

Workshop

Summit Art: Art and Political Events since the 1970s

Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Georgenstr. 47, 10117 Berlin, room 0.12

Organisation: Dr. Linn Burchert together with Justine Vivian Ney (student assistant)

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Abstract

In recent decades, ‘political art’ and ‘the political’ in contemporary art have become a major focus of art historical research. Within this broad field, the workshop “Summit Art: Art and Political Events since the 1970s” addresses an as of yet underexplored arena: art directly related to political summits and other institutionalised political media events. During the workshop, we will discuss art produced since the 1970s that has appeared in the context of specific political negotiations, events and ceremonies, such as on the occasion of UN summits, during G8, G20 or diplomatic events held by various political “leaders,” or at national and international meetings or anniversaries such as Earth Day. A particular feature of “Summit Art” and its related forms is its incorporation into existing political and public (media) formats versus into acknowledged art worlds. The workshop’s aim is thus to debate the interconnectedness of art and political events, as well as to discuss how art contributes to – and even shapes – these often festival-like mega media events. Emphasis is placed on the diplomatic, governmental and media-political uses of images, art as both a means of legitimation and critique of summits, political events as aesthetic sites of affect, and the role of artistic activism on these occasions between potential resistance and the danger of recuperation. The goal of the workshop is ultimately to reflect on the theoretical as well as methodological and terminological challenges of research into “Summit Art”, thus initiating an exchange around various aspects of this current of contemporary art.

Image Politics: Diplomacy, Governance and Population

Chair: *Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen*

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen is an art historian and theorist working on the politics and history of the avant-garde, the politics of contemporary art and the revolutionary tradition. A professor of Political Aesthetics at the University of Copenhagen, he has written a number of books, including *Crisis to Insurrection: Notes on the Ongoing Collapse* (Minor Compositions, 2014), *Playmates and Playboys at a Higher Level: J.V. Martin and the Situationist International* (Sternberg, 2015), *Hegel after*

Occupy (Sternberg, 2018), *After the Great Refusal: Essays on Contemporary Art, its Contradictions and Difficulties* (Zero, 2018), *Trump's Counter-Revolution* (Zero, 2018) and *Late Capitalist Fascism* (Polity, 2021), as well as numerous articles in journals such as *e-flux journal*, *New Formations*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Rethinking Marxism*, *Texte zur Kunst* and *Third Text*. He is also an occasional cultural producer, including the 2010 exhibition *This World We Must Leave* at the Aarhus Kunstbygning with Jakob Jakobsen (new edition Kunsthall Oslo, 2016), and the play *Revolution*, with Christian Lollike, at Nationaltheatret in Oslo, 2017 (S/H in Copenhagen 2018).

Felicity Scott, "Governing Governments: Habitat's Audiovisual Program, 1976"

In 1973, preparing for Habitat: The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, which took place in Vancouver in 1976, Maurice Strong, Secretary General of the UN Environment Program (UNEP), proposed to his governing council that conventional conference reports and verbal presentations be supplemented by audio-visual media. If the initial idea was to produce a multi-media exhibition demonstrating "mutual aid" strategies then in line with World Bank mandates that the Habitat conference sought to promote, this initiative turned into a policy of inviting member states to prepare up to three 26-minute films or slide-shows to be screened in Vancouver as part of their national participation. Films, Strong insisted, were better-able to communicate the ambitions of technology transfer and modernization projects in the field of human settlements to the international audience gathered at the inter-governmental conference, also serving as tools of data collection and visual documentation, or what they called a "visual census." Hence Enrique Peñalosa, Habitat's Secretary General, announced "1975 will most certainly become known as the year in which the world had its picture taken. For Habitat's audio-visual program has caused cameras to focus all over the world on human settlement problems and their solutions." Habitat's Audiovisual Program resulted in 230 films of urban and rural development initiatives ranging from housing, factories, schools, markets, and hospitals to plantations and infrastructure systems, each required to conform to a narrative telos aligned with economic and social development. My paper will not focus on the development or technical assistance programs depicted in the films. Rather, it will investigate the UN's instrumentalization of film and filmmakers in the service of World Bank's economic and ideological agenda and the institution's attempt to "use movies to move" in a global summit. To this end, I will unpack the careful scripting of coherent and distinctly Western narratives of "human settlements" in these supposedly documentary accounts, and the ways in which they fed into a larger governing apparatus. In other words, I want to take seriously the degree to which time-based media were conceived as diplomatic techniques, as potential vehicles that might inflect the course of "concrete political negotiations," to assist in the UN's ambition to govern governments during the process of inter-national deliberations.

Felicity D. Scott is professor of architecture, director of the PhD program in Architecture (History and Theory), and co-director of the program in Critical, Curatorial and Conceptual Practices in Architecture (CCCP) at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University. Her work as a historian and theorist of architecture, art, and media seeks to articulate genealogies of techno-scientific and geopolitical transformations, as well as environmental, social, and political movements impacting discourses and institutions affiliated with these disciplines. She is currently focused on architecture's relation to mechanisms of global environmental governance and population management in the 1960s and 1970s, and the developmental and media-technical regimes that informed the shifting topology of the so-called Global North and Global South. This work traces colonial and neocolonial violence in its many forms as well as the spatial, cultural, aesthetic, and subjective legacies and forms of refusal arising in its wake. Her books include: *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics After Modernism* (MIT Press, 2007), *Living Archive 7: Ant Farm* (ACTAR, 2008), *Outlaw Territories: Environments of Insecurity/Architectures of Counter-Insurgency*

(Zone Books, 2016), and *Disorientations: Bernard Rudofsky in the Empire of Signs* (Sternberg Press, 2016).

Linn Burchert, "Fomenting Fear: The 'Population Bomb' in 1990s Summit Art"

More than 20 years after the publication of Paul R. Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) and 40 years after the start of a global major attempt to curb population growth, especially in the Global South, fears about the threat of overpopulation moved into the focus of several artworks produced and displayed within the broader context of international political summits. This talk looks at art works in two exhibitions that accompanied the NASA-led International Space Year 1992, the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the first UN climate conference in Berlin, Germany in 1995: Although *Erdsicht – Global Change* (1992-1993, 1995) and *Arte Amazonas* (1992) were not directly shown at the conference venues but in museums, they were supported and inaugurated by the United Nations and German state officials who were themselves heavily involved in the negotiations. Contrary to the undifferentiated notion that the ecologically engaged art of the time had begun to reject hegemonic, neo-colonial positions, I argue that, in these summit contexts, this type of art in fact served as a mouthpiece for institutions and concerns of those who sought to protect the privileges of the Global North and to educate the public about the most important ecological threats, as they perceived it: rising population numbers, especially in the Global South (versus, for instance, consumption patterns in the Global North). At a time when the end of the era of forced forms of population control was ushered in, as it had been dismantled as undemocratic, dehumanising, and ineffective, artists such as Piotr Kowalski, Urbain Mulkers and Antony Gormley created powerful images that fuelled fears of the (coming) population explosion. In addition to discussing the aesthetic means of their sculptural works in relation to overpopulation discourses, with an emphasis on concepts of degeneration, limitation, prognosis, abstraction and devaluation, this talk will also reflect on the broader institutional contexts of the exhibitions in question and the uses of such artworks in the media.

Linn Burchert is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Art and Visual History, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. From 2014 to 2017, she was a research associate and doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History at the Friedrich-Schiller University, Jena. Her 2019 dissertation, *Das Bild als Lebensraum. Ökologische Wirkungskonzepte in der abstrakten Kunst, 1910-1960* (The Image as Living Space: Ecological Concepts in Abstract Modern Art, 1910-1960), investigated ecological and therapeutic concepts in terms of the psychological and corporeal efficacy of abstract modern painting. She has published on concepts of nature, colour, and rhythm in modernity, on theories of reception and artistic production, as well as on funding policies and cultural politics. Her most recent project is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and examines art connected to international environment and climate summits since 1972. Her monograph, "Climate Summit Art: Art and Political Event, 1972–2022" (working title), will examine the history of art in the context of political negotiations, exploring art's political functions and uses.

Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat, "Engaging Art in Diplomatic Venues Addressing Disaster Displacement: A Case for 'Policy-Oriented Practice'"

Artists have long created and exhibited artworks in the context of intergovernmental conferences that convene diplomats, UN representatives, non-governmental organizations, and various observers. However, research into art and visual histories has not yet considered how art influences these international policymakers, nor how debates on the site-specificity of socially engaged art practices apply to intergovernmental conferences. Notably, psychologists have studied the impact of art as a

form of communication about climate change in generating public awareness about climate change, including at ArtCOP21, but not art's influence on the international policymakers who ultimately develop and agree upon international law and policy. Within the field of international relations, scholars have begun to explore the representation of international relations through aesthetic means, arguing that it can serve as an interpretive tool to understand global politics. However, these emerging insights have not been applied to understanding the role of art in the promotion of international norms in diplomatic venues. To bridge these gaps, this paper explores how art can contribute to political change – in the form of international laws and policies that address critical global challenges, such as climate change and displacement – through a consideration of the possibilities and consequences of exhibiting art at diplomatic conferences. Applying a conceptual framework of “policy-oriented practice,” I will present my practice (2017-2022) curating DISPLACEMENT: Uncertain Journeys. DISPLACEMENT primarily works in collaboration with the state-led Platform on Disaster Displacement to develop art interventions at intergovernmental conferences for policymakers, not the general public, as part of wider efforts to promote norms related to protecting the rights of people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change. I share how combining art theory and international relations norm development theory shaped my understanding of art's potential influence on diplomatic policy processes, and, consequently, my curatorial practice. I will also reflect on which forms of artistic engagement aimed at promoting norms in diplomatic venues currently seem possible and which seem more challenging, and the implications of my research for curators, artists, and others seeking to exhibit policy-oriented practice in such contexts.

Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat is a doctoral candidate at Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London, co-founder and curator of DISPLACEMENT: Uncertain Journeys, and director of the Swiss art association La Fruitière. She is also a lawyer by training, with over 15 years of experience working with the United Nations, nation-states, and non-governmental organizations on operational and policy issues related to humanitarian affairs and the protection of displaced people in conflict and disaster situations. She currently bridges these two worlds by exploring how contemporary art practice and research can contribute to the development of international law and policy to protect the rights of people displaced by disasters and climate change. She holds a BA in Peace and Global Studies from Earlham College, USA, a JD in Law from the University of Toronto, Canada, and an MA in Critical Curatorial Cybermedia Studies from the Geneva University of Art and Design, Switzerland.

Additional background:

<https://www.displacementjourneys.org/>

<https://disasterdisplacement.org/staff-member/in-conversation-with-hannah-entwisle-chapuisat>

<https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/library/displacement-uncertain-journeys>

Between Legitimation and Critique: Engendering and Challenging Summits

Chair: Marie Rosenkranz

Marie Rosenkranz is a research associate at the Chair of Social Theory and Cultural Sociology at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Her research deals with the changing relationship between art and politics. Through an analysis of art-activist practices in relation to Brexit, she argues that the current widespread political engagement of artists forces us to reconsider the social function of art. While

her dissertation illuminates the characteristics of such transformative practices in re-nationalization processes specifically, she has also analysed art activism in climate politics and the convergence of art and architecture discourses within activist movements in smaller side projects. Previously, she worked at the Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society and at two thinktanks, the European Democracy Lab and Polis180. She studied Communication and Cultural Management at Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen, and European Studies and Sociology in Maastricht and Granada.

Sarah Happersberger, "Alternative Summits? The International Festival of Women Artists, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, and the Non-Governmental Alternative Organizations Conference, 1980"

This paper discusses the International Festival of Women Artists, an art summit held on the occasion of the 1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen. The large-scale event was initiated by the US-American artist Susan Schwalb and sought to demonstrate the political relevance of women artists, who, she felt, were left out of the UN conference and the accompanying Non-Governmental Alternative Organizations Conference. The UN summit marked the halfway point of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85) and was called to assess the progress on the World Plan of Action, a plan conceived in 1975 to improve women's status worldwide. Schwalb and her co-organizers planned to connect women artists from diverse backgrounds, identify their needs and develop strategies for the betterment of their situation.

In this paper, I analyse how the arts festival appropriated the format of the political summit, and how it related to the agendas and proceedings of the official conferences. By investigating the organisational structure, funding, programme and attendance of the artists' gathering, I seek to demonstrate that the organisers made efforts to mimic the UN conference in global reach and overarching aims, but maintained a distance with regard to their discussion points and debate culture. Though Schwalb described it as an "alternative to traditional politics," I will argue that the festival was by no means apolitical or unconnected. Rather, it differed from the UN conference and the NGO forum due to its distinct vision of the form, function, and meaning of summits on women's issues. The kind of "alternative" the festival presented to the UN conference, and how far this alternative corresponded to the alternative offered by NGO summit, is also addressed.

Sarah Happersberger, MA, is a doctoral researcher in Art History at the Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, Germany. Her dissertation, "Connection, Community, Kinship, Network. Women Artists Performing Togetherness in the 1970s and 80s" analyses how women artists negotiated the notion of "togetherness" in collaborative artworks produced in the context of the women's movement in the US and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. Previously, she worked as a curator specializing in time-based art, public art and socially engaged art. She has organised exhibitions and projects for, among others, the ZKM (Karlsruhe, Germany), the Arnolfini (Bristol, UK), and the Liverpool Biennial (UK). Her publications include essays on performance stills, the performativity of artist books, exhibitions of time-based art and women's galleries.

Jacopo Galimberti, "Migrants, Models and White Overalls. Vanessa Beecroft's Summit Art and Pablo Echaurren's Activist Art at the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa"

To celebrate the twenty-seventh G8 summit, held in Genoa in 2001, the Genoa-born American artist Vanessa Beecroft was invited to stage a performance in the Palazzo Ducale, where the G8 heads of state would subsequently gather for the official proceedings. Beecroft's work was titled *VB48* and featured 30 black models arranged in various poses and wearing wigs and scant string bikinis. Today, Genoa's G8 is mostly remembered as a deeply sombre event: The murder of Carlo Giuliano and the

torture inflicted upon a number of demonstrators largely obscured how artists engaged with the event. This paper will first concentrate on Beecroft's performance and its depiction of "poverty," a theme of the 2001 G8. I will examine VB48's institutional framework, the positive reception that it received in *Flash Art* and *Il Manifesto*, as well as the political undertones of Beecroft's work, by interpreting it as a problematic instance of "summit art," one that failed to take a clear stand on the event of which it was part. In particular, I will consider the provocative notion of "artists as useful idiots" discussed in *Individuals against Individualism*, where I examined the artistic agenda of the Francoist dictatorship. VB48 will be juxtaposed with the "activist art" of Pablo Echaurren, a veteran of artistic interventions within social movements by exploring Echaurren's critique of VB48 and his collaboration with the magazine *Carta*, one of the main outlets of the alter-globalisation movement in Italy and the anti-G8 protests.

Jacopo Galimberti is a fellow at the Max Planck Institute-Bibliotheca Hertziana (Rome) and an Assistant Professor at IUAV (Venice). He is the author of *Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962-1988)* (Verso, 2022), *Détournement & Kitsch. Die Postkarten von Hans Peter Zimmer/Les cartes postales de Hans Peter Zimmer* (Les Presses Universitaires de Nanterre, 2021) and *Individuals against Individualism. Western European Art Collectives (1956-1969)* (Liverpool University Press, 2017).

Sites and Affect: (Inter-)National Aesthetics of Summitry

Edina Eszenyi, "Hungary and Her Angelic Crown at the Turn of the Millennium"

In the 1970s, Umberto Eco's two seminal essays explored what he interpreted as a renewed interest in the Middle Ages in Western culture, popularizing the concept of Neo-Medievalism, and highlighting the "new Middle Ages" as a cultural fad. In East-Central Europe, this renewed interest in the medieval past was immediately associated with the recent political past. Following the end of communism, the purposeful rediscovery of pre-Communist times was heavily marked with political connotations. Accordingly, millennial state celebrations became instrumental in stressing the importance of the Middle Ages at the intersection between the religious and political millennia.

In Hungary, the millennium coincided with the 1000-year anniversary of the foundation of the state by King St. Stephen, to whom the nation's Holy Crown is attributed in popular tradition. With the very first law passed in 2000, the Republic of Hungary provided for the Holy Crown to be kept in the Parliament; on 1 January 2000, royal insignia were transported in a nation-wide procession to the building. The Crown was later received by state leaders in Esztergom, where it participated in a Mass celebrated in the Basilica. In addition to, and largely as a consequence of, its travels, the Crown was also the object of several state-financed monuments and works of art erected in public places. Various occult theories also appeared, closely related to another popular tradition, according to which the Holy Crown was delivered to the country by an angel. Through examples of related artwork, this presentation examines how the involvement of the Holy Crown in millennial celebrations affected the narrative surrounding Hungary's medieval roots and how the reinterpretation of the past might provoke political, social, and cultural anxieties.

Edina Eszenyi holds a PhD in Medieval and Early Modern History from the University of Kent Canterbury, UK; a Medieval Studies MA with Distinction from Central European University, and MA

diplomas in Art History and English Studies from the Pázmány Péter Catholic University of Hungary. From 2014 to 2018, she was resident art historian at the New York-based Rome Art Program; from 2018 to 2020, she taught at the English-American Institute at the Catholic University of Hungary. She is currently a lecturer at the HEI Pegaso International Malta – Pegaso University Naples and translator at the Office of the State Attorney General in Rome, supporting Italy in cases before the European Court of Human Rights. Her first book is contracted for publication with the Vatican. She regards Angelology as her primary research field, and Vampire Studies as her academic guilty pleasure. Her interest in researching the Holy Crown of Hungary was raised by the corona angelica tradition, according to which the Crown was delivered to the nation by an angel.

Kirsty Robertson, "Reflections in the Fake Lake: Echoes of a 1976 Art Protest at the 2010 G20 Summit in Toronto"

In 2010, journalists and attendees at the G20 Summit in Toronto were invited to rest and relax at the Experience Canada Centre, a \$2 million CDN display featuring art works, tourism videos, and a central feature of a "fake lake" surrounded by canoes, wooden "Muskoka" chairs, and videos transmitting the northern Ontario wilderness to summit participants. The Experience Canada Centre was extremely controversial and a touch stone for myriad groups ranging from anti-capitalist activists to conservative taxpayer associations who had organized against the Summit. As the largest mass arrest and policing operation in Canada's history took place outside, anger coalesced around the small water feature. The "fake lake" and the Experience Canada Centre were designed by Lord Cultural Resources, a - if not the - preeminent global museum planning and design firm. Based in Toronto and founded in 1981, the impact of Lord Cultural Resources on the global cultural sector should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the emergence of Lord Cultural Resources as a leading firm designing/planning museums (as well as numerous expos and cultural programs for summit meetings), seems far removed from the roots of the company founders Gail and Barry Lord in the raucous left wing nationalist movements that characterized the cultural scene in Toronto/Canada in the 1970s. This talk draws on several protests of museums and galleries in the mid-to-late 1970s with focus on actions outside the 1976 exhibition *Changing Visions* at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. While an easy interpretation would be that by 2010 Lord Cultural Resources had no connection to the earlier activism of its founders, I suggest that in fact there is a clear thread that illuminates the way culture, nation, and economies interact in summit and museum culture.

Kirsty Robertson is Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of Museum and Curatorial Studies at Western University where she also directs the Centre for Sustainable Curating. Her pedagogy involves curating large-scale speculative and experimental exhibitions with students. In her academic work, Robertson has published widely on activism, visual culture and museums culminating in her book *Tear Gas Epiphanies: Protest, Museums, Culture* (McGill-Queen's University Press, May 2019). Her work on museums has expanded into a new project focused on small and micro-collections that repurpose traditional museum formats for critical and politically radical projects. In addition, Robertson is a founding member of the Synthetic Collective, a group of artists, scientists and cultural researchers working on plastics pollution in the Great Lakes Region and project co-lead on A Museum for Future Fossils, an ongoing "vernacular museum" focused on responding curatorially to ecological crisis.

Jason Derouin (CA), "The 2016 Special US-ASEAN Leaders Summit at Sunnylands: A Case Study of the Affective Dimensions of Art and Architecture and Their Impact in Diplomatic Summitry"

In November 2015, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to participate in the US-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and East Asia Summits. US involvement in these summits were demonstrations of Obama's commitment to deepen the country's engagement with the Asia-Pacific region, which began in earnest after the President declared the US an Asia Pacific nation a year earlier during his first state visit to the Philippines. Among the achievements of the 2015 US-ASEAN Summit was the uniform endorsement of a plan of action to increase economic and maritime cooperation, promote opportunity for women and cultivate leaders in ASEAN, and address transnational challenges like climate change and the protection of human rights. During the close of the summit, President Obama announced that he invited all ten ASEAN leaders to the US to build on the successes of their assembly in Kuala Lumpur. The White House later confirmed that a Special US-ASEAN Leaders Summit would be held at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, California, in February 2016.

The cynosure of Sunnylands is the Annenberg Residence, a mid-century coalescence of pre-Columbian and modern Latin American architectural styles. Formerly the house of Walter and Leonore Annenberg, it now functions as a venue for experts and leaders from around the world to engage in dialogues that facilitate international agreement. Sunnylands appears to have been a locale favoured by President Obama. Before the 2016 Special US-ASEAN Leaders Summit, he met with President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China at Sunnylands in June 2013 and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in February 2014. The discussions were intended to enhance cooperation between the US and China and the US and Jordan.

The interior of the Annenberg Residence provides an interesting backdrop for diplomatic talks. A medley range of Chinese and European antiques, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, and Hollywood Regency furnishings decorate the Spanish Colonial Revival rooms. This paper takes as a case study the 2016 Special US-ASEAN Leaders Summit held at Sunnylands to explore the aesthetics of diplomatic summitry. It draws from texts that circulate in the public domain—including news articles and government statements and releases—to understand the affective dimensions of the Annenberg residence and collections and their role in the assembly of US and ASEAN leaders at Sunnylands in 2016.

Jason Derouin (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada) identifies as an artist-scholar; he engages art making, curating, and writing as complementary forms of inquiry. Jason holds undergraduate degrees from McGill University and the University of Ottawa, and a Master's degree from the University of New Orleans. He is presently a doctoral student in the Cultural Mediations program at Carleton University, concentrating in Visual Culture.

Between Resistance and Recuperation: Summit Art Activism

Gavin Grindon, "Curating with Counterpower: Rethinking Art's Institutional Leverage"

The power relations between artists and institutions have shifted, not just since the first UN climate summit of 1972, but specifically since the 2007 financial crisis. This paper will look at artistic mobilisations at the 2009 COP15 in Copenhagen and the 2015 COP21 summit in Paris, and mark the

space between them, in which the UK group Liberate Tate, and many others internationally, emerged and won a series of victories to pressure European and US arts institutions to change policies and practices. It will try to identify some of the structural causes of these shifts and of the rapid success of these groups who developed new art-activist strategies in relation to both summit mobilisations and art institutions.

Gavin Grindon is a senior lecturer in art history and curating at the University of Essex. He has written on histories of activist-art, and co-curated *Disobedient Objects* at the V&A (2014), *Cruel Designs* at Banksy's Dismaland (2015), *The Museum of Neoliberalism*, London (2019) and *Werbepause* at Kunstraum Kreuzberg (2022).

Eleftheria Lekakis & Thomas Dekeyser, "Negotiating Recuperation? Subvertising, Mediation, and the Limits of Visibility"

In this paper, we offer reflections on the complex politics of subvertising as a practice that is, at once, emancipatory and under constant threat of recuperation (Dekeyser, 2021; Lekakis, 2017; 2021). As a portmanteau for "subverting advertising," subvertising encapsulates various illicit interventions into outdoor advertising spaces – from graffiti scribbles and removed adverts, to the replacement of bus shelter posters, full-blown billboard take-overs, and digitally hacked adverts. We focus on subvertising at three summits (COP21, TTIP, and COP26) to examine how summits, as highly mediated events, impact the potential for its recuperation by corporate actors, but also for its resistance to that very process. After a short introduction to the case studies and the aims of the session, participants will be invited to respond to three subvertising posters from the selected summits in small groups. During this interactive component, participants will explore the different logics used by the subvertisers, the particularity of the aesthetics, the artistic/activist influences, and how each of these components were influenced by the summit context in which the subvertising posters emerged.

In the second part, we build on extensive ethnographic research and interviews with subvertising groups in the UK, Belgium, France, and the US to focus on three stages of subvertising (preparation, poster, afterlives). We question the conditions of recuperation and how subvertising actors have responded to the resultant problems they pose. Exploring the dialectics between (mediation as) visibility and (resistance as) recuperation, we situate our discussion in the context of summits and the appearance of (artistic) activism (Duncombe, 2016; Uldam, 2018; Jiménez-Martínez, 2021). Reflecting on the dynamics of promotional culture and resistance, we discuss a hierarchy of visibility (Lekakis, 2022; Phelan, 1996) that specifically conditions highly mediated events such as summits. Through an exploration of the processes and conditions of the development and dissemination of summit art, we argue that the focus on summit interventions offers a unique insight into the dialectics between resistance and recuperation. Subvertising activists are constantly – but often implicitly – negotiating the paradox of visibility, where the attempt to create counter-media-spectacles presents both the promise, and the potential downfall, of subvertising practices, since it is only when subvertisers enter into the mainstream that corporate actors instigate attempts at direct and indirect forms of recuperation. We observe how a recognition of the connection between visibility and recuperation has led subvertisers into different directions: Responding to the limits of visibility as a strategy for measuring emancipatory actions, some subvertisers dig deeper underground, attacking advertising spaces without mediated attempts at convincing publics of their motives. Others respond by altering the conditions, processes, and measures of success of their work. This involves, amongst other strategies, producing non-recuperable (or less recuperable) aesthetics for their posters and shifting the focus away from media engagement towards the politics of urban emancipation, where the process and preparation of subvertising becomes a political aim in itself, opening up the advertising city towards an ever-expanding and diversifying set of actors.

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Thomas Dekeyser is a cultural geographer and urban ethnographer who is currently a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the GeoHumanities at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research interests revolve around refusal, urban subcultures, techno-politics, and theories of pessimism and nihilism. He is currently writing a monograph tentatively titled "Techno-Negative: A History of Refusal."

Eleftheria Lekakis is Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Media and Communications at the School of Media, Arts and Humanities at the University of Sussex. Her research focuses on communication, consumer culture, and politics. Her first book explored the relationship between fair trade consumption and political participation. She has also co-edited *Art, Law, Power*, a volume on the intersections of artistic practice and resistance in relation to the law. Her latest book is entitled *Consumer Activism* and explores the complexities and dilemmas of using the marketplace as an arena for politics. Other published work has appeared in journals such as the *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *Popular Communication*, *Social Movement Studies*, as well as edited collections such as the *Sage Handbook of Consumer Culture*, the *Oxford Handbook of Political Consumerism*, and the *Routledge Handbook of Advertising and Promotional Culture*. Eleftheria teaches on topics related to advertising and promotional culture, as well as humanitarian communication, media and social change.

Ephemerality, Terminology, Hetero-/Auto-nomy: Challenges to Summit Art Research

Barbara Preisig & Kris Decker, "Summit Art from Below"

On the streets, beyond the inner circle of the twenty-sixth United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, artistic expressions abounded. People painted murals on facades, marched through the city dressed as mermaids, garbage monsters and pikachus, accompanied by polar bear figures and handsewn banners. Alongside chants and slogans, these street scenes created a performative counterpart to the huge sculptures, text-based neon works, and ice core installations officially commissioned by participating institutions at the climate conference.

Apart from highly visible (and often costly) works of art, there is a great deal of spontaneous, unauthored, and effervescent art being made at the margins of climate summits today – including parts of the climate movement’s protests themselves, which can be read as an embodied way of world-making. Contrary to common assumptions about these demonstrations, one encounters more than moralizing appeals and political demands here. They take on the character of performances that play with theatrical forms of masquerade and travesty or hint to phenomena as diverse as art happenings and cosplay. The body, standing front and center, dramatizes political activism, hence creating moments of ambiguity and speculation.

Closely examining a collection of photos and texts that emerged around the 2021 Glasgow conference, our contribution engages with some tentative questions about the political and epistemic stakes of climate summit street art: Should it be understood as a low-brow commentary on the issues being negotiated at COP26 or does it constitute a more subtle counterpoint to them? What is being explored and projected in these playful forms of art? How do they transform scientific assumptions and political messages into artistic material? What kind of interventions into current debates on future climatic changes does this art at the margins of a climate summit offer? And in which ways does it blur the presumed boundaries between art and activism?

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Kris Decker / Has a background in Science Studies / Conducts fieldwork in the borderlands of science and the arts / Currently running the project Academized Artists (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation) at Zurich University of the Arts in Switzerland / Recently published: some observations on art-in-the-making, titled *Machines Under Pressure* (St. Gallen/Berlin: Vexer, 2022).

Minna Valjakka, “Artistic Engagements for Earth Day in Singapore”

In 1971, the Singapore Natural Health Society celebrated UN Earth Day in the Botanic Gardens, transforming it into one of the earliest sites in Asia to join forces to support international efforts to save the Earth. In 1973, the ringing of the Peace Bell on Orchard Road further enhanced aims to advocate for shared environmental concerns. Beyond this initial push to make Earth Day known among residents, wider efforts have been relatively few and far between until recently. Whereas events organized by local associations, foundations and officials are likely to gain media attention, the engagements by contemporary artists and alternative art communities have not necessarily gained broader audiences. In the (semi-)authoritarian conditions of Singapore, it is also not uncommon that informal and critical artistic practices might sheer away from official discourses and seek other innovative ways to initiate societal change. The aim of this paper is to unravel the historical and current conditions that have shaped contemporary artists’ aspirations to respond to Earth Day celebrations in Singapore. To provide a more detailed contextualization, I critically analyse what kind of roles arts in general have taken in relation to Earth Day in recent decades. Through extensive archival research and numerous interviews (with artists, curators, and scholars), I investigate what kinds of artistic practices have been created and supported, what kinds of networks

of agency are involved in these processes, and how they resonate with or differ from wider regional and global tendencies.

Minna Valjakka is Professor of Art History at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), working on contemporary art history and theory in a global perspective. Before joining Leiden University, she was a Senior Lecturer of Art History in the University of Helsinki, Finland (2020-2021) and a Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore (2017-2019). Through her long-term and locally embedded interdisciplinary research in East and Southeast Asian cities, she examines how artistic and creative practices interact with current global conditions, how they reformulate public spaces and spheres, and what kind of positionalities they take in civil society formation. By bridging together art studies, urban studies, and environmental humanities, she investigates the dynamic interrelations reshaping contemporary art worlds in light of environmental crisis, translocal mediations and post/decolonial struggles, and how the contemporary arts, in turn, contribute to socio-political transformations. She has published extensively, including journal articles in *Cultural Studies*, *City, Culture and Society*, *Urban Design International*, and *China Information*. She has also written numerous book chapters, exhibition essays, and a co-edited both special issues and books, including *Visual Arts, Representations, and Interventions in Contemporary China. Urbanized Interface* (AUP, 2018). She is currently finalizing her book, *Urban Encounters in Hong Kong*. In addition to her academic work, she also collaborates with art institutions and organizations in terms of research, exhibitions, workshops, and publications.

Ursula Ströbele, “We’ve had many warnings’ – Art between Mediation, Artivism and Eco Pop”

In his 1972 text *Art and Ecological Consciousness*, György Kepes argues for the social and ecological responsibility of the arts. Under the premise “We’ve had many warnings,” he highlights the artists John Ruskin and William Morris, who as early as in the nineteenth century had both noted the air pollution in and around the city of London caused by mass industrialization. Based on Kepes’ “ecological imperative,” I demonstrate how contemporary art representing an environmental consciousness, partly manifested through activism/artivism and social engagement, connects with political events – with particular reference to the group exhibition *The Most Beautiful Catastrophe* shown on the occasion of the 2018 UN climate change conference (COP24) in Katowice, Poland. As part of this show, aimed at “critically reflect[ing] on the UN Climate Summit by bringing together the voices of artists and activists from Central Europe” (curator Jakub Gawskowski), Polish artist Diana Lelonek presented *Seaberry Slagheap stand (action)* in nearby Bytom. Lelonek’s piece deals with the degradation and modification of post-coal extraction landscapes and the question of how to re-use these anthropocentric wastelands – in this case, the Konin coalfield. Searching for pioneer plants, her artistic focus is on the potential of sea buckthorn (which grows in post-mining areas), which she used in a community project aimed at creating and then selling local food products. Taking this political event and its site-specific art projects into consideration, I would like to elaborate on the *siteliness*, its situated knowledge, funding infrastructures and curatorial concepts. From the perspective of the environmental and ecological humanities, the question of engagement and responsibility, of affirmation versus contestation arises. How do we situate our research questions? How do we approach such time-based/ephemeral, partly politically motivated and perhaps resistant, works between classical object aesthetics and situational aesthetics that provoke their own exhibitionability? What role does the digital presentation and documentation of such works on a website play for later reception? Does the challenge lie in the fact that divergent contemporary artistic positions are summed up under eco art, oscillating between eco criticism, eco activism/artivism and a kind of decorative *eco pop*, as I like to call it? Is *Eco Art* in danger of becoming prematurely canonized or ideologically charged? The current discussions are essential, but these debates have existed in art since

the 1960s. How can we describe the relationship between the role of art as “problem mediator” or staged event and its proclaimed autonomy? And who is the audience?

Ursula Ströbele is a research associate at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte Munich and head of the Study Centre for Modern and Contemporary Art. In 2021/22, she was a visiting professor at the HBK Braunschweig, while in 2019 she was artistic director of the Kunstverein Arnsberg. From 2012 to 2018, she was a research associate at the Udk Berlin and co-founder of the scientific network *Theory of Sculpture*. She holds a PhD from the HHU Düsseldorf, with a dissertation on the reception pieces of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, 1700-1730. Her 2020 habilitation centred on the sculptural aesthetics of the living since the 1960s (Hans Haacke and Pierre Huyghe). Her current focus includes digital phenomena of the sculptural, art and ecology, female sculptors of the twentieth century, infrastructural studies, and ephemeral media images.