

## WEBSITE

### Editorial

We are six curators, participants of Session 22 (2012-13) of the International Curatorial Training Program, the Ecole du MAGASIN, in Grenoble, France. Since its inception in 1987, the Ecole du MAGASIN constant educational aim has been the conception and production of a collective curatorial project, presented in public at the end of the nine months of the program.

This website documents the process leading up to the realization of the final exhibition "*I lie to them.*" Based on a true story (09/06/13- 01/09/13). The website serves as a self-reflexive tool re-telling our path as a collective, recalling the research and counter-research, readings and discussions, arguments and approvals, all together convening in the victory of a single topic resulting in the project's conclusion.

A compilation from different sources and references is gathered under a menu of notions that is subjectively defined in a way to parallel the evolution of the collective's methodology of working. The references that accompany each notion from our lexicon formed a part of our study at some point, highlighting both connections and disjunctures between them and in doing so, illustrating how one entry could lead to another, but could also lead to a dead-end (which means that we decided not to include this notion as a key term related to our final project). The record of our history as a collective is condensed in the progress or regress during the nine-month program, indexed under 8 notions: Collective, Masks, Superheroes, Anonymous (group), Undesirability of Truth, Terror, History, "Re-" (Retelling, Re-enacting, Re-representation). Each is selectively represented in the books and videos that most influenced our thinking. The month denoted under each entry indicates the date of its adoption for study. A trace from some has remained until the end of the project, while remnants from others were discarded completely.

The necessity to work collectively led to a logical introspection of our situation and a study on the 'Collective' as our first point of departure in October 2012. Independent research and joint discussions resulted in a plethora of issues ranging from art and labor, authorship and anonymity, institutional critique, activism and subversion of power in art. Each was presented and brainstormed leading to the next notion — either as a natural progression or as a way to begin afresh and discover a new interest altogether. Finding a single topic comfortable with all members of the group was challenging and so, our focus from October-December 2012 remained deeply entrenched in research drawn from varied disciplines: politics, philosophy, semiotics, art theory. And from the latter half of the 3rd month, in December 2012 we began reviewing related artistic practices.

The visitor to the website is invited to draw associations, as we did, between books and quotations taken from them in a way to suggest a re-reading of history of the 20th century, and of popular culture as seen for example in comics, cinema and the internet. It also reflects on how the multitude of extracts taken from each can be overlapped to create a new narrative.

## **Lexicon**

- Collective
- Masks
- Superheroes
- Anonymous (group)
- Undesirability of Truth
- Terror
- History
- “RE-” (Retelling, Re-enacting, Re-representation)

## **Collective**

Adopted in early October 2012

The necessity to work collectively led to a logical introspection of our situation and a nuanced study on what collectivity meant to us, as our first point of departure. We diversely interpreted ‘Collectivity’ as loss of single authorship, the possibility of anonymity, a source of united strength and a multiplicity of perspectives which we not only observed within our group but also within art movements in general. The collective could be masked as a single entity and could claim more power as a multitude. Further, the formation of a collective is often necessitated by economic profitability implied in the division of labour. How do we then value labor within art practices; can creativity be assigned a monetary worth? We then began to deconstruct individualism within a collective and observe how it influenced labour and understand how the multitude of different narratives could reflect a more wholistic vision.

## **Mask**

Adopted in late October 012 - early November 2012

Understanding the Mask as protecting its wearer; masks suggest an anonymity that is a source of audaciousness, allowing also for the possibility of a collective uniting behind one mask. We particularly investigated the carnivalesque culture in anti-establishment movements, both from an anthropological and sociopolitical viewpoint. This aspect evolved into our understanding of masked heroes — of superheroes as well as an interest in the Hactivist Group called ‘Anonymous’ which we then considered as a case study.

## **Superhero**

Adopted in early November 2012

Conventionally understood as an individual with superhuman abilities who fights to maintain

order and protect the masses; we rather focused on the superhero's human aspects befitting the profile of an anarchist or vigilante. He masks his identity behind a costume or pseudonym. The confrontation of choosing between his own principles or those supporting the common good necessitates a lie (*white lie*). The superhero allegedly functions as a sort of unauthorized police auxiliary unit. We notice a marked resurgence of the superhero in popular culture post 9/11, possibly in retaliation to the threat to social order and a need to balance the moral code between good and evil.

### **Anonymous (group)**

Case study, early November 2012

A collective of hacktivists who united against the authorities, claiming vigilante justice in support of freedom of information across the internet. Anonymous is a decentralized online community, acting anonymously in the field of collaborative international hacktivism. The movement originated in 2003 on the amateur website and free image-board called 4chan. They gained momentum when they attacked the church of Scientology for controlled use of technology and alleged secrecy, soon becoming politically motivated and eventually taking to the streets in numerous anti-establishment protests. They adopted the mask of Guy Fawkes, an English anarchist figure of 16th century, a traitor who was burned for his misgivings of a failed plot against the British parliament. For us, the most interesting was the re-appropriation of the Guy Fawkes mask from Alan Moore's 1980s comic series, *V for Vendetta*, to the 2005 action thriller film by the same name to the face of democracy within the Anonymous group and the Occupy movements. This transition from history to fiction and back again into history is a strain that has remained as an interest till the realization of our exhibition "*I lie to Them.*" *Based on a true story.*

### **Undesirability of Truth**

Coined by Slavoj Žižek, adopted in late November 2012

1. A denial of the ugliness in real things, events, or facts by seeking refuge in fantasy, or in a parallel reality, possibly even a utopia. A confrontation with the ugly truth/ reality makes it undesirable and is generally associated with fear. The defense mechanism which is activated when facing what is considered dreadful brings fear. Idealistic distortion, which refers to the ugliness of truth, the unspoken, dreadful side of the truth that necessarily needs to be repressed or removed.
2. The synonym of 'Undesirability of Lies', we questioned the existence of an absolute truth and how this could be understood within our reality. Could we possibly use a lie detector test to measure the level of "Undesirability of Truth"?
3. Departing from the knowledge of the (white) lie, the phrase came to define the vulnerability and contradiction, and even the fear imminent in human knowledge that leads us to vacillate between what we seek to know and what we will rather not know. It could be a state of unease, of friction,

of anticipation and anxiety, of wanting and becoming.

## **Terror**

Adopted in December 2012

Described as focusing on darkness, obscurity, privation, vastness, loudness, suddenness or sublime. We assume this terror as an underlying pulse in today's existential reality, perpetuated in mechanisms of governance, economy, socialization, culture and artistic production. We were interested in the ambivalence of this reality driven by subliminal emotions underlying individual and collective actions, as a means of comprehending the truth of our times. Demonstrations of terror have most certainly infiltrated our daily lives, whether they come from the media, or from national security systems, natural disasters, and even from our most common personal fears.

Largely imperceptible until experienced, terror is implicit in the spectacle of its manifestation, often through manipulation. For this reason, our initial selection of artists relied on works that drew from and/ or express moments of uncertainty, vulnerability, vacancy, doubt, violence, resistance and instability described within a narrative or in repetitive, dramatic and poetic imagery. Each has a strong physical presence paralleling the power of the impulse to affect and mutate.

## **History**

Adopted in February 2013

Observing the increasing artistic tendency of turning back to History to either draw material from, and/or propose another version of a specific event, we consult historical narration in the forms of reconstruction, representation and re-enactment. Our focus is on the kind of possible histories that can be created with the merging of fact and fiction, of the authentic and the staged, as well as in shedding light on marginal histories. Documents of History, the archives are diversely used by the artists, either functioning as primary sources for them to embark on a historical research, or as actual objects, manipulated and reproduced within their practice. We became particularly interested in the way they are deployed in the practice of film-making, as in the work of Johan Grimonprez, Deimantas Narkevicius, Omer Fast etc. We perceive, on the one hand, artistic engagement to re-establish the relationship with History, as a tool to beat collective amnesia and as an ideological shelter in the midst of a society of collapsed ideologies and sociopolitical uncertainties; on the other hand, to withstand official History, as a sort of criticism/resistance against the power relations and the way history is mediated. The dwelling on past times requires a twofold reading of History through different temporalities: one of long ago and one of right now.

## **“Re-”**

Coined in *February 2013*

“Re-” is the macro genre we coined to refer to our understanding of the acts of repeatedly

representing, retelling and re-enacting, aimed to emphasize the multiplicity of versions that evolve each time a textual or visual source is appropriated. In particular, re-representation comes to pass when an artwork represents an already represented reality - not the truth, but a manipulated version of it. This implies that the resulting artworks consist of an exponential elaboration of the real and supposedly convey to a second or nth degree of fictionalization. We assume re-representation (and the “re-“ genre in general) as the second level of the effort of knowing and configuring reality: a form of resistance and socio-artistic engagement, expressed through a renewed regard to the potential of counter-fictions and the reactivation of marginal stories. As Yves Citton wrote in his *Contre-fictions: trois modes de combat*, appeared on *Multitude #48*, *counter-fiction* is a “narrative which introduces a fictional component into our actual world in order to scramble, block or re-route the systemic reproduction of our reality”. We position this term between narrative imagination and politic activism, as a tool of anti-systemic resistance whose aim is to get a glimpse of another possible world.