MATERIALIZATION OF LIFE INTO ALERNATIVE ECONOMIES

Paris edition: towards project art and sustainability

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An introductory note

The first presentation of *The Materialization of Life into alternative economies* occurred in 1996 at the Printed Matter bookshop in New York and it was the first show I had ever curated. Five different artists were included with each representing a different notion of economy and distribution: Paula Hayes/Wild Friends for collaborative economy; Joseph Grigely for information economy; On Kawara for gift economy; Gordon Matta-Clark for business economy; and Mierle Laderman Ukeles for maintenance economy. My reasons were to offer another reading of Lippard's idea of conceptual art as a dematerialization of the art object and instead to suggest that for some it was not so much about the art object but about life, about a materialization of life. I had also just left my galleries and I was interested in methods of exchange and value that were an alternative to that of the gallery system.

In 2000 Carlos Basualdo invited me to present the show within the context of his exhibition *Worthless (Invaluable)* at the Museum of Modern Art – moderna galerija, in Ljubljana. There we recreated the exhibition but without the use of original documents. Everything was photocopied with the exception of Joseph's bulletin board which I recreated with various texts and cards that he had sent for that purpose. We continued to give away Paula Hayes' seed packets "Cats Dig Grass;" photocopies of Ukeles' *Maintenance Art Manifesto*; and recipes from the restaurant Food.

When Sandra Terdjman decided to show the traveling exhibition *Prospectus* she thought to present those works which concern economy. For this reason, it was logical that she would be interested in *The Materialization of Life into alternative economies*, but as it had been presented twice already, she asked if there could be a new presentation with new artists. Additionally, Emilie Parendeau, a young artist from Lyon, had already recreated two of my earlier works, *I take you, I trust you* and *Congratulations* as part of her *A Louer* series. Sandra knew of this and so she asked if Emilie could collaborate with us for this new formulation, to which I readily agreed.



This new Materialization of Life into alternative economies includes the following artists: Susanne Cockrell & Ted Purves, Claudia Fernandez, Thomas Gieger, Rick Lowe, and Superflex. One difference in this group from the earlier artists is that there is a greater emphasis on works which are concerned with duration over gesture. There is also more of a focus on contributions to others and sustainability, or the impossibility thereof. I believe that all of them, however, show a commitment to expanding the possibilities of art and an offering a new mode of exchange which allows for us to see and do things differently. It should also be noted that in this installation at Kadist, there were two wallpaper photographs of the first two presentations in New York and Ljubljana, a copy of the original Materialization of life catalogue for people to handle, and a stack of the current publication you hold in your hand for people to take away for free. There were no original documents on display as in New York, or even photocopies in vitrines as in Liubliana. This was in part due to the economy of the Kadist show itself as well as a decision of by the three of us to make clear that although we were presenting on the first two formulations, this new iteration was distinct in both content and form. I believe this limitation of not viewing original documents can be somewhat mitigated by the fact that nearly all the projects offer websites for additional information.

It should also be noted that for the current edition, Emilie has conducted an interview with me about the first show and the genesis of *The Materialization of life into alternative economies*. Excerpts from that conversation have been presented as an appendix to the current publication.

Thank you to all six of the artists for being willing to participate and to Emilie and Sandra for collaborating on this presentation.

Ben Kinmont Paris 2011

Susanne Cockrell & Ted Purves

Temescal Amity Works

Temescal Amity Works was a multi-year project (July 2004-January 2007) sited in the Temescal neighborhood of Oakland, California. We have lived in the neighborhood since 1999, and when we conceived of the project, we saw it as a way to localize our attention and to restructure our practice to work in a community that we were not external to. We considered the project to be a social sculpture that also drew upon historical models of mutual-aid societies, barn-raisings, DIY collectives and urban communism. We were (and still are) interested in how a specific community built relationships through personal and casual economies. To accomplish this, we created two interlocking programs, The Big Back Yard and Reading Room.

The Big Back Yard was built on the history of the neighborhood, an Italian-American, immigrant community planted with backyard citrus and fruit trees. Today, these trees still bear fruit while the culture that planted them has dwindled. Much of the harvest rots on the ground or is hauled away by the city. The Big Backyard was structured around a hand-built, steel pushcart that we made to collect surplus fruits and vegetables from neighborhood yards, which we gave away fresh or re-distributed in the forms of collective marmalades and fruit butters.

The Reading Room, located at a storefront space just off Telegraph Avenue, contextualized the ongoing experience of the Big Backyard through casual contact during open hours, as well as through a series of public events, film screenings and a small resource library. Over the course of the project, our storefront was open most weekends. We harvested and redistributed thousands of free oranges, lemons, apples, and other produce from local yards. We made and gave away many jars of marmalade, fig conserve and apple butter. We published a series of postcards documenting local groups and collectives, venerable fruit trees, and the local landscape. We also collaborated with the local merchants association to produce a neighborhood resource map that was given out to all of the residents of the neighborhood.

While the project could have continued indefinitely, in January of 2007, we decided to close the storefront. We had observed that the longer the storefront remained in operation, the projects identity as a service became more ingrained in the neighborhood's "consciousness"; which worked against our own interest in jump-starting a network, wherein residents would begin to circulate their backyard surplus amongst themselves.

www.fieldfaring.org



Claudia Fernandez

Proyecto Meteoro

Proyecto Meteoro works with art as a tool for creative development. It is a social project developed ten years ago by artist Claudia Fernandez in Mexico City.

Throughout a seven-year process we managed to build a complex and viable learning model to address the homeless children and teenagers that are living under conditions of extreme poverty. A densely populated city such as Mexico City was experiencing at the time, an accelerated growth among this population.

The idea is a *sui generis* school that operated in the street, straight where the homeless children were living. In the beginning, it was implemented as a mobile school with folding stools and tables that would travel throughout the city. As the project grew, a museum (Laboratorio de Arte Alameda) provided us with a classroom with all the necessary tools and services. A sociologist, a psychologist, an artist or designer and production personnel composed the team working for the project.

High profile artists and designers (Richard Moszka, Sebastian Romo, Taka Fernández, Ximena Fernández, Carla Fernández, Thierry Jeannot, and Keko, among others) were invited to participate in the creation of workshops to develop interesting and aesthetic objects, later shown in contemporary art museums and galleries. Art objects with a strong emotional component.

This project was supported mainly by artist Francis Alÿs. He donated the money received by him from the "Blue Orange Award". For the next seven years, he provided the necessary funds to support the entire project. We also received substantial support from Fundación / Colección Jumex, Fundación BBV Bancomer, Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo and Banorte Bank.



Along the seven years we were able to carry out the project, we worked with 210 people. 30% left the streets and incorporated into society, 60% remain living under the same conditions and 15 of them passed away.

In 2009 the project was suspended due to insufficient funding. None of our previous donors were able to continue with their support. The government of the city made some changes to their programs addressing this population inspired in our project; however, the original learning model was not rightfully adopted.

Proyecto Meteoro proved that through art and creative work, we can transform the most adverse contexts, even social conducts considered to be lost. We managed to create bridges between people belonging to different worlds and contexts in our humble attempt to modify the reality faced by our contemporary society.



Thomas Geiger

I want to be a millionaire

I want to become a millionaire is an ongoing performance, started in April 2010, in which I try to collect as much money from various people as possible. For each Euro the donator gets a sheet with a stamp, number and my signature. Each day I try to collect money by standing in public space with a sign in my hand and speaking to people. Besides that I try to collect money in other situations like exhibition-openings or visits at home.

The money is used to built-up a new work: Mark Pezinger Verlag, an experimental publishing house for artists` books, founded by Karsten Födinger and Thomas Geiger. We only work with the donated money and invest it in our publications, by this means each donator becomes a small part of Mark Pezinger Verlag. Till now we have realized 18 publications and three exhibitions with that money.

For people who would like to invest a bigger amount of money we can offer our sheets-books, with 10, 100, 500, 1000 or 2500 stamped and signed sheets.

www.thomasgeiger.com



I want to become a millionaire
Thank you / 1000000

www.twgeiger.de

Rick Lowe

Project Row Houses

Project Row Houses (PRH) is a neighborhood-based nonprofit art and cultural organization in Houston's Northern Third Ward, one of the city's oldest African-American communities. PRH began in 1993 as a result of discussions among African-American artists who wanted to establish a positive, creative presence in their own community. Artist and community activist Rick Lowe spearheaded the pursuit of this vision when he discovered the abandoned 1 1/2 block site of twenty-two shotgun-style houses in Houston's Third Ward. The shotgun houses became the perfect opportunity to pursue the creation of a new form of art. They had two key elements: 1) a beautiful form recognized by the renowned Houston artist Dr. John Biggers to be filled with architectural, spiritual, and social significance, and 2) a need for social action among the community to bring the project to life.

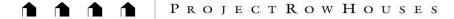
PRH is founded on the principle that art-and the community it creates-can be the foundation for revitalizing depressed inner-city neighborhoods. This principle was is in part based on the philosophy of German artist Joseph Beuys (1921 – 1986) who coined the phrase "social sculpture," which transformed the idea of sculpture as an art form into a social activity. Thus, the mission of Project Row Houses is to create community through the celebration of art, African American history and culture.

PRH has established programs that encompass arts and culture, neighborhood revitalization, low-income housing, education, historic preservation, and community service. These programs are inspired by the work of world renowned artist Dr. John Biggers (1924 – 2001) and his principles concerning the creation of effective communities, specifically:

- Art and creativity should be viewed as an integral part of life, exemplified in African traditions wherein art is interwoven into the very fabric of life through rituals and ceremony activities.
- Quality education is defined through impartation of knowledge and wisdom including understanding that is passed from generation to generation.
- Strong neighborhoods have social safety nets, woven by community to support community and to raise social responsibility
- Good and relevant architecture; meaning housing that should not only be well designed, but also make sense to preserve a community's historic character.

www.projectrowhouses.com





YOUNG MOTHERS RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM Program Overview

The purpose of the YMRP program is to assist low-income single mothers and their children to achieve independent, self-sufficient lives; with an emphasis on African American and Hispanic women. PRH seeks to provide an environment which will provide healthy, holistic experiences for young mothers and their children to call forth their positive energy, guiding them to become empowered, self confident, nurturing human beings, women, mothers, companions, employees and daughters.

Program Outcomes:

- 1. Residents will be able to identify with and appreciate their spiritual, sexual, creative, intellectual and physical selves.
- 2. Residents will demonstrate nurturing relationships within themselves and with their children and with other children.
- Residents will demonstrate life skills, career preparation/job skills, goal setting skills, home management skills and decision making/problem solving skills.
- Residents will document and periodically assess their personal objectives.

In order to realize these objectives, the program activities are interactive, experiential and cognitive.

Program Guidelines:

YMRP is <u>not</u> a women's shelter or transitional housing program. The program is specifically geared for young mothers who have ambitions and goals for themselves and their children, and who believe they would benefit from a structured program that will assist them in achieving their aspirations. Therefore, the goals of the YMRP program are to strengthen the following key areas:

- Academic Excellence
- Career Development
- Financial Security
- Parental Responsibility
- Emotional/Physical/Social/Spiritual Awareness

Program Benefits

- A weekly workshop series with topics on budget/finance, parenting, computer skills, and job readiness
- A program mentor, a community volunteer will be paired with each YMRP resident and be available as a support, a friend and advisor
- A fully furnished row house for mothers with up to two children.
- A structure whereby participants learn to establish healthy boundaries for the raising for their children

To-date, over forty (45) participants have "graduated" from the program. They include a college professor, artists, accountants, pharmacist, a law-yer, interior designer, teachers, bankers, business professionals.

YOUNG MOTHERS RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM Application Criteria

- Must be a low-income, single mother between the ages of 18 and 26.
- Applicants must have physical custody of one (1) or two (2) children under the age of 17; however, applicants with a maximum of three (3) children four (4) years of age or younger may be considered.
- 3. All children must be enrolled and regularly attending a public/private school, and daycare classes to qualify.
- 4. Willing to be employed either part-time or full-time.
- Income must be documented by independent sources such as Social Security benefits, employment pay stubs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Food Stamps award letters etc. and must be current at time of admission.
- Must be pursuing their education either part-time or full-time in two or four-year college or university and/or accredited training program. Applicant must also be in good academic standing with the college or university they are currently attending maintaining a grade point average of 2.5.
- 7. Must be willing to honor YMRP schedule program commitments, including weekly meetings and programs that support a year-long focus on self, family and community growth.
- 8. Project Row Houses Young Mothers Residential Program cannot accept women who are pregnant, suffering from mental illness, and drug/alcohol addiction.
- 9. Must be willing to interview with

- 10. Once an applicant has completed the interview process; she will be contacted via phone or email within 48 hours AND receive letter via mail concerning the status of her application.
- 11. An Occupancy Fee will be required by all participants. This fee will range between \$75 and \$250 per month, determined on a sliding scale basis, based on the participant's income and will cover the usage of the facility and utilities. The fee is revisited on a quarterly basis during the participant's stay in the program.

By signing below, the applicant acknowledges that she has read and understands the program description and application criteria.

Superflex SUPERGAS, Ltd.

Sustainable economy

In 1996-97 Superflex has collaborated with biogas engineer Jan Mallan to construct a simple, portable biogas unit that can produce sufficient gas for the cooking and lighting needs of an African family. The system has been adapted to meet the efficiency and style demands of a modern African consumer. It is intended to match the needs and economic resources that exist in small-scale economies. The orange biogas plant produces biogas from organic materials, such as human and animal stools. For a modest sum, a family will be able to buy such a biogas system and achieve self-sufficiency in energy. The plant produces approx. 3-4 cubic meters of gas per day of the dung from 2-3 cattle. This is enough for a family of 8-10 members for cooking purposes and to run one gas lamp in the evening.

The use of biogas has a number of advantages, providing a solution to energy demands that is both ecological as well as economical. Many international organizations concerned with environmental and social problems have for many years hoped to find a technologically sustainable solution to the ecological problems encountered in developing countries.

Engineers and investors have together with Superflex formed a share-holder company, SUPERGAS Ltd. This company is responsible for the commercialization and further development of the biogas system.

The pilot project for the biogas system was developed in Tanzania with the help of SURUDE, a farmer – based nongovernmental organization (NGO) that aims to promote technologies which are economically viable and technically and socially feasible, some of the activities are supported by micro credit schemes to enable poor members of the community to acquire them. The first biogas system was then installed in the home of the Massawe family in Morogoro, Tanzania August 1997, and is being used by them for cooking. A new version was then installed in Cheing Mai (Thaïland) in 2002 and was then installed in 2007 in Zanzibar in collaboration with the non-governmental organizations "Dantan" and "ZALWEDA". Last year, a new prototype was developed in collaboration with OPA and TOA in Gualaraja (Mexico).

http://www.supergas.dk



Appendix: Extracts from an interview with Emilie Parendeau

PISTE 1

07:30 - 09:30

EP: Would you define yourself as a curator for a project like that?

BK: Yes, I think I did think of myself as a curator, I still do with « The Materialization of Life into alternative economies ». I mean certainly it is a curatorial project of mine but also, in some sense, I don't see such a really clear boundary though between the curatorial projects or the projects on the street or other things. It is just working with people in a different way. The difference between « Materialization of Life » from projects on the street is that in the « Materialization of Life » I was working with other artists and trying to present their ideas. It was really just trying to say here are some other works by these artists, some of whom are very well known but maybe for different things. Here are some other works by them that we need to present now, at that time, when the show was first done. But the idea of presenting works that looked at different modes of distribution. It wasn't really being discussed at the time and I thought like, because it wasn't being discussed, it was important for me to get the idea out. Just, you know, in a kind of introductory way and also to try to provide a context for what I was working on at that time or in the years before that time.

35:55 - 38:00

The show was never intended to be exhaustive. It was never meant to be full and complete. Whenever I curate things, I'm never intending that it be like: this is the final word and I have the authoritative voice... It's more to say: hey, look you guys, there are subjects going on right now that are also interesting and maybe we should think about it this way. And it was also an effort on my part to contextualize art historical subjects that were going on and that were of interest to me. For example, before that, I had done work about washing dishes, I had done work about making breakfast for people and those pieces were not about the dishes that I washed or the food that I was serving, it was more about where did the work occur, who was involved in the work, how and what kind of exchange was possible during that time with someone.

The whole issue of Antinomians was that the Antinomians were taking control of the press, were out on the street and distributing their own ideas and this is also a kind of effort, an encouragement to other artists to empower themselves through doing their own exhibitions, even if there are not with original artworks, but just to curate their own exhibitions and to not leave the histories to be written by the critics or the art historians.

PISTE 2

09:30 - 11:55

EP: At the same time as the « Materialization of Life », you showed the project « We both belong ». How did it happen?

BK: When « We both belong » happened, it was the very beginning of artists doing projects on the internet. This was with adaweb, Benjamin Weil was the curator and the project that had preceded me was Jenny Holzer and then right after me, I think it was Julia Scher and maybe Toland Grinnell and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and different people... I wasn't so specifically interested in working with new technology but the idea of the web as a kind of manifestation of spaces in-between that did interested me. And I was also interested in the issues of exchange that could occur -or could not occur- through the web. So the whole function in « We both belong » of there being something that was real and actual, in the sense of the diptych of the photographs that was distributed and given through an interaction of something that was virtual on the web, kind of pointed out the different types of limitations of both systems in a way possibilities and limitations. And so with « Materialization of Life », in the context of the « We both belong » project, I was interested in the way in which there were other artists that were working with ideas of exchange through the distribution of the work. And so the « We both belong » project was kind of like using new technology as a new means of distribution of the work.

PISTE 3

11:55 - 16:30

EP: So that is how we can say that these two works are linked together, exchange and distribution.

And was it your idea or a request to do the both projects?

BK: Yes, it was my idea. Because, before this time, I was really interested in Lucy Lippard's book Six Years: the dematerialization of the art object. Partly because my father was in the book, so I grew up knowing the book quite a lot or with this knowing that it was a book that was very important to my dad. That book started as an essay with Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, and John Chandler had been somebody that had been very supportive of my dad's practice. The interesting thing to me about that book was that I think that when it was made it wasn't intended to become a sort of hegemonic control or reference point of how conceptual art would be understood. I don't think that was Chandler and Lippard's intention but it became that. And so, I think that after that book, everybody really wanted to discuss conceptual art in terms of dematerialization of the art object. But I think that what became clear to me by looking at some of the works -not all of it- and also knowing what some of the artists were thinking about at that time, was that some of them weren't going about it in a sort of formal sense of 'I am going to change the materiality of what I am working on and make it become less material in order to produce new work that's challenging or interesting'. What was clear to me is that some of these artists were in fact newly caught up in the materiality of what they were doing. They were very concerned about the materiality of what they were doing. And to such a degree that people like Ian Wilson, saying 'it's not conceptual art if the point size of the type is above a certain amount of the font'— this is something he said in Artforum. The fact that these guys were working with printed material or not doing exhibitions in exhibition spaces but doing them in books, I think that this was a hyper consciousness of materiality and I know that a lot of the artists were in fact really questioning issues of art in everyday life and the possibility of having a practice which is no longer within the art world or within the art context. And this is something that has always interested me for a great deal of time. And I think that what has happened historically is that a lot of these artists who were making work during that time and thinking they were making work that existed outside of the art discourse, beyond the art discourse, had a certain degree of disappointment, later in the seventies, when that work became part of the art discourse and got absorbed. I think that is ultimately what resulted into institutional critic. I think that institutional critic emerged because those people interested in institutional critic. at least for some of them, they realized that no matter what they did it

could become part of the art discourse, it could be absorbed into the art discourse, and therefore the only way they could have a critical stance is by accepting a position within the art discourse by criticizing the power structure of the art discourse itself. What was interesting to me was that they were in fact interested in materializing life. It reminds me of Robert Filliou's quote which goes like: art in everyday life is not so interesting for what it does for artists but for what it does for life. So, that's kind of partly where this came out of, exactly this issue.

PISTE 4

19:03 - 23:45

EP: How did the project begin? How did you choose the artists and the categories? What was your methodology?

BK: It was basically to try to look at different typologies of distribution that are alternative to the typical gallery system. So, what I wanted to see was just the different structures, different ways of exchange that artists were involved in. So, I had always been interested in On Kawara's work. It was interesting to me as a commentary upon the gallery system that the mail art pieces that he created, these telegrams and these postcards, were ignored compared to his date paintings. In the way in which they challenged the existing distribution system of the art scene, I thought that they were perhaps more challenging that the date paintings. And I saw that this functioned in a gift economy. There are other artists to do this but it was just an example.

And Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work was always interesting to me: the idea of maintenance and the way in which this was a challenge to be written about and talked about within the art world. And so, her manifesto is functioning within a maintenance economy, which is really a very different economy and notion of exchange within the art world.

And then, I had been interested in Gordon Matta-Clark's restaurant Food and his collaboration with people on that. I had read that Gordon had tried to sell the restaurant Food as an artwork itself through Leo Castelli and he wasn't able to. That idea of how do you create a valuable business structure to allow for other things to happen — obviously with my bookselling business and stuff, was interesting to me — and the restaurant Food is a kind of precedent. So I saw this as a kind of business economy in a sense of functioning in a general business economy outside of the capitalist system of the gallery.

But then, when I had those three, the other issue was that I wanted to include some younger artists, I didn't want to have only historical people. It is always important to me when I can to include historical work with

younger and more emerging work. And at that time, Paula Hayes and Joseph Grigely were two very close friends of mine and there were just beginning to show. They weren't well known.

Paula was a professional gardener and the whole issue of how do you work doing gardening and the maintenance of plant life within a gallery or economy is very difficult. Because there is a lot of constant care of course that is needed in sculptures and artworks that involve plants, and the gallery system is really not based upon that, it is based upon an object which can't change, which can be stored. So this idea is something which is actually alive, a living thing. It is a real challenge.

Then, the idea of Joseph Grigely as an information economy was interesting me particularly because information economy was normally discussed in term of the internet at that time. Because Joseph is deaf, he has conversations with people on paper and he is very conscious of the meaning of this kind of communication and the mistakes as well that occur. I thought that was a nice thing. At Printed Matter, there was a very important bulletin board in those days where people put up information on studios for rent or jobs or exhibitions. And Joseph made an installation on the bulletin board in Printed Matter. What is interesting is that he took existing stuff from the bulletin board and that he added some of his own texts and writings onto the board. And so it was an actual information economy for Printed Matter itself as well as he created a new installation there.

PISTE 5

40:30 - 42:58

EP: What about the recreation in Slovenia? How did it happen?

BK: What happened is that Carlos Basualdo —I didn't know him then—saw the show in Printed Matter and he then approached me later and said that he was asked to curate a show in Ljubljana at the museum of modern art and he said that the idea that he had for that show actually came from the Materialization of Life show. And he wanted to expand upon that show and work with artists dealing with different economic structures. And he said because your show inspired my show, I would like you to be both an artist in the show and a curatorial consultant. And so Carlos ended up curating a show called « Worthless/Invaluable » which was artists from like Marcel Duchamp to the present who were dealing with different economic structures and it was spread out over three different museums in Ljubljana. And because the Materialization of Life show was caused his show to happen, he wanted the Materialization of Life within the context of this bigger show. So the picture that you see there is

a room that we built inside the big main exhibition space of the museum of modern art in which we recreated the Materialization of Life. And then during that show, I also recreated the project « Exchange ».

EP: So, it was an exhibition in the exhibition?

BK: Exactly.

EP: And was it exactly the same artists and the same works?

BK: Basically, with exception of Joseph Grigely's piece, I think he made a new installation of a bulletin board. For Gordon Matta-Clark, we made that as wallpaper. And there were no original artworks, so there were photocopies of On Kawara's works. But it was pretty similar.

PISTE 6

44:38 - 46:04

EP: What do you mean when you write that the show can be repeated?

BK: I think it is very interesting to do a new show and to do like a new formulation. In some sense, one can take The Materialization of Life into alternative economies and also simply you could utilize the original five categories but you could then also add additional ones. And I think it would be interesting maybe to do the show again with new artists, to take those five and show examples of artists who are working with those five, but then maybe if there is a new one that one could argue for, and then show that other type of exchange. The main issue is that the economic structure being used by the artist in the show is alternative — the term of alternative is referring to the typical notion of exchange that occurs within the gallery and within the art institutional space. That's the point.



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