). However, you also need to have some kind of trust in each other. You may not know the filmmaker or project that your fellow artist is bidding for, but that they vouch for it is enough.

—Even though we've wanted to do more, facilitate more productions, engage with more of our peers, we've learned that that's not always possible in our small structure.

Regarding the limitations of being a small structure: Are you looking to grow still?

—First of all, we must question what growth is. We don't want fully-equipped studios or a permanent building like a theatre. Thus, if that is growth, we agreed that we don't want to grow in such a way. Being small-scale also affords us many freedoms in terms of how we work, which projects we decide to take on, and such. We don't have to work in a commercial manner; thus, we choose not to.

—In previous conversations, we did say that we want to deepen instead of expanding. This also has to do with the reality of the subsidy framework—with every structural funding application comes a moment of reflection, looking back to then look forward, re-thinking the structure and adapting bits and pieces.

You say it is a matter of deepening, rather than growing. Can you give examples of this within Auguste Orts?

—Deepening... Perhaps that's about creating connections, lasting relationships? The Guest Production initiative is but one of the ways that we connect with our field. It gives us the honour of providing an invitation, which is a wonderful power to have: being able to share.

—There are challenges, too, of course. As with every new relationship, one has to find ways to co-exist. There are some productions that are, were, stronger than others, certainly in terms of the kind of accreditation that is counted by views or demand or profitability. And there were also other collaborations that cannot be measured in such metrics yet were invaluable to us, on personal levels, emotional levels, perhaps even just on the level of friendship or artistic appreciation.

—In terms of deepening, 'growing up' rather than just 'growing', we are maturing not only in age but in our relationships too. I mean, we are a different age than when we began, of course, so maybe we want to make things

last a little longer? That sounds vague perhaps, so I can give the concrete example of production. For instance, we have realised several Guest Productions with Aglaia Konrad, which originated organically from the great working relationship she had with Marie. We have similar long-term collaborations with Dora García and Annik Leroy. Rather than inviting these 'guests' only once to our house, we wanted to have a deeper relationship with their practices.

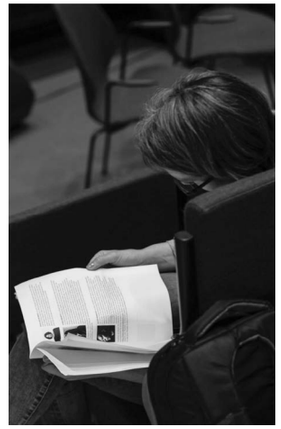
So, can we deduce that you want to learn more about these artists' practices?

—The word 'organic' may be repeated here. Somehow, there is something fertile about those collaborations in particular. So, yes, you can deduce that we want to learn more of their practices. But their projects also just grew! They create ambitious projects or multiple-part projects, and thus they required more time.

—It's important for us to be able to take proper care of our existing (ongoing) productions, and not to (have to) add more productions to our workload just for the sake of growing the catalogue, just for the sake of numbers. We'd rather do fewer productions with care than limit our investment by overstretching our platform and compromising the projects in the making.

—This notion of 'deepening' is not only associated with productions, though. I am thinking of our working relationships too, like with Rebecca or Anna, as described earlier. If you look at the credits of our productions, you will see many of our skilled technicians returning to work together, time and again: Laszlo Umbreit, Léo Lefèvre, Artur Castro Freire, Loup Brenta... Or take Fairuz Ghammam, for example: a great friend after all of the years she has worked with us on productions as a dedicated and talented cinematographer, editor, and post-production technician. In fact, now we are looking forward to producing her new work: as artist, not technician!

Speaking of collaborations, at an international level, the relationships that On & For creates and makes



space for is important, I think, in terms of strengthening your bonds in the field both at home and away. You are the main driver of that project. Why did you initiate it?

—Before discussing the conceptual side of the project—what we perceived it to be, why we are invested in On & For and its possible gains, like partnerships—it's important to address the foundation from which even the idea of handling a European collaboration could stem: 'how we initiated it'. And truth be told, it was all rather pragmatic: back in 2014, when we organised the first On & For events (the 'pilot edition', then without European funds but with local backing), we had a financial director, Ann Goossens, who had already run EU-projects in her previous employment, so we knew that as a small organisation we could handle that side of things—or, at least, she could!

—If you recall, some years before then, it was actually one of our board of directors, Geert Palmers, who was one of the first to raise the idea of applying for European funding. He saw it as a way of becoming less dependent on Flemish subsidies and to capitalise on Auguste Orts's inherently international way of working.

—True, and then we reached out to Anna in order to think together about how Auguste Orts could work internationally in a structural sense and help us navigate the first dossiers. In October 2012, she came to work with us and we went together to the Media Desk and Cultural Programme, and we applied in October 2014 for the first time—daring to do so because Ann came to work with us earlier that year.

—Beyond that, the reason *why* we initiated this project was that we wanted to connect with similar organisations in Europe. That search for connections is still ongoing. What we have learned, and perhaps that's why we were invited to participate in this conversation today, is that people/organisations throughout Europe 'look up' to our model. Which is sometimes uncomfortable! I mean, to stand out as some kind of 'example' when we know that to survive as an artists' moving image producer without the help of a national or European arts or film fund—or both—is a stretch

of the imagination. At least, it is a great challenge to continue making the work that you want to make and be able to live from it. In this, we admire our colleagues like Stenar Projects in Lisbon, for example.

> You hinted that you were unsuccessful in finding like-minded or, better put, 'like-modelled' organisations to relate to. However, we see that you are hosting events in Europe from Norway to Portugal. Thus, would you say that a large European network is being created, is taking form?

—Well, yes. It is. Little by little. Originally the idea was to find similar organisations from which artists could share skills, information on production and distribution. But when that was not successful, we started working with organisations that are complementary: active in the network but not necessarily the same. Because there are hardly any similar organisations, or they exist but have no structural support.

—It is probably best to remember that each platform has its own regional specificity. Our specificity is being a trilingual (NL/FR/EN) platform in the city of Brussels—a bilingual territory, which is the capital city of Flanders—and to have a Flemish subsidising government, as previously explained. Thus, connecting with all different shapes and sizes of arts organisations throughout Europe has been riveting, if only just to touch on the layers of complexities surrounding the existence of AMI-platforms. It could be a study in itself. One that we would greatly encourage, an ambitious mapping of the European landscape, its conditions, and working towards an ideal—I mean, towards an ideal way of working that isn't precarious. As with each region, our situation has its own uncertainties: we depend on government subsidies.

> And what about the larger picture: the European networks?

—Maybe we can point you to our website here—the website of On & For (onandfor.eu). The reason I'm adding this is that we have a participants-page that was designed as a reference of sorts, a depository for people to roam around

in and see who—which organisations or individuals—have contributed to On & For. Thus, you can see the artists/filmmakers, production and distribution platforms, curators and programmers, exhibition and presentation venues, funds and collectors that we have, until today, encountered in this venture. All of whom have a vested interest, a stake, in artists' moving image production, presentation, distribution. That's our humble attempt at making our unscientific mapping visible.

—What it also shall make visible, of course, is the *impossibility* of mapping. I mean, there will be new production and distribution platforms forming constantly and we don't pretend to have a European overview. As said, that's a study in itself.

> One of the things that immediately struck me about On & For was the principle that for the roundtables you organise, the Work Sessions,[6] you choose a producer to invite before you choose an artist's project and that the 'guest producer' proposes their own productions. You then have much less control over which productions will ultimately be included in the selection for these events. Is this an exercise in letting go? Or why did you choose to operate like this?

—Although it may seem as though we do take our hands off the wheel when it comes to the choice of the artists' projects, it wouldn't be *only* our choice anyway. On & For is a cooperative project, which means that there are many voices included in the decisions made: the partners of the projects, for starters, and the Work Sessions curator, for another. Each voice will have their own vested interest in inviting one 'producer' or another. And they'll most likely already have insight into who the producer is currently working with. So, it's not so spontaneous in most cases. Then, we do make collaborative decisions—or should I say, 'negotiations'—on which project would benefit most from the experience and we try to find a balance in the projects being taken on per edition—that they aren't all from established artists from Northern Europe or that the projects aren't too similar in length or form, to give but a couple of rudimentary examples.

6

See p. 143.

—I'd like to add that the hosting partner will most likely want to invite a local or national (to them) 'guest producer'. At most editions—all editions apart from the two at Visions du Réel that we modified slightly for the film festival's context—there are four Work Session tables curated. And in Brussels, for instance, we always involve two local producers. This is partly to do with our funding structures and partly to do with connecting to the field, wanting to be able to invite our peers to participate in our project. In Brussels, for instance, we've invited Contour Biennale, Escautville, Jubilee, to name but a few.

—Perhaps it is also important to say that when we use the term 'producer', we do so in the broadest sense. The producer can be someone who is associated with a residency or exhibition space, and does not have to be a classic film producer, rather someone who accompanies a project. It's about making things possible, in all constellations. For example, our long-term collaborator LUX is not a producer; it's an 'arts agency'. They have, however, supported many projects at the On & For Work Sessions and helped to guide them to fruition. There are different types of hybrid-producers—but very few independent producers of artists' moving image.

—One of the things that often comes up is the question of whether you can 'train' that kind of producer—although that might be the wrong word! I think it's not that the care needed in the creation of AMI-projects is ultimately so incredibly different than film projects, it's rather the conceptualisation process, the development process, the budgets attached, the undefined, unpredicted durations of the works, the distribution means and outreach, and the flexibility necessary at all stages. The relatively small production budgets and the incredibly tight producers' fees to match make it unprofitable for most, but also unfeasible for many.

—At On & For, although the term 'producer' is flexible, at each edition of the Work Sessions, we try to involve producers and create a combination of various professionals enacting this role, too, because there is a certain know-how amongst producers that we want to take on board—to tap into,

even—which is important for the learning process. In this way, bringing together those that facilitate AMI-production in one way or another, On & For also functions as a kind of showcase of production models, where artists and those supporting artists can meet.

—Take, for example, Annik Leroy's Work Session (2019, Brussels). Here, we are talking about someone who has a long-standing career in filmmaking (her debut documentary dates from the very beginning of the eighties). Accompanying her project was an established Belgian documentary film producer (Cobra Films), and then the curation of her table ranged from a television broadcasting producer (CANVAS VRT, BE) to a live arts festival that has branched into moving image co-production (Kunstenfestivaldesarts, BE), with a moving image producer (Pong, DE), visual arts professionals, such as a director of an institution (WIELS, BE) and a curator (MAC Gulbenkian, PT), and a dramaturge (Wiener Festwochen, AT)! It's an interesting case study because, unlike most of the artists who participate in the Work Sessions, Annik's work has travelled through film channels, even being broadcast on television. So, due to her profile, we could 'hook' the interest of representatives of such fields to join us for her Work Session, and we could support her in meeting newer contexts for her practice, by proposing performance, visual arts, and museal contexts for her project.

—In terms of choosing artists' projects for the Work Sessions, in our scene, here in Brussels, it would be an impossible feat if we were to open it as an open call for artists to apply. There are innumerable artists who want to make a project and who would benefit from the roundtable events. We don't have the capacity to open up that arena and make a selection. Not in the way that the project is currently managed and funded, in terms of how we allocate funds between events—not only Work Sessions, which take place behind closed doors, but also public workshops, seminars, talks and screenings—and distribute the workload.

—But our choice to programme the tables in this way wasn't and still isn't due only to not being able to 'handle' the

workload of an open call, as this we could calculate for in the future and organise things differently. Rather, to borrow your turn of phrase, it's to do with the notion of 'guest producers'. Indeed, this was a priority of ours: to find, meet, connect (with) those working in AMI-production. As a production organisation ourselves, we find value in facilitating the meetings of those working in the field. It's about strength in numbers too! We want more producers of AMI to exist. We want more artists to be able to produce their works. And we want not only 'more', but better conditions.

I think you have all participated in Work Sessions. What was that like for each of you?

—For me, the great thing about the Work Sessions model is the commitment to the process: the long haul. Once the artists' projects have been decided upon, there're multiple steps to be made. Although there isn't a rulebook on 'how to', I'll break the process down into the elements of the process that I recall, on the spot. First, you'll discuss the project's concept, your relationship to it, and formal aspects too, references, aesthetics, previous work, all of that, and you'll be supported in how to describe your project best on paper. That will be your project description, which you will eventually use to grab—and hopefully secure—the attention of the invitees. In parallel, this gives way to discussions with your producer and the Work Sessions curator on the direction of the project—from fundamental questions such as 'where do you hope to film?' to 'how do you envisage the distribution and presentation of the work?' These practical notions can lead to ideas on who you might like to invite to your table, or at least what kind of expertise, what kind of disciplines or fields are you hoping to break into or be supported by. Then you create dream guest lists of people, organisations, that you'd like to share your film idea with. And each person involved in these brainstorms adds insights, experiences, knowledges, ideas. Then, you start to get real. You start to make a balance. I mean, you have about 5 guest-tickets to offer, 5 seats to fill, and you want to use them wisely, strategically. So, you wouldn't contact 5 Brussels-based curators who you already know and have working relationships with in order to join you, for example.

No, you'd create a table that could offer a diversity of knowledges, experiences, and offer new insights into the project's development...

—Of course, you also have to accept that some invitees won't have time to join you or aren't interested.

—True! But it's an excuse to start a conversation at least! And this process takes time. Then, when your table is confirmed, the excitement begins. You start to envisage your project presentation, your roundtable, and you'd better start preparing, too.

—Absolutely! I'll just add that it's also exciting to hear about who others have confirmed for their tables. At the event, you have four tables convening simultaneously. So, before the day itself, you'll find out who the other three tables have managed to secure as invitees. All of the guests combined will be your audience for the project presentations. And sometimes you'll even have a number of guest invitees who aren't participating in the Work Sessions but are only present for the Work Session presentations—I'm thinking of the curators visiting Art Brussels, or the symposium guests at Nordland School of Arts and Film, or those visiting the LIAF biennial (Lofoten International Art Festival), as On & For tries to take advantage of the guestlists of larger events by hosting our editions coinciding with their happenings.

—To follow up on the notion of time, it's further a unique situation that the conversations aren't rushed. After the individual project presentations to the collective audience, we have two hours or so to convene with our individual tables. So you can really go into depth on your project with the invitees. It's not like at film festivals or film 'markets', where you pitch to an anonymous audience of industry folks and then have a speed dating situation to further convince someone you have no real knowledge of, and they also not of you, to support your project. It's also not just about gaining funds! At the Work Sessions, half of the conversation is about the content, the conceptual part of the project. It can be really interesting to hear the input of your chosen invitees, some of whom will be on your wavelength and add

to your flow, but others will challenge you and provoke new ways of seeing...

—And then comes the difficult phase of the task: it is great that the invitees support the project substantively, but how can you capitalise on that?

—Yes. True! Even when the composition of the table is in favour of your project, as is the goal, it's still a difficult exercise to talk about funding, coproducing, and to hint towards a need for investment. Which is why the producer's role is so fundamental, right?

—That is always the most difficult step: from the contemplative to the practical. Sometimes people end up being a little bit hesitant.

—Plus, you have to bring a certain openness to the table, to people who may want to produce or co-produce without being mediated by an institution, and yet you may want to have institutional backing. And while you want both parties involved in your project, one or another party will be hanging back... not ready to *really* invest. Perhaps unable to really invest, for whatever reason.

> I find it interesting that the Work Sessions are group processes because you step outside of that 'insider' atmosphere. As artists who have already participated in film pitches, can you say something about the openness of the Work Sessions?

—Actually, one of the criticisms we sometimes get of the Work Sessions is that they're carried out behind closed doors. But, as an artist, you are vulnerable within those closed doors. To some, that seems exclusive—a bit in contrast to the public pitches at festivals. Although those are also not really open because you have to register as a professional and often have to pay a lot of money to access these cinema market/industry events. So, in terms of agency, the film pitch scenario may be a bit more open, but it is also not a question of free entry for all.

—With a pitch you are much bolder, whilst you have a more vulnerable position here. With a pitch, the role playing is far more clear-cut: you're selling or trying to sell an idea. At the Work Sessions, the timing is radically different, not only of the meeting between the conversation partners but also concerning the stage that the project is in. It can happen that some of those who are gathered around the roundtable are already 'in', involved in your project, because the project has already progressed since you first reached out to them about it. The opposite can also happen: the Work Session can happen too early on in your project's timeline. And when that happens, the closed doors format can see to it that this 'failure' nonetheless turns into a productive meeting.

—It remains an interesting experiment to translate the Work Sessions into an open conversation with the public. That was the intention at the time, back when we first began with the Work Sessions in 2014, to demystify the film pitch-cum-Work Sessions process. But we find it fragile, the notion of making public the conversations of the tables. I mean, there are no declarations made immediately, no investments are put on the table; there's nothing concrete to announce, therefore, only potentiality, only interest. If we expected to have direct investments, nobody would want to come! What we propose is a conversation between peers. And we want people to be able to speak freely. So, it's a strange idea to then 'publish' or make public the minutes of such a searching, sprawling, intimate, in many ways, conversation. People trust in one another and confide many things: about the project in the making, for one, which will surely change greatly before it comes to fruition. But invitees also often open up on the conditions of their organisations, on their own matters of precarity, on why or why not they feel in a position to look towards the future of your project. You don't want to have the sense of holding people to their word. Things become too officious, too invasive then.

—What we do, though, is try to make a short-hand internal report for the artist–producer duo. For them to reflect on points made, opportunities shared, names of references announced. We must remember that, although the Work Sessions are conducted over ample time, they're a rush for

the people at the head of the table! There are many things to think of, putting your best foot forward, presenting all of the aspects of the project, keeping time, moving from the artistic and conceptual parts of the project to speak about the needs of the project, making sure everyone has been involved, has spoken, etc. So, it's great to have someone from the On & For team to help them remember the intricacies of things by discreetly making notes. But this is, indeed, a far step from making the discussions public.

—On the notion of openness, I think we have to reflect on generosity too. I mean, it's quite something that all of these professionals clear their very busy schedules to sit together, to make time, for a project that doesn't yet exist—and may never! I'm talking about everyone involved, from the artists and producers to the institutional curators or independent programmers. Everyone who is involved is investing time. It's not for money, either. Nobody is paid to be at the Work Sessions.

—Yes, that's true. But we've been discussing how it's not fair to ask independents to participate in such events for free. And we really want to take that on board for the next sessions, assuring a fee for those who don't have a salary.

Now, after 10 Work Sessions editions since 2014, 5 events during the first term and 5 in the second, can we speak of concrete results? What impact have the Work Sessions had on productions?

—The impact of the events themselves is tricky to quantify, as partnerships and investments don't appear immediately but present themselves over time. That said, I think we have all had concrete examples of co-production arising from the Work Sessions, right? The offers of support have manifested in various ways: residencies, exhibitions, commissions, invites even to pitch at industry events... Remind me, how many projects have been supported?

—If we count the upcoming Work Sessions at Visions du Réel in April 2021, since its inception in 2014, On & For has supported 36 projects with an invitation to participate in the

Work Sessions and in the set-up of the roundtables. Of the 36 titles, 15 have been produced and distributed, only a couple of projects have fallen by the wayside or the project ideas have manifested in other forms, and the rest are at various stages of development and production. Keep in mind that, of the total 36 projects, 16 of them were participants of this 2018–2021 project.

—We are, in any case, always hesitant to make claims and quantify things. I mean, of course, we provide the set-up for people to get together. But it's the artists and producers, the allure of their projects, the depth of their projects, that really gets people invested in them. The credit is all their own.

—Certainly! However, along the way, we've been gathering testimonies from artist–producer duos in order to be able to report on the project's 'outcomes'. Fortunately, we do have feedback that can be used to evaluate the knock-on effects of the roundtables, and helps us report on the 'successes' of the initiative. Apart from the necessity to deliver an evaluation of such project initiatives for our financiers, we are also just delighted that things arise from the Work Sessions, especially when the projects that we've met along the way come to fruition. After all, that's what we do this for: for artists' moving image to be supported, created, and shown.

The current edition is called On & For Production and Distribution. Why did you decide to highlight 'Distribution' in this second edition of On & For?

—When proposing a second edition, we didn't want to end up in merely a kind of copy-paste situation from one round of the project to the next. In any case, you always have to be striving for 'innovation' when you are applying for such publicly funded grants. You wouldn't be awarded funding for exactly the same project twice. Which is another topic—as it can't be presumed that after one European-funded collaborative project of two years (2014–2016) the field of AMI is strengthened and set for a prosperous future, nor a second, or third, or fourth project for that matter. But that's a far more expansive issue, which can't be resolved today!

—With the first project, we were really just scratching the surface in terms of thinking about and supporting the field of AMI-production. But one has to keep evolving. And continuity is likewise important, otherwise the first project would have been but a drop in the ocean. No, we decided to reapply with the Work Sessions model again, and, as with last time, create a programme of discursive events that would be open to all. Then, in terms of points of focus, we thought that the natural evolution was to shine a light on distribution. In our first term, we did look at distribution in relation to production and we wanted to take that forward: we wanted to explore what distribution is and may look like for such films as we make. Simply, we wanted to feel out new modes of distribution, and feel out old modes, too, for that matter.

—I think there are very few answers to questions posed by distribution because very little research has been done on it. In production, those possibilities have been mapped out a little by On & For. The seminar on distribution (*Distribution Models*, 2019) was really great for this, if only for its focus on data gathering and sharing numbers, opening the books, on stage. Many people are guarded when it comes to talking about money; we are taught that it's rude, right? But this event put that attitude on its head in a 'bare all' kind of fashion, which was liberating for all involved, so it seemed. On our website, you'll find the audio registration of the event and the so-called 'DATA SWAP',[7] the graphic analysis of the figures that were gathered and shared. You can check out the presentations and the 'hard matter' if you're interested.

—'Hard matter'?

—Yes, the numbers. That's how Natalie Gielen refers to figures and funds in her essay, 'In Between the Cracks', on the event in Lofoten (Symposium, 2019). I liked the expression!

—Returning to why we expanded our project to think of dissemination, it was also a concern that's linked to the educational side of things; that became apparent through our teaching positions. As teachers, we've noticed that distribution is not really discussed or handled in an educational context. At school, you can learn how to make

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The DATA SWAP was a discussion based on a composite of information on the workings of various distribution organisations that was gathered by questionnaire and compared on graphic slides.

a film: from exploring its concept to its finishing touches, with the support of technicians. But everything that comes afterwards is actually not discussed.

—Yes, agreed. The Dummies workshop series held in Brussels—*Production for Dummies* and *Distribution for Dummies*—is like a gift from above because it offers a crash course in the knowledge that's lacking in our education systems.

Before we depart, we have talked about how On & For started, but maybe we can try to land, briefly, also on why you initiated On & For and continue to be at the wheel?

—Why? Well, that was actually (just) because we work so intrinsically 'internationally', which is rather unexpected for a small organisation perhaps and, in addition, quite invisible to people involved in policy. We wanted to make that somewhat explicit, because today it is thought that (only or mostly) the large institutions are the international ambassadors.

—To pick up on being at the wheel, well, there are many benefits from leading a project, as you can steer things in an interesting direction. But it also means you have all of the responsibility. So if agreements aren't being met, you need to often run after people in order to make sure they fulfil their promises, abide by the rules, and so on. That's the downside. However, if you find the right partners, you shouldn't have that problem. The ambition is to work with others who bring ideas to the table, who are eager to curate and host On & For events in their national contexts, and who'll be ambassadors for the project. Those are the partners that you'd better connect with, ones that want to pull their weight and learn together. To initiate such a project, it's a big undertaking—there's no denying that! But it's about bringing fresh ideas and energy into your operations. It's motivated by the excitement of doing something out of the ordinary, something extra, something expansive, something that is bigger than just yourself, in your own organisation and on your own little patch of land. It's about learning, about sharing, about scratching surfaces, and putting in as much

effort as you can to go in depth. Such a project gives us the opportunity to open outwards, to have colleagues, build partnerships, and create lasting relationships... I'll be quite sad to see us shrink again, to say goodbye to all of that.

I guess that whether On & For continues to move forward also depends on future financing?

—It all depends on us *applying* again for the finance, certainly. But I think that we need to stop and take stock first...

—For the future, it is also a question of what will happen with European events—you know, the criss-crossing over borders for talks, symposia, screenings, exhibitions that was such a given before this year's health crisis. Such events are at the basis of On & For's operations to date; events where people come together and share their knowledge from all corners of Europe. That 'coming together' is now somewhat difficult and limited—and we do imagine that to be the case only for a limited amount of time. But there is also an unlimited issue that resonates: the environmental issue, and the growing consciousness in us—at Auguste Orts—of the ecological impact of such gatherings.
In general, we want to limit our participation in the kind of events that just fly people in from all over for one-day seminars or such. We are, or seriously aim to be, conscious in our own travels, in our own productions, and so the formula of On & For should reflect this ideology too.

—Times have changed—I mean, the thinking and consciousness in relation to environmental matters—since we started On & For. In the European funding terminology, our main 'priority' was/is to be 'transnational' at our core. Only now, along with most of the planet, we have been surfing the digital wave of 2020, rolling into 2021—hosting meetings, workshops, even Work Sessions (2020, Brussels) online. And we need time, now, to reflect on the benefits of that. The space that the online environment has opened up: a relatively clean travel through the airwaves.

—And to what effect? Well, socially, all of the informal moments that surround lectures, screenings, roundtables, etc., are evidently flattened by the screen—you know, you're talking to a mirror, talking into what can feel like the void. It can be quite disconcerting. And we miss, deeply, all of the unprogrammed, off-script moments of connections with our peers, with old alliances, with new friends. However, the core aim: to generate and share knowledge on a particular subject from different perspectives, hearing from different modes and conditions of working, has been possible. Investments of time, of thinking together, of sharing one's knowledge have been made—only, now, they are made in our independent spheres, digitally. And, if you look at the last Work Sessions event, we have had participants from outside of Europe too, from Colombia, Canada, Mexico, all of whom we could never have dreamed of inviting on our small travel budgets if the situation had been, as planned, live. Thus, we have to weigh up the pros and cons of what we've learned from this situation of being 'locked-down' and our project being shook up.

—Yes, the agitation has been interesting! Now, I'm curious to see where the pieces land. There are so many interesting paths still to explore with On & For. The Work Sessions formula is certainly a hit. There simply aren't enough situations that support AMI projects in such a way, in the modified film-pitch form. But regarding the public discursive events, I feel that by gathering and sharing data, and talking about what the facts tell us, we have been working towards producing content or at least a level of discourse that discusses concrete matters, rather than talking in meta terms. Talking 'numbers' may sound technical or aloof, but actually, it's like pulling up your sleeves and really getting into something. Sharing the 'hard matter', which differs per subject, per organisation, per individual, you can start to have an indication of what's *really* going on in production or distribution, you are on the outside looking in, instead of being only in your own bubble, you can start to see trends and think through ways to divert certain laid-out courses, think towards new ways of doing...

—Sure, but I'll harp back to the notion of data gathering being a professional study in its own right, whereas we are more focused on creating the platforms for discourse through hosting events, which will hopefully empower people, equip them with knowledges, so they can instigate changes. It's equally important that we keep on inviting those who work with funds to such events, administrators, policy makers, and such, as the channels of learning and communication must remain open and flowing, in both directions.

—Another tangible outcome that I think we can be proud of is making a priority of presenting knowledge to starters, who can be overlooked when we are only talking to those who are making things: from making films to making film funds. We need to remember to keep sharing with those who are 'in the making' themselves: students, fresh graduates, or even just artists who are experimenting for once with moving image. They also give us energy. The questions they pose stop us from taking things for granted; they make us think, be aware.

—Perhaps what I'm about to add appears to look backwards, to old norms, but I'm excited about the future: about the prospect of getting together again with our colleagues, friends, meeting new people too; about going to the cinema to see the works that have been developed from the Work Sessions; to meet new initiatives that have sprouted up in parallel to the project.

—I think it's okay for us to imagine a socially *less* distant future! That's what we all need now, perspective.

—Yes, and one perspective to keep in mind is all of the people and organisations that have reached out to us, with an eagerness and curiosity to understand the mechanics of the project, perhaps with the will to be involved or set up something like-minded, or 'like-modelled', as the term was coined earlier. I mean, I had so many animated conversations with peers along the way, about the importance of such projects that create a 'peer group' for artists' moving image, and about the necessity to continue to nourish that; it would be a shame to let that sense of urgency, action, community slip away when I had the feeling that many people/

organisations wanted to join us, to strengthen the project, in some capacity or another.

—Indeed. We also could feel the relevance that the project seems to have in the wider audiovisual community, not just in Belgium but beyond, through the conversations had with project partners, associates, or even just audiences.

—I'd say *especially* audiences!

—Yeah, it's almost as if people forget that On & For is only a 'short-term' cooperative project, which lasts a maximum of 3 years. I mean, I often sense that people think of On & For as an institution! Something that's built to last.

—You mean, funded to last?

—Ha! Yes. Now, that would be a novel idea.

—Well, I'd say that there are foundations laid that are built to last. We just have to see how we'll add on to them. What will be our next building blocks?

—I guess we just need to get through to the other side of this health crisis, wrap up this project neatly, in terms of all of the administration, and then take some time to reflect together on possible futures. Although I'm putting on the breaks, at times, especially during these uncertain times, I feel that this is not 'the end'.

To be continued, thus!

Thank you to Jan Costers for his help with the transcription of the audio recording in Dutch.

Helena Kritis is a curator at WIELS Centre for Contemporary Art in Brussels and programmes for the experimental short film section at the International Film Festival in Rotterdam.

Rebecca Jane Arthur is a Brussels-based visual artist. Parallel to her artistic practice, she is project coordinator of On & For, co-founder of the production and distribution platform elephy, and contributor to the online film agenda *Sabzian*.

Jan Costers has a Master's in Cultural Studies and completed an internship at Auguste Orts in 2020. He currently works as at the Leuven based student newspaper *Veto*.

In Between the Cracks

A crack. ‘A line on the surface of something along which it has split without breaking apart’, says the dictionary. ‘Something you can sneak through’, says Mike Sperlinger.

We’re sitting in a dark space with steep stairs, listening to the words of writer, professor and curator Mike Sperlinger.

We are artists, students who will become artists, academics, producers, programmers, curators, funders, and writers. And we are here to talk for two days about the production and financing of artists’ moving image.

We’re in an auditorium. A cinema space. Or both.

I’m here, amongst other reasons, because I have worked for the Belgian Contour Biennale, for the pilot edition of the European project On & For, for the Flemish artist-run production and distribution platform Auguste Orts, and because I work as a freelance writer, adviser and producer in the arts.

We’re in a school in the south of an island, the largest one in a group of islands. Earlier on, I sent a picture to a friend, showing (off) how utterly beautiful it is here, outside the auditorium.

May I have this dance?

It’s day one of the On & For symposium in September 2019, and Sperlinger introduces a synonym for crack: a gap—the one between the world, and thus the logic, of feature-length film, and that of visual arts. How not to fall in between those two as an artist creating moving image?

Obviously, no correct answers exist, but several openings, bridges or safety lines manifest themselves throughout a panel discussion with artist Dora García, artist/producer/educator

Natalie Gielen

Katja Eyde Jacobsen, artist/producer/writer Olivier Marboeuf, and producer—'just' producer—Anže Peršin.
The composition of the panel is already a statement on the hybrid nature of artists' moving image. Different players frequently combine different roles—often because of a lack of budget: artists become producers, curators produce works, etc. This combination of roles can be emancipating, leading to insights such as: Why not talk more about contracts? Why not introduce the logic of the artist in the administration?

Marboeuf likes to talk about the contract as a way of negotiating how to work together, of discussing the cultural capital of the work and adding poetry to the budget.
I'm thinking about all the contracts I've ever made, imagining a most welcome breach in these walls of paper. I'm also vividly reliving the time and effort it costs to collect all the necessary signatures via email. (Remember when it took you ten minutes to copy-paste your signature in a stubborn template?) Does the endless administration damage our creativity? (I'm not even going to bother answering that one.)

So what about these cracks between film and visual arts? According to Peršin, they create a certain privilege, making it possible to benefit from different worlds. Later, somebody will call this 'the dance with the funders'. Dora García does not stand up and boogie, but agrees. She has learned how to navigate in between disciplines, and in addition in between the academic world (a crucial funder of artistic research) and public funders. She has learned to speak different languages while moving in between symposia and exhibition spaces.

Sounds familiar. For a film I'm producing, I've tried to convince the Flemish film fund about the intrinsic artistic qualities of the work and the relevance of the medium. I've argued the broad and international scope to potential distributors, the social relevance to potential not-for-profit co-producers and the local relevance to municipal funders, while emphasising the political relevance to a potential audience of students. This is dancing: adjusting to the rhythm of film and to that of the visual arts, to the different needs of different funders and allies. And then: move forward.

Close the door

On the first evening of the symposium, the artists practise their project presentations for the Work Sessions.[1] Herman Asselberghs will be talking about his project with the working title *Film School Time*. 'Close the door', Asselberghs says. 'Put something on the table. Open up the world. (Stop time.)'

I pause from writing this text and gaze at my desk. There's a small object on it: a walnut. It transforms into a memory. A boat? An island? On my writing table?

The island we are gathering on in September 2019 is called Austvågøy. It's part of the Lofoten archipelago in the north of Norway. All these art professionals have travelled to the small fisherman's town Kabelvåg. We came there by planes and some more planes, perhaps a boat, then a car. We travelled all this way to meet and talk about artists' moving image. And why? Because there's an artist-run film school in Kabelvåg, taking part in the European project On & For? Because there's a travel budget provided by the EU, making meetings like this possible? Because this is an opportunity to exchange knowledge and network? Because we can?

I take the walnut, but I cannot eat it. So that's it: we need to open up hard matter before a crack can even exist.
Hard matter: applications, definitions, limitations. Funding, categories, templates. Always lacking time to stop and reflect on what we are doing. Time is money, even though we try to resist that idea. But at the end of summer, we travel to a remote group of islands to gather in a dark space in a school to reflect on how we do the work.

I remember the coffee breaks on the island. Talks with a kind, intelligent young woman from the Flemish arts administration. We agree it's important to talk. We also agree it's quite outrageous we've had to come all this way in order to do that. I don't think this is what Peršin meant with the privilege in between the gaps, but it sure felt like a strange and very questionable privilege to be there. Do we really need the lure of remote islands to meet and talk? Looking at the small but thick shell of the walnut in front of me, I think of a long list of artists and filmmakers who do not have the privilege to travel wherever they want whenever they want, lacking stamps,

1
See onandfor.eu for more event details.

visas, European passports. Rarely can they break through the bureaucratic system that keeps them far and away.
And now, in the midst of a pandemic, my writing table, too, becomes an island. To reach other lands, whether faraway or nearby, you need a strong, stable internet connection. A laptop. And some imagination.

But on the island, during the symposium, there is no talk of waves of contagion, social distancing or a virus. There are just the waves of the sea. Steep rocks in the distance: irregular, serrated, sharp. In the early morning, they seem grey with a pinkish glow; in the sunlight they become paler and smoother, while the shadows of the afternoon render them dark, carved. Often, they're barely visible in the rain and the island seems to float in a foggy mass.

On day two of the symposium, I end up at the funders' table because I'm there as a representative of Flanders Arts Institute, the platform in between the Flemish government and the arts sector. I'm sitting amongst agents from the Norwegian Arts Council, Creative Scotland, Arts Council England, Flanders Film Fund, Flanders Arts Administration and Creative Europe Norway. (Hi, I'm Natalie. Freelance this and this and that.) Just about as literal as dancing with the funders could be.

There's a lot of awareness at the table about what could be done better, such as improvements in application procedures. Often, they don't leave enough space for the nature of the artistic work to be rendered. In general, the group agrees on the urgency of connecting more to artistic practices: funders and artists sharing time and space. Also, there's an apparent need for exchange between different administrations on a European level, and even in between funding bodies on a national level. But, according to the agents, this can only be fulfilled when there's a top-down strategy, freeing up budget and working hours for these exchanges.

It's bittersweet, listening to a bunch of good intentions. We're sitting here because a handful of highly professional but small-scale and mainly artist-run organisations joined forces and obtained European funding to gather and exchange. Because they invited the funders to this table. Bottom-up. Which is great, but what does it say about our policy makers and the responsibility they assume?

Open up the world

We need cracks in between which we can work and move freely, but the fragmentation that comes along with them has its limits, leaking energy from smaller players.

I crush the shell of the walnut. Little pieces fall out, unevenly coloured, irregular, varying from the smoother texture of the kernel to the papery bits that serve as a partition. This is the essence.

Maybe that's what Olivier Marboeuf meant with introducing poetry in the budget: never lose sight of the core—the artists and their work, around which we gather on the island. How can we create a specific context that arises from their way of working, their artistic needs and the different shapes their practices take?

This question is not a new one of course. What we now call artists' moving image arises from a long tradition in which artists have worked on the verges of visual arts and cinema. Especially in Flanders, we can move rather freely in between these disciplines, as María Palacios Cruz writes in her essay 'Let me be your guide: Artists' Moving Image in Flanders'. But what is new, certainly in most Scandinavian and Western European countries, is the ever-rising pressure of professionalisation: an increase of the hard matter. A fragmented bureaucracy imposing different logics onto artists. And, sometimes, an instrumentalisation of art.

There's not just a noun, but also the verb 'to crack': to break without complete separation of the parts, says the dictionary. A warning against uniformity, without losing a complete sense of wholeness that the hopeless fragmentation of systems and means often causes. A new sense of togetherness when we open up our individual worlds.

A crack in time

Recently, I read *Underland*: *A Deep Time Journey* by Robert Macfarlane. Suddenly, there they are: tiny red figures, hands and legs spread out. They are known as the red dancers, painted with iron oxide powder on the walls of caves that were

once carved out by the current, two or three thousand years ago. The people who painted the figures were nomadic fishers and hunters-gatherers. ‘They must have lived short, heavy lives, probably with little opportunities for making art’, writes Macfarlane.[2] One of the most remote caves is actually situated on the Lofoten islands, about 130 kilometres from Kabelvåg. You can only reach it by boat, risking a notorious current, or by foot, passing the steep mountain ridge called the Lofoten Wall. Macfarlane chose the latter during winter. The people who made the paintings took enormous risks to reach the caves, he mentions. But his path is strenuous as well. He arrives at a place where two worlds meet: land and sea. And somehow, ages ago, people found an opening there—a crack in time: ‘The red is rough at the edges, flows into the rocks from which it emerges, faded by water and condensate, and all these circumstances—the fading, the weak light, my fatigue, my blinking eyes—make the figures come alive, changing shape on this many-sided canvas’.[3]

And it is a different crack in time—a symposium—that makes it possible for us to gather around the artists and their work in Lofoten: Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard, Zayne Armstrong, Duncan Marquiss, Dora García, Herman Asselberghs, Lene Berg, Deborah Stratman, Knut Åsdam, Dan Ward, and all the others that are present. In between soap operas and community building, Artificial Intelligence and animal behaviour, film students and teachers, socialist feminism, in between black, white and colour, in between recording and inventing, shifting in between forms and switching in between speed and mood, ‘multi-voiced, multi-formed, and multi-layered’.[4]

An island. An opening of possibilities. And in between, we work. In between, we meet.

2
Robert Macfarlane, *Benedenwereld. Reizen in de diepe tijd*, (Amsterdam: Athenaeum—Polak & Van Gennep, 2019), p. 268. Quote translated from Dutch into English by the author.

3
Ibid. p. 290. Quote translated from Dutch into English by the author.

4
Quoting a hand-out on Herman Asselberghs’s *Film School Time* Work Session during the symposium.

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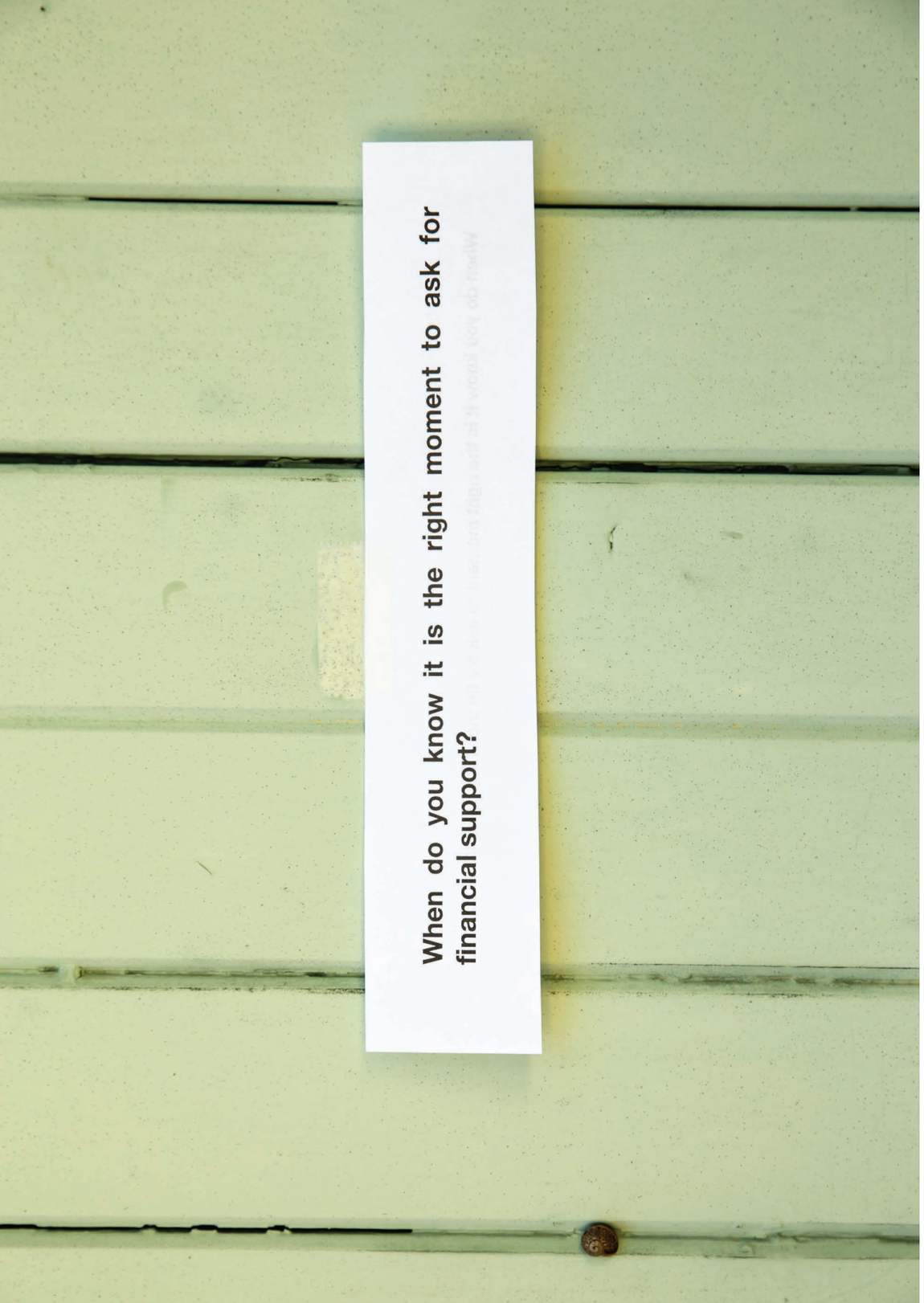

Look at and Look After Infrastructures

I have written a lot about On & For Production (later, Production *and* Distribution). However, a comparatively small part of that writing made it into publications. Most of it was produced for applications or within the daily working routine. In setting up frameworks that are outside of anticipated moulds and which don't reproduce the usual roles, expectations and formats, one ends up spending an incredible amount of time describing what the initiative is, or is not. As exhausting and repetitive as this writing might be, it was absolutely needed to bring the project forward and to make methods that operate between established schemes intelligible. Having said that, the only way in which I can write about On & For yet again, and if this text is to permeate any gearing libido, it is by deliberately departing from the descriptive kind of writing that would aim *again* at drawing the singularity of what we have been doing. I would like to write instead about how I think about On & For now, or more precisely, about why I find myself going back to that experience now—after years and during the pandemic—in relation to a series of more general concerns. And still, if I took a few lines to mention what I would *not* write—the administrative, nerdy, sector-oriented, functional text—it is because this kind of almost-disembodied type of writing is part of a back-office, unsexy invisible labour that I believe is a real catalyst for change, and more so now. It is a form of maintenance that is as looked down on as it is becoming increasingly crucial.

The pandemic and the lockdown were experiences of radical discontinuity at many levels. In the crudest sense of the word, they literally brought about the interruption of lives, but in a more general sense, they felt like a momentary cut from life as we knew it. Next to the harshness, however, a sense of possibility opened up. In the wake of the first lockdown, we spoke of it as a crack that could be the occasion for change. Along those optimistic lines, the likes of Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

Anna Manubens

interpreted the events as proof that capitalism was no longer inevitable.[1] A year later it seems impossible, or even naïve, to conjure up that feeling again. At the antipodes of change, what we are witnessing now is rather the perfectioning of neoliberalism, in an accomplishment of Klein's 'shock doctrine'.

In our sector, the claim for institutional renewal that had been part of the zeitgeist for a long while was brought back on the table as a top priority by the pandemic. Institutions plunged into deep self-assessment as they wondered what was left from their mission after their doors closed and their users no longer met. The urge was—and still is—to be *response-able*[2] and come up with meaningful ways to keep on being available and useful for art professionals and audiences. However, this kind of claim is hardly ever followed by a practice. Intentions usually dissolve when they hit practicability. There are very few practical examples, in comparison to the saturation of theoretical claims, that get into the mud of finding legal, administrative, methodological, economic and practical viability for structural change. Similarly, writing and lecturing about institutional renewal is encouraged and applauded while the details of its translation into material conditions and working environments remain largely invisible and rarely make it into the public sphere and debate.

I believe that if there is a possibility to go back to the now-fading sensation that at some point in recent events the conditions were there to welcome a difference, it will be through practicing what we reclaim. We are usually bestowed complete freedom in programming under the tacit condition that the hosting structure remains untouched. There are, therefore, reasons to suspect that regaining any form of political e/affect lies in being able to operate—or curate—at an infrastructural level. That is, to design and test alternative or reviewed infrastructures.

In a premonitory essay written in 2016, Lauren Berlant states: 'All times are transitional. But at some crisis times like this one politics is defined by a collectively held sense that a glitch has appeared in the reproduction of life. A glitch is an interruption within a transition, a troubled transmission. A glitch is also the revelation of an infrastructural failure.'[3] Glitching times bring

1
'El capitalismo ya no es inevitable' interview with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi by Marcelo Expósito in *Contexto y acción*, April 2020. Last accessed: 23/03/21

2
The hyphenated writing of the word 'responsible' as 'response-able' is taken from Donna Haraway.

3
Lauren Berlant, 'The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times' in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Nº34. (2016).

to the fore damaged but also damaging infrastructures whose nuisance might otherwise remain obfuscated and perpetuated. Recent events reveal dysfunctional infrastructures. A glitch is like a finger pointed at the infrastructure that hosts it (or is unable to host it); it is the symptom of its trouble. A way to process what just happened but also to think ahead is, to extract from Berlant's argument, the urgency to look at and look after infrastructures. In other words, to respond to the experience of radical discontinuity with an exercise of infrastructural maintenance, care, repair and updating. Such a take on things is also grounded in the acknowledgement that 'structures govern more than ideology', as Irit Rogoff put it.[4]

It is in thinking about examples of infrastructural scaffolding that I find myself going back to On & For as a tangible, concrete and practical exercise of infrastructural responsiveness. I am by no means suggesting that our modest initiative can bring responses to the massive structural failures that we are currently being confronted with, which would be cynical. I am thinking back about it in trying to gather examples of how to *institute*. That is, how to transform institutions into verbs, actions or behaviours instead of petrified forms. It is not as much about what On & For was, but about the kind of attitudes and the steps it required in order to develop. Their importance comes from the fact that they point back at wider issues such as the practicability of change or the need to restore agency to tasks like maintenance and administration that are often diminished as passive machinery.

We started in 2014 by raising a little bit of money to put together a prototype. Animated by the firm determination of surpassing the endless and repetitive conversation on the intersection between art and cinema, our aim was to practice an intuition. The idea was to create a professional framework that would no longer be defined as an intersection but as a space in and of itself that blends elements from both economies, modes of production, circulation and valuation. In a chapter of *What's the Use?*, Sara Ahmed builds on Heidegger's idea that a tool disappears through its use, to come to a statement that lies close to the above-quoted lines by Berlant. When things function as needed they vanish. It is their brokenness that reveals them. The experience of

4
Laura Herman, 'Bergen Assembly 2016' in *Metropolis M*, September 2016. Last accessed: 23/03/21

uselessness is that of potential transformation.[5] Use can be the unaware reproduction of functions through habit, but it can also be the grip on the material conditions for (re)action. On & For was grounded in the feeling that neither the working environment of art nor that of cinema were exactly *useful* for artists' films. It grew out of trying to come up with a better tool, one made from gathering pieces from useless ones. As its very name suggests, it was as important for the project to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge *on* production as it was to carve out a different infrastructural and practical space *for* production. Combining sharing and doing allowed for a very basic exercise of coherence consisting of practicing what you claim. The initial years were mostly about setting up different working conditions, about designing an infrastructure that eventually became of use. It is not coincidental that On & For was pulled together by Auguste Orts. This artist-run organisation has as its core mission the creation, improvement and shareability of production and distribution conditions for artists' films. Theirs is undoubtedly infrastructural work. They share with On & For the fact that they operate as supports; providing that which accompanies, sustains and keeps on making possible moving image practices.

Also as pandemic reflex or sequel, and as yet another symptom of the growing belief that the (only) way forward is in infrastructural imagination, I have been rereading *Support Structures*, the publication that Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade edited in 2010. In their own words, '*Support Structures* is a manual for what bears, sustains, props, and holds up. It is a manual for those things that encourage, give comfort, approval, and solace; that care for and provide consolation and the necessities of life. It is a manual for that which assists, corroborates, advocates, articulates, substantiates, champions, and endorses; for what stands behind, underpins, frames, presents, maintains, and strengthens. *Support Structures* is a manual for those things that give, in short, support.' I think of On & For as something that could be included in such a manual and I couldn't agree more with Condorelli and Wade's observation that 'the work of supporting might traditionally appear as subsequent, unessential, and lacking value in itself'. If their research and editorial compilation and tool acquires renewed relevance in these, our gloomy times, it is because it has the political agenda 'to restore attention to one of the neglected, yet crucial modes through which we apprehend and shape the world.'[6]

5
Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

Production is a support structure. Developing working environments to bring forward artistic practices means creating, adapting and updating support structures. It is a form of systemic care and maintenance. However, most of the gestures and tasks associated with this care fall into the same invisibility and lack of recognition as that of reproductive labour or administrative labour. I would agree with Andrea Franke when she states that 'for revolution to happen we need administrators on our side'.[7] We tend to imagine administration, institutions as well as production circuits and modes, as impenetrable machinic entities that govern life in spite of everything else while they are actually made of a sum of (human) acts and decisions, or the lack of them. If there is still a little bit of margin left to respond to faulty infrastructures, it will be through wrestling with finding material and practical viability for structural reimagination.

6
Support Structures, ed. by Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009).

7
Andrea Franke, 'Bureaucracy's Labour: The Administrator as Subject', in *Parse Journal*, Spring 2017. Last accessed: 23/03/21

Anna Manubens is an independent curator and producer based in Barcelona with a preference for hybrid roles at the intersection between exhibitions, research, public programmes, project development and institutional analysis or imagination.

Work Sessions

On & For curates and hosts roundtable events that are called Work Sessions. These events provide a platform for artists to share a project in development with a small group of invited professionals in order to receive conceptual and strategic feedback and to connect with prospective co-producers and other potential project collaborators.

Together with five or so carefully selected individuals per table, the Work Sessions convene with the artist and producer at the head of each table. They lay out the concepts and needs of their project over the course of a couple of hours and invite reflections, feedback and interest from the others at the table.

Depending on the needs of the project at hand, the Work Sessions invitees are sourced from the visual arts, live arts, audiovisual arts and film fields—artists, producers, curators, programmers, representatives of museums, private collections, residencies, festivals, broadcasting, and so forth.

Before each Work Session table commences, there is a collective moment of presentation where each selected artist will give a short presentation of their project. This allows all invitees to become familiar with each project before taking place at their assigned roundtable.

The Work Sessions are conceived as an adaptation of the cinema industry's film pitch. They welcome some conventions from the pitch, such as moments of collective presentation and encounters with industry professionals; however, they are unique in that the meetings are between individuals chosen for their potential interest in the project at hand, that each person who sits at the table is made familiar with the artist's work and ambitions prior to the event, and that each session asks for a substantial amount of care and time to be spent thinking together on each selected project.

Work session Projects

Psychic Island Participant in 2021, Visions du Réel edition (Nyon).	Babak Afrassiabi & Nasrin Tabatabai
Days Participant in 2019, Kabelvåg edition, accompanied by Lene Berg (NO-DE).	Zayne Armstrong & Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard
Speech (Oslo, chapter 2) Participant in 2020, Brussels edition online, supported by Nordland School of Arts and Film (NO) & osloBIENNALEN (NO).	Knut Åsdam
Film School Time Participant in 2019, Kabelvåg edition, accompanied by Marie Logie of Auguste Orts (BE).	Herman Asselberghs
The City Participant in 2019, Visions du Réel edition (Nyon), accompanied by Katrien Reist of arp: (BE).	Rossella Biscotti
NSR Participant in 2020, Brussels edition online, accompanied by Vincent Stroep of Escautville (BE).	Wim Catrysse
Ghosty Party Participant in 2020, Brussels online edition, accompanied by Marie Logie of Auguste Orts (BE) and Fanny Virelizier of Figure Project (FR).	Manon de Boer & Latifa Laâbissi
One (2020) Participant in 2019, Brussels edition, accompanied by Marie Logie of Auguste Orts (BE).	Anouk De Clercq
Amor Rojo Participant in 2019, Kabelvåg edition, accompanied by Eva González-Sancho of osloBIENNALEN (NO).	Dora García
The Signal Line Participant in 2021, Visions du Réel edition (Nyon).	Myriam Lefkowitz & Simon Ripoll-Hurier
Failles Participant in 2019, Brussels edition, accompanied by Sven Augustijnen for Cobra Films (BE).	Annik Leroy
Interviewing an Animal in its Own Language Participant in 2019, Kabelvåg edition, accompanied by Ben Cook of LUX (UK).	Duncan Marquiss
Let us flow! Participant in 2019, Brussels edition, accompanied by Adam Pugh of Tyneside Cinema (UK).	Sophio Medoidze
Goodwill Moon Rock Project Participant in 2020, Brussels edition online.	Santiago Reyes Villaveces & Ilona Jurkonytė
To a God Unknown Participant in 2019, Visions du Réel edition (Nyon), accompanied by Dominic Paterson of The Hunterian (UK).	Margaret Salmon
Kālā Pānī: Missive III Participant in 2019, Brussels edition, accompanied by María Palacios Cruz of LUX (UK).	Alia Syed

Programme Summary

On & For Events 2018–2021

Event Glossary

The Case Study has adapted between iterations, most often taking the form of a public seminar consisting of both a screening and talk with artists and their producers. But at its heart, it remains an activity driven towards sharing work and knowledge with students, artists, filmmakers, producers, programmers and enthusiasts alike and opening out into a horizontal conversation with the audience.

The *Dummies* Workshops are back-to-basics informal and informative gatherings that demystify 'behind-the-scenes' activities in AMI for students, graduates, and emerging artists' moving image makers. There have been two such events, fittingly on *Production* and *Distribution*, which tackled the basics of production and offered a general overview of distribution landscapes, sharing knowledge about the different stages of these processes through presentations, case studies, and debate.

Production Models & *Distribution Models* are seminars that invite representatives of production or distribution platforms to present their practices, describe their working methods with the aid of practical examples, share data, and open up to the public for questions and debate.

The Symposium is a one-day event on artists' moving image production, presentation, dissemination, and the future of the field with panel discussions and presentations by artists, academics, producers, festival programmers and curators.

The Work Sessions are curated roundtable meetings for artists to share projects in development with a small group of invited professionals in order to receive strategic feedback and to connect with prospective co-producers or other project collaborators. For a more in-depth understanding you can refer to page 143 of this publication.

26 September 2018 — Kaunas Artists' House, Kaunas — Screening & Talk — Kaunas — 2018

A talk given by Louis Henderson and a screening of *Sunstone* (2018) by Filipa César and Louis Henderson.

27 September 2018 — Kaunas Artists' House, Kaunas — Screening — Kaunas — 2018

A screening of two films that were supported by On & For Work Sessions: *For Now* (2017) by Herman Asselberghs and *Crippled Symmetries* (2015) by Beatrice Gibson.

15 November 2018 — CINEMATEK, Brussels — Case Study — Brussels — 2018

For this edition artist Alex Reynolds, a previous On & For Work Session participant, was in conversation with producer Anna Manubens. Screenings: *Ver Nieve* (2016) and *Eiqui Chegan Os Meus Amores* by Alex Reynolds.

12 April 2019 — Visions du Réel, Nyon — Artists' Work Sessions — Nyon — 2019

The selected projects were *To a God Unknown* by Margaret Salmon and *The City* by Rossella Biscotti.

12 April 2019 — Visions du Réel, Nyon — Roundtable — Nyon — 2019

This event formed part of the *Doc & Art* programme developed by Visions du Réel in collaboration with On & For, wherein four producers shared knowledge on production and distribution in the fields of artists' moving image and cinema. Moderator: Adam Pugh (Tyneside Cinema, UK). With the participation of Corinne Castel (Les Volcans, FR), Marie Logie (Auguste Orts, BE), Dominic Paterson (The Hunterian, UK), Katrien Reist (arp:, BE).

25 April 2019 — Beursschouwburg, Brussels — Work Sessions — Brussels — 2019

The selected projects were *Let us flow*! by Sophio Medoidze, Failles by Annik Leroy, *One* by Anouk De Clercq, and *Panopticon Letters: Missive I*; *Meta Incognita*: *Missive II*; *Kālā Pānī*: *Missive III* by Alia Syed.
With the additional support of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF).

26 April 2019 — Beursschouwburg, Brussels — Distribution Models — Brussels — 2019

Moderator: Helena Kritis (Beursschouwburg, BE/IFFR, NL). With the participation of Sirah Foighel Brutmann (Messidor, BE), María Palacios Cruz (LUX, UK), Diana Tabakov (Doc Alliance Films, CZ), Niels Van Tomme (ARGOS, BE), Gerald Weber (sixpackfilm, AT), Theus Zwakhals (LIMA, NL).
With the additional support of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF).

Distribution for Dummies — Brussels — 2019

Symposium — Kabelvåg — 2019

Funding Workshop — Kabelvåg — 2019

Funding Roundtable — Kabelvåg — 2019

Work Sessions — Kabelvåg — 2019

26 April 2019 — ARGOS, Brussels

Moderator: María Palacios Cruz (LUX, UK). Presentations by Laurence Alary (ARGOS, BE) and Kim Vanvolsom (Atelier Graphoui, BE).
With the additional support of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF).

02 September 2019 — Nordland School of Arts and Film, Kabelvåg

Moderators: Knut Åsdam (NKFS, NO), Benjamin Cook (LUX, UK), Mike Sperlinger (Oslo Academy of Fine Arts, NO). With the participation of Ilona Jurkonytė (Kaunas IFF, LT), Olivier Marboeuf (Spectre Productions, FR), Anže Peršin (Stenar Projects, PT), Jean-Pierre Rehm (FIDMarseille, FR), Peter Taylor (Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, UK), and the artist/filmmakers Lene Berg, Dora García, Katja Eyde Jacobsen, Deborah Stratman, and Dan Ward.

03 September 2019 — Nordland School of Arts and Film, Kabelvåg

The workshop staged a meeting point with various funding organisations for art and film from different countries in Europe in order to think together and discuss the future of AMI funding. Moderator: Mike Sperlinger (Oslo Academy of Fine Arts, NO). With the participation of Arts Council Norway, Creative Europe Culture Desk Norway, Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Flanders Audiovisual Fund, Flanders Arts Institute, Departement Cultuur Vlaanderen.

03 September 2019 — Nordland School of Arts and Film, Kabelvåg

European funding organisations met with artists, producers and distributors to discuss the needs of the field of artists' moving image.
Moderator: Benjamin Cook (LUX, UK). With the participation of Arts Council Norway, Creative Europe Culture Desk Norway, Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Flanders Audiovisual Fund, Flanders Arts Institute, Departement Cultuur Vlaanderen.

03 September 2019 — Nordland School of Arts and Film, Kabelvåg

The selected projects were *Days* by Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard and Zayne Armstrong, *Film School Time* by Herman Asselberghs, *Amor Rojo* by Dora García and *Interviewing an Animal in its Own Language* by Duncan Marquiss.

27 September 2019 University of Kaunas, Kaunas

Moderator: Ilona Jurkonytė (Kaunas IFF, LT). With the participation of Mindaugas Bundza (Chief of Staff, Lithuanian Council for Culture, LT), Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė (Lithuanian National Gallery of Art Chief Curator, LT), Audrius Kuprevičius (Film Production Department, Lithuanian Film Center, LT), Asta Vaičiulytė (Curator, Contemporary Art Centre, LT), Dagnė Vildžiūnaitė (Producer, Just a Moment, LT), and the artists/filmmakers Lene Berg, Len Murusalu, Romana Schmalisch and Robert Schlicht.

Symposium
Kaunas
2019

27 September 2019 Kaunas Cultural Center, Kaunas

A screening of *False Belief* (2019) by Lene Berg and a subsequent artist talk, moderated by Ilona Jurkonytė (Kaunas IFF).

Artist Film in Focus
Kaunas
2019

28 September 2019 Kaunas Cultural Center, Kaunas

A screening of two works by previous On & For Work Session participant Beatrice Gibson: *I Hope I am Loud When I'm Dead* (2018) and *Two Sisters Who Are Not Sisters* (2019).

Screening
Kaunas
2019

28 September 2019 Kaunas Cultural Center, Kaunas

A screening of previous On & For Work Session participants Robert Schlicht and Romana Schmalisch's film *Labour Power Plant* (2019) and a subsequent artist talk, moderated by Ilona Jurkonytė (Kaunas IFF).

Artist Film in Focus
Kaunas
2019

01 February 2020 Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon

In this edition, *From Scratch to Film*, artist Manon de Boer was accompanied by curator Rita Fabiana (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, PT) and programmer Nuno Lisboa (Doc's Kingdom, PT). Screenings: *Presto, Perfect Sound* (2006), *Two Times 4'33"* (2008), *Dissonant* (2010) and *An Experiment in Leisure* (2016) by Manon de Boer.

Case Study
Lisbon
2020

April–Nov. 2020 Online

The selected projects were *Ghost Party* by Manon de Boer and Latifa Laâbissi, *Speech* by Knut Åsdam, *NSR* by Wim Catrysse, and *Goodwill Moon Rock Project* by Santiago Reyes Villaveces and Ilona Jurkonytė.
With the additional support the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF).

Work Sessions
Online
2020

Production Models
Brussels
2020

08 September 2020 Online

Moderator: María Palacios Cruz (Elías Querejeta Zine Eskola, ES). With the participation of Leonardo Bigazzi (Lo schermo dell'arte, IT), Mason Leaver-Yap (KW Institute for Contemporary Art, DE), Marie Logie (Auguste Orts, BE), Anže Peršin (Stenar Projects, PT), and Reem Shilleh & Mohanad Yaqubi (Subversive Film, BE/PS).
With the additional support the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF).

Production for Dummies
Brussels
2020

17 November 2020 Online

Moderator: Alice Lemaire (Michigan Films, BE). Presentations by Andrea Cinel (ARGOS, BE) and Ellen Meiresonne (Atelier Graphoui, BE).
With the additional support the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF).

SUPERLUX Resources
Online
2020–2021

Nov. 2020–April 2021 LUX Scotland, Glasgow

With the participation of Jenny Brady, Jamie Crewe, Shama Khanna, Myriam Mouflih, María Palacios Cruz, Adam Pugh, Morgan Quaintance, Rhea Storr, and Michelle Williams Gamaker.

Case Study
Online
2020–2021

Dec. 2020–Jan. 2021 LUX, London

This edition focused on the work of artist Jamie Crewe. Adapted to an online performance-lecture, the artist discusses personal and working methodologies, inspirations and concerns. Screening: *PEOPLE HAVE COME* (2020) by Jamie Crewe.
With the additional support of Art Fund.

Exhibition
Online
2020–2021

Dec. 2020–March 2021 LUX, London

The exhibition presented *Captioning on Captioning* (2020) by Louise Hickman and Shannon Finnegan, and *Silence* (2020) by Nina Thomas, two new moving image works by d/Deaf artists, commissioned as part of an initiative to explore access in AMI, 'not as an afterthought, but as a creative impetus which does not presume sighted or hearing audiences' (LUX).

Roundtable
Online
2021

20 April 2021 Kunstnernes Hus Kino, Oslo

A series of videos on the distribution of moving image works in the Norwegian context culminated in an online roundtable discussion. Moderator: Mike Sperlinger (Oslo Academy of Fine Arts, NO). With the participation of Lene Berg & Mariken Halle

(Jack Film Agency, NO), Silja Espolin Johnson (Kunstnernes Hus Kino, NO), Nicolas Siepen (Arctic Moving Image Festival, NO) and Anne Lajla Utsi (International Sámi Film Institute, NO).

21 April 2021 Visions du Réel, Nyon

This event formed part of the *In Between* programme developed by Visions du Réel in collaboration with On & For. The selected projects are *Psychic Island* by Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi and *The Signal Line* by Myriam Lefkowitz and Simon Ripoll-Hurier.

Artists' Work Sessions Online 2021

Colophon

On & For Production and Distribution is initiated by Auguste Orts (BE) in collaboration with Kaunas International Film Festival (LT), LUX/LUX Scotland (UK), and Nordland Kunst- og Filmhøgskole (NO). With the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Website	onandfor.eu
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LUX/LUX Scotland	Kitty Anderson, Ben Cook, María Palacios Cruz, Nicole Yip
Nordland Kunst- og Filmhøgskole	Knut Åsdam, Lene Berg, Katja Eyde Jacobsen
Texts	Rebecca Jane Arthur, Jenny Brady, Jamie Crewe, Shama Khanna, Nina de Vroome, Natalie Gielen, Maxime Gourdon, Ilona Jurkonytė, María Palacios Cruz, Anna Manubens, Rachel Somers Miles, Niels Van Tomme, Jue Yang
Editor	Rebecca Jane Arthur
Editorial Assistant	Elizabeth Dexter
Proofreader	Dominique De Groen
Work Sessions Project Images	Front cover order of appearance: *Psychic Island*, Babak Afrassiabi & Nasrin Tabatabai *Days*, Zayne Armstrong & Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard

Speech (Oslo, chapter 2), Knut Åsdam
Film School Time, Herman Asselberghs
The City, Rossella Biscotti
Outpost, Wim Catrysse (production still)
Ghost Party, Manon de Boer & Latifa Laâbissi
One, Anouk De Clercq

Back cover order of appearance:
Let us flow! Sophio Medoidze (production still)
Goodwill Moon Rock Project, Santiago Reyes Villaveces & Ilona Jurkonytė (production still)
To a God Unknown, Margaret Salmon
Kālā Pānī: Missive III, Alia Syed
Failles, Annik Leroy (production still)
Interviewing an Animal in its Own Language, Duncan Marquiss
Love with Obstacles, Dora García
The Signal Line, Myriam Lefkowitz & Simon Ripoll-Hurier

Maxime Gourdon & Juliette Le Monnyer p. 24, p. 32, p. 38, p. 44, p. 62, p. 74, p. 78, p. 100, p. 128, p. 136 — Dummies Artwork

Jona Kleinlein p. 29, p. 85, p. 87, p. 111, p. 113, p. 115, p. 117
Anna Meiners p. 97, p. 99
Vytautas Paplauskas p. 109
Pedro Pina p. 17, p. 77, p. 95, p. 119
Rémi Rupprecht p. 61, p. 81, p. 83
Bo Vloors p. 19, p. 23, p. 31, p. 41, p. 43, p. 59, p. 123, p. 125, p. 141 — Event Photographers

Caroline Wolewinski assisted by Louise Serlet — Graphic Design

Graphius — Printer

With the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union

Thank you

Auguste Orts would very much like to thank Rebecca Jane Arthur for her inspired and inspiring work—above and beyond the call—on the 2018–2021 edition of On & For Production and Distribution.

Special Thanks

Kitty Anderson, Knut Åsdam, Herman Asselberghs, Sven Augustijnen, Boris Belay, Lene Berg, Kristina Bliznec, Ben Cook, Maria Bratt, Jan Bull, Jan Costers, Jordi De Beule, Manon de Boer, Anouk De Clercq, Pepa de Maesschalck, Milena Desse, Elizabeth Dexter, Dave Driesmans, Lieselot Everaert, Katja Eyde Jacobsen, Edvart Falch-Alsos, Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) (An Feyfer), Ann Goossens, Kenneth Göran Sävenstad, Louisa Grane Larsen, Marin Håskjold, Gudrun Heymans, Victoria Holdt, Jurga Igarytė Liutvinskienė, Anongnat Jindana, Dr. Lolita Jablonskienė, Ilona Jurkonytė, Giedrė Kavaliūnaitė, Helena Kritis, Kunstnernes Hus Kino (Silja Espolin Johnson, Maria Fosheim Lund, Leonie Merkl), Marie Logie, Marianne Løvdal, Enrique Mañas de la Mota, Anna Manubens, Eglė Nevedomskė, María Palacios Cruz, Adam Pugh, Rémi Rupprecht, Lou Schaub, Olga Sismanidi, Eve Smith, Mike Sperlinger, Asta Vaičiulytė, Agnė Valatkaitė, Visions du Réel (Émilie Bujès, Gudula Meinzolt, Teresa Mignolli, Madeline Robert), Nicole Yip

Thanks

Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard, Babak Afrassiabi, Ane Aguirre, ARGOS (Laurence Alary, Andrea Cinel, Stijn Schiffeleers, Niels Van Tomme), Zayne Armstrong, the Arctic Moving Image & Film Festival (Nicolas Siepen), Art Fund, Arts Council England (Fabio Altamura), Atelier Graphoui (Pierre de Bellefroid, Ellen Meiresonne, Caroline Nugues-Bourchat, Kim Vanvolsom), Beursschouwburg (Ava Hermans, Dimitri Geussens, Constance Neuenschwander, Laura Smolders, Gaëlle Zgumi), Leonardo Bigazzi, Rossella Biscotti, Daniel Blanga Gubbay, Bryony Bond, Jenny Brady, Mindaugas Bundza, Manuela Buono, John Canciani, Anja Casser, Corinne Castel, Antonio Cataldo, Wim Catrysse, CINEMATEK Brussels (Céline Brouwez, Mikke Somers), Olivia Cooper-Hadjian, Creative Europe culture desk Norway, Creative Scotland (Mark Thomas), Jamie Crewe, Cultural Council Norway, Ben De Raes, Federico Delpero Bejar, Sara Eliassen, Maggie Ellis, Mohamed El Mongy, Escautville

(Ulrike Lindmayr, Vincent Stroep), Oier Etxeberria, Ruth Estevez, Rita Fabiana, Shannon Finnegan, Pierre-Emmanuel Finzi, Flanders Arts Institute (Dirk De Wit, Lissa Kinnaer, Michael Lombarts), Department of Culture, Youth and Media of Flanders (Lyne Viskens), Sirah Foighel Brutmann, Cato Fossum, Dora García, Beatrice Gibson, Natalie Gielen, Eva González-Sancho, Paz Guevara, Mariken Halle, Stella Händler, Fatima Helberg, Louis Henderson, Louise Hickman, Ane Hjort Guttu, Helena Holmberg, Wouter Jansen, Kaunas Artists' House, Kaunas Culture Center, Shama Khanna, Zsuzsanna Kiraly, Carolin Kirberg, Jona Kleinlein, Vsevolod Kovalevskij, Lisa Marie Kristensen, Audrius Kuprevičius, Latifa Laâbissi, Mason Leaver-Yap, Robert Leckie, Myriam Lefkowitz, Alice Lemaire, Annik Leroy, LIMA (Rachel Somers Miles, Gaby Wijers, Theus Zwakhals), Maria Lind, Nuno Lisboa, Martí Manen, Leif Magne Tangen, Olivier Marboeuf, Diana Marincu, Duncan Marquiss, Sophio Medoidze, Anna Meiners, Piet Mertens, Daria Mille, Myriam Mouflih, Fleur van Muiswinkel, Len Murusalu, Helen Nisbet, Carolina Nöbauer, Christina Nord, Vytautas Paplauskas, Dominic Paterson, Anže Peršin, Pedro Pina, Fabrizio Popettini, Oksana Polyakova, Céline Poulin, Morgan Quaintance, Filipa Ramos, Jean-Pierre Rehm, Katrien Reist, Ann Carolin Renninger, Santiago Reyes Villaveces, Alex Reynolds, Simon Ripoll-Hurier, Ali Roche, Margaret Salmon, Rasha Salti, The International Sámi Film Institute (Anne Lajla Utsi), Eva Sangiorgi, Robert Schlicht, Romana Schmalisch, Florian Schneider, Nicole Schweizer, Reem Shilleh, Adam Smythe, Dirk Snauwaert, Rhea Storr, Deborah Stratman, Alia Syed, Diana Tabakov, Nasrin Tabatabai, Peter Taylor, Nina Thomas, Theresa Traorer Dahlberg, Achilles Van den Abeele, Dagnė Vildžiūnaitė, Fanny Virelizier, Pascale Viscardy, Bo Vloors, Simon Vrebos, Dan Ward, Gerald Weber, Axel Wieder, Michelle Williams Gamaker, Mohanad Yaqubi


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