

RAPHAËLE JEUNE *THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE SOURCE RESIDENCIES*

The Séjours de Recherche et de Création en Entreprise (SouRCEs)—literally ‘Corporate/company Research and Creation Residencies’—are artists’ residencies devised as *in vivo* experiments in the world of work and labour. They start out from the principle that this setting, which is usually not very accessible to artistic activities, represents a place of human life, activity and relations, where art may be really present, conveying meanings and raising questions.

Fourteen artists were accommodated by companies and businesses in the Brittany region for a creative work period ranging from a few days to several weeks¹. During their residencies, they freely developed an artistic proposal, in interaction with company employees, and bearing in mind the company’s activity. Managers and employees agreed to open up their professional world and be present at and/or take part in the creative process, its form being unknown to them but based on a familiar context.

For the artists, these experiments represented an opportunity to introduce into their approach and method a real dimension pertaining to the economic system, through contact with those employed by the firm in question; and for the various companies in the programme, they represented a chance to go beyond image-cultivating patronage and beyond decorative appeal, and take on the risk inherent in the unpredictability of any artistic idea.

This entailed providing points of contact, without second-guessing results and without giving in to any kind of weak convergence for which artists and companies alike might have set aside the differences of their goals and the legitimising systems connected with them. This ‘shared’ space thus turned out to be the forum for a negotiation, capable of swinging from dialogue to trying to get the upper hand. It was defined by the temporary confrontation between respective tool-kits in an area of friction from which may emerge a form, a concept, or a vision of things, peculiar to each party, and there to be shared.

So the SouRCE system has to do with shifting the boundaries between two production contexts which are, for the most part, unaware of each other, and this in turn gives rise to upheavals in their inner geography, to re-negotiations of the links and rules which form them, and to a recasting of what is familiar therein and what is alien. All this proceeds by way of a phase of reflective hyper-sensitivity, which causes situations to be expressed in proportion to their transformation. The dovetailing of the cultural codes of art praxis and those of remunerated activity in companies shakes up established positions and gives rise to a particular readability of the features of each party.

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1. Some residencies started very early, when the company in question gave an immediate positive answer, and lasted for several weeks or months. Others started later, some of them at a very late stage, when there were several negative responses running. This was the case with the Collectif 1.0.3, Boris Achour, and Claudia Triozzi. It also applied to AaMb, the collective made up of Alain Bublex and Ania Martchenko, whose project was not really accommodated by any company, which explains their choice of page design (cf. p. 210). For further details about the practical development of the SouRCE residencies, see the essay by Mari Linnman and Anne-Laure Zini, p. 146.



INPUT/IMPORT?

In the rules and regulations offered to the artists and companies involved, it is clearly stated that the SouRCE residencies have to do with artistic experimentation and not with managerially related or innovative commissions. The artist is not called upon to solve corporate problems. What is more, it is the artist who chooses the structure or the activity of the structure which will accommodate him or her, based on an intended work, and not vice versa. This makes it possible to preserve the area of freedom required—or so it seems to me—for the experiment's relevance.

This basic principle encompasses a powerful paradox, one which expresses both a desire to act in order to contribute 'something better' and the fact that the artistic purpose cannot be scaled down to any kind of role involving social improvement.

The undeniable prime intent of this arrangement, issuing as it does from a cultural agent, consists in introducing something into a given context. If the SouRCE residencies failed to contribute anything either to the world of work and labour or to the artist temporarily installed in this world, they would be meaningless. Nobody would see any interest in them.

In a situation like this one, which brings about encounters between eclectic factors, there are indeed areas of interest, but they differ. What we regard as an input is, in accordance with our own criteria as artists and curator: questioning and challenging, within aesthetic propositions, the various power-based relations and the various professional routines; calling upon both body and subjectivity to purposes other than utilitarian ones, upsetting alienation processes, creating unusual situations, exploring unknown territory, and so on. What do these acts bring with them? Do they have a special value? Do they improve reality? If so, for whom, and based on what rules? Is art here for this? Anyway, is art here for something?

Georg Baselitz observed that "the artist is not responsible for anyone. His social role is asocial. His sole responsibility lies in his position towards the work he does." The artist taken in and adopted by the company enters into a relationship with a social group which, with regard to him or her, will nurture expectations which he or she does not have to meet, or which will be the object of more or less obvious negotiations. The company accommodates the artist because it envisages an input or contribution (either at the human level or in terms of creativity, openmindedness to things outside it, and communications), while at the same time remaining aware that the movement cannot be forced. To make things more complicated, the company may come

across as an organically structured social group, but it is, in reality, a patchwork of disparate motivations and sensibilities, from which expectations emerge at several levels, be they complementary or contradictory, reflecting the many different facets of the organisational corporate chart. So the artist's approach will not be capable of meeting any need or requirement in an unequivocal way.

Generally speaking, in the trade in objectives, a value is dependent on a goal being sought. If an action or programme means that this goal is more readily approachable, it creates a positive value. If it makes the goal more remote, then it is a negative value. In the case of a SouRCE residency, whose rules and regulations guarantee the artist a freedom of method, the impossibility of muddling the corporate project with the artist's project makes any analysis of the action or programme difficult, in terms of results for either party.

So there is no guarantee that the company which is ready to receive the artist and support his/her action at the operational and financial level will nevertheless move forward in its own objectives. And it is indeed because no guarantee can be offered to it in advance, in terms of incorporating the artist's approach and method in its own development, management and communicational strategy, that a most interesting arena of discussion and construction opens up, an arena that also encompasses confusion and surprise, created within it by the unpredictability of artistic scripting. The French term *valorisation*—which has a multitude of meanings in English: development, enhancement, promotion—describes a controlled process of value-harnessing in a given situation, and makes it possible, in the negative, so to speak, to pinpoint a pitfall: the hazards of instrumentalisation. Under no circumstances can the process of artistic creation be controlled by the company, or be *previously* subject to any enhancement-oriented objective. The artist alone is in a position to be master of his idea, which, needless to add, does not prevent him, in his relations with the organisation accommodating him, from complying with this latter's basic values, provided that they do not clash head-on with his own values.

It is therefore difficult and ambiguous to talk of input and contribution. It would be nearer the mark to regard the SouRCE residencies as chances for a reciprocal *import*. The import of the artistic approach into the company's activities, and the import by the artist of aspects of these activities into his/her artistic proposal.

This *imports* more than it contributes, by way of input, to the employees, or brings to the company. The encounter and the shift which result from this are based on the sharing of the *importance* attached to the other.



This way of seeing things helps to open up a working turf in which the artist constructs his/her idea by way of interaction with the employees, but without being bound to incarnate the social link, or render reality as something aesthetic, or 'boost' creativity. The fact that this comes about *a posteriori*, i.e. that the company knows how to derive profit from this presence in compliance with its objectives, is a natural tendency, but in no instance does it have to do with the artist's responsibility.

The acronym SouRCE was not chosen haphazardly: the residency experiment cannot respond to any objective laid down in advance, and has nothing strategic about it. It is a reality in the making, one that is essentially unforeseeable, which 'springs forth' from the context itself and is oriented in the direction imposed on it by the artist.

GETTING INTO THE OTHER'S LANGUAGE

Going about things at the crossroads of two worlds whose systems have very few procedures and tools in common, indeed, and whose languages do not always overlap, is a confusion-inducing factor, as well as one that clarifies stances. From the moment when it is necessary to explain to the other what appears to oneself to be self-evident, nothing can be taken for granted anymore. What people think they already know has to be re-learned, and the reasons for doing things have to be reappraised in an ongoing way. In the way a project such as a SouRCE residency is conducted, the uncomfortable awkwardness of the interstice—in between two languages, in between two value systems, in between two economies—introduces a need to invent ways of making the transition from one language to another. Within a company, touching on the critical eye cast by certain artists upon capitalism, upon the managerial culture, upon the commodification of the world and upon working conditions, is not done in the same way as for visitors to a contemporary art institution. In this organisation going through many different challenges and tugged between firming up assets and wagering on investments—crucial to its adaptation, development, and survival—informed by individuals joined together by a very wide range of bonds (authority, subordination, cooperation, and so on) and motivations (personal fulfilment, professional calling, attachment of the corporate culture, pay, absence of alternatives), it is not easy to maintain (often compassionate) ideas which have a bird's eye view of a complex reality experienced on a day-to-day basis.

The artist comes from somewhere without knowing anything about the corporate/company culture, its history, its techniques and technologies, its pace and cadence, and its already established social relations. He/she does not have a grasp of

the whole ballpark, and this makes his/her presence at once embarrassing—some employees felt bothered by an intrusion that was too sudden, as well as by a lack of knowledge, on the part of the artist, about the company's activities—and enriching—others appreciated the unusualness or oddity of a layperson's eye sizing up their occupations. In this encounter, the artist and the company personnel were asked to compare their skills, and their lack thereof, within a relationship where each lent an ear to the other; this was not always possible at the first take, as it were, in a world of work where the hierarchy at times makes it hard to switch roles, between those making decisions, and those carrying them out. These latter do not easily allow themselves to go against the established order—and the artistic process is one such transgression—even if this is encouraged by the former.

Over and above power-based relations in the company and their possible upheaval by the artist's presence, the encounter between artist and employees is based on the capacity of each party to go beyond preconceived ideas and make their way into the other's language. This does not mean shedding one's own language, but rather rediscovering it.

This language differential interests companies. Some single out their need for surprise, and their need to offset the way they see things, in order to develop a clearer view of themselves. The artist's mission may not be that of a scout, but it is no less true that the heterotopia whose outlines he/she traces actually within the company, that somewhere else that is close at hand, sends back, as something without, a sharp image of what 'being within' means. The same cannot be said of a consultant who, in working on behalf of the company, in its 'language' and in its interests, in accordance with his own, will only in the most exceptional instances open up a real without, a real outside. The essential thing here, as we shall see below, is based on the specific nature of art as it persists in its 'being outside', not enslaved by a project that is not itself.

AN ARTIST IN SOCIETY AND THE COMPANY

The company can be seen as a social microcosm, with a 'government', contributing constituent-like people, and transactional and operational links between its members. The SouRCEs can be analysed as artists' residencies in a social space within which activities are organised around a common project. But the specific nature of companies (with the exception of two of them, the Conseil général, a territorial local authority, and the INRIA, a public laboratory) lies in the private character of this space and the motivated character of the project. The collective dimension of the project does not actually rely on any principle of gratuitousness or impartiality. Each individual exchanges his/her belief in the objective



laid down for a pay packet, and the management agrees to share this objective with its members solely because they devote their productive activity to it. This activity creates a wealth whose use(s) the company management alone is responsible for allocating, by way of decision-making, in compliance with legal guarantees. Without going back over the basic principles of capitalism, and their neo-liberal drift resulting in a concentration of wealth among those who own the productive apparatus, to the detriment of those who make the machinery actually work, let us merely note one crucial point within the prickly issue of the relation between art and business: the connection between the factor of motivation traditionally associated with companies and businesses (private ownership, utility, lucrativeness) and the factor of impartiality and non-motivation, where art is one of the pillars (public property, non-utility, being free).

This well-rooted dichotomy raises suspicions among part of the art world, sometimes quite rightly, when doing away with boundaries is involved. But it is often regardless of a more subtle examination of what the world of work is, on the one hand, what the art system is on the other, and, lastly, of confrontational processes and points of transit which are rendered operative between the two. In no time at all, we realise that the mercantile commodification of art works serves lucrative interests in the same way as wagers made on stock exchanges, that the world of artistic work is among the most competitive and precarious going, and that the quest for private profit is rampant there, too. And on the other hand the corporate world is criss-crossed by issues and problems that are of a public nature, involved as it is in an ongoing negotiation between the good of the community—the community formed by employees and the community of the society in its entirety—whose good health is a guarantee of its own health, and its private interests.

The SouRCE residencies help us to move forward in this examination, and raise the following question: does the artist, who is present in the company, convey a *public micro-space*²? Does the artist shift the porous boundaries which separate public space and private space? What is the public space inside a compartment of private law, whose operating results are under no obligation to serve the community? In the public space everything to do with living together is shared, with a respect for everyone's equality with regard to dignity. This principle is variously interpreted in the world of work, be it public or private.

Whatever the case may be, the essentially non-motivated character of an artistic idea means that the experiment can be appropriated by one and all, including within the company setting, where, in normal times, the corporate object channels subjectivities. Art makes it possible to hijack human facts and gestures from their productive end purposes by getting their

singular features to exist for themselves, both 'gratuitously and uselessly'. This is what is proposed by Marie Reinert and Claudia Triozzi by inviting employees to remove their professional gesture from their primary occupation.

ANOTHER SPACE-TIME

The SouRCE residency experiment opens up a heterogeneous space-time within the company's organised space-time structure. The artist's presence in both work place and work time introduces the possibility of a heterotopia and a 'heterochrony'. Within the company, both geography and cadences are arranged by the end purpose of the object, inside statutory parameters (work time, days of rest, and so on). Each instant and each space, including breaks and pauses, is indexed to this object, in a productive relationship. The artist's presence makes it possible to construct a space-time which, while existing *intra muros*, is not the company's space-time. This may look like a storage or filing room turned into a film set (Reinert), a production unit that has become the stage for a bruitist opera (Triozzi), the playground in a photographic portrait (Bernardini), or a writing workshop (courants faibles). In this shared space of creation, inside the company but with 'off-the-ground elements', the employee as a person takes part in the artistic process and becomes something other than a spectator looking at a finished work, and something other than a worker needing re-motivation.

As Maurizio Lazzarato so aptly analyses all this in the pages that follow, these breaks are played out at a 'micro' level, the level of singular sensibilities where things indeterminate and undecidable have an entitlement, and are arrayed as many different 'micro-possibilities' within which the individual can stay without having to answer for his/her productivity. In Lazzarato's view, the real issue is still the 'molar' ('macro' level) treatment of the outcome of these molecular upheavals, that is to say the channelling, by management, of the subjectivities which, once stimulated, will better nourish the company's creative performances. Innovation, which is so vital for the company, is actually fuelled by projections and development scenarios which call upon the imagination and the intuitions and hunches of employees. So it is more than necessary, in order to understand the spirit of the SouRCE residencies, to take all these things into proper consideration: by dissociating the artistic project from any aim of innovation, and by laying claim, on behalf of these encounter-based situations, to an open and undirected time-frame of *experimentation*, whose arena is the subject-to-subject relationship, which is always a special one.

2. This question was raised by the Think tank during the *Problems Generator IIIII* seminar (cf. p. 108)

