

Panel Proposal

The creation of constructive, alternative realities

The avant-gardistic works of art we investigate in our papers are all characterized by having an inherent desire for change. Common to our cases is the fact that their immanent critique of society is expressed and presented constructively. The art works invite and open up to interaction with the public and thereby create the possibility of alternative realities – either mentally, perceptually or structurally.

Our papers will deal with alternatives to the usage of the public space, the normative writing of history, and the traditional ways of representation in the media. Kristine Sahlholt will analyze the phenomenon Flash mobs, Stine Fagerholt will look at the archive as social organization, and finally will Jara Høgsberg deal with the arts entry into the TV medium.

As a theoretical frame our papers will use Peter Bürger's concept of the avant-garde as well as Nicolas Bourriauds notion of micro-utopias. When we speak of "avant-gardistic works of art" it is implied, that there is a desire to integrate art into life and life into art.

In order to regain the social impact of art, artists must create works with multiple meanings - thereby creating confusion for the spectator. Attention is instead drawn to the construction of the work. The shock that this confusion causes potentially initiates the transformation of life praxis.

Even though Bürger has received critique for not acknowledging the multiple ramifications of the avant-garde movements, we still find that his definition of avant-gardistic works of art very useful when analyzing current works of art, as we do in our papers.

Our papers all focus on the social impact of art works. By challenging the hierarchical structures of our society, the art projects all initiate reflection and offer constructive alternatives to the given. In various forms the avant-garde phenomena in our papers present micro-utopias, ie. they make bids of constructive, alternative 'realities'.

Jara Høgsberg

Reality restructured – arts entry into the TV medium

This paper will focus on the ramifications of the avant-garde movement on the TV medium. I use the TV show *Den 11. Time* (The 11th hour) as my case study to exemplify TV's potential as arena for social art with its intervention-like approaches. *Den 11. Time* is a hybrid show, straddling satire, late-night talk show and serious culture news. I will mainly refer to one episode, which was recorded, produced and broadcasted on March 5th 2008 (Click here to watch it in [Danish](#), program no. 98).

The TV show uses different aesthetic tactics that connect it to the avant-garde. One is the recurring self-referential and media-referential elements of the program, exemplified by one of two hosts commenting on the making of an earlier episode. The show operates through *Verfremdungseffekt* – an aesthetic effect, which deliberately breaks the flow of the performance and points to itself as such. Following Brecht's concept, *Den 11. Time* deliberately alienates its viewers, hereby forcing them to adopt a critical attitude to its content.

Furthermore, *Den 11. Time* blurs different levels of fiction. It is constantly unclear where fiction ends and reality starts due to the two hosts ambiguous behavior. The acts of the show take place both in the fictional space of TV (in the studio, where guests are invited), and in "real" spaces outside the frames of the TV universe e.g. at a university conference, on the program website and in the living rooms of the show's viewers. This muddiness, as to the nature of the show and its operating space, is another feature, rooted in the avant-garde movement. The confusion created, derived from the genre hybrid and the mixed fictional levels it operates on, is potentially productive, and stands in sharp contrast to the predictable and clear communication of traditional TV shows, and their aim to provide easily digestible entertainment. Furthermore this tactic of confusion facilitates various interpretations of the program's intentions and messages, and engenders the establishing of multiple 'realities'. It is as producer of alternative and differing realities, I regard, *Den 11. Time* as relational art.

Through their alternative journalistic practice the hosts challenge and question the institution of media, i.e. the norms and practices that underpin them. Using performative, aesthetic tactics, the hosts perform a critique from *inside* the institution of the medium itself (TV), and hereby create an alternative experience of the medium.

Kristine Sahlholt

Flash mobs - visualized bricolage in the urban sphere

How do you get urban people's attention in the 21st century's society of the spectacle?
How do you shock spectators and provoke them to reflect upon how they spend their time in the urban environment?

The Flash mob phenomenon, which occurred for the first time in New York City in 2003, uses avant-gardistic tactics in order to catch attention from the public and the media. Flash mob events such as "Mob #6" from 2003 and "Frozen Grand Central Station" from 2007 can be regarded as critical comments on current urban ways of living. In this paper I will make a comparative analysis of the above-mentioned Flash mobs and I will argue, that the phenomenon is linked both to Michel de Certeau's term bricolage as well as the Situationists' ideas of psycho-geography.

I suggest that the non-violent Flashmobs' insistence on being inexplicable leaderless mobs without political or artistic agenda is in fact a way of criticizing the very idea of hierarchic structures in the capitalistic Western societies.

The Flash mobs use a subtle shock tactic as opposed to more radical and destructive avant-gardistic groups. Even though both the violent mobs and the Flash mobs receive a lot of media attention, I conclude that besides the shock effect, the violent mobs do not achieve much more than a general label as law offenders. On the other hand, the peaceful Flash mobs are able to start dialogues and debates because they actually show interesting, constructive alternatives to the existing society – alternatives that can be characterized as micro-utopias. I will argue that by doing so, the Flash mob phenomenons are able to initiate constructive reflections in the minds of the spectators.

Stine Fagerholt

Constructive Alternatives to the Archive

One approach employed by art in its attempts at challenging hierarchical structures in society is to point to the archive as being in possession of structural power. From an overall point of view, the archive is a locus for our collective history. A vehicle and space for the narratives that any given society has about itself and its past. However, analyses have also pointed to the archive as a symbolic space of power. The archive is not neutral, nor is it all-inclusive; the contents of any archive are always the result of a process of selection and classification.

One project pointing towards this selection and classification is *The Atlas Group*. In a mesmerizing mix of fiction and facts, they seek to document and research the history and present of Lebanon, particularly the years of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1991). They mix personal memories and stories with public history, poetry with the cruelty of war, and walk a fine line between art and science. They play with traditional notions of what an archive is and show us an alternative.

A similar challenge of the traditional archive is also seen in the Surrealist archive, *Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes*, where artists collected an archive of the unconscious. They made use of the media of the archive, for instance the journal, the written document and the index card, using those media to enter the unconscious, an element of man's reality, which had not previously been represented in the traditional archive.

In this paper I will call attention to some similarities between the up-to-date project of *The Atlas Group* and the early surrealist *Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes*, describing how the two projects can use the archive to reflect upon the normative writing of history.