

Title of Project: Specificity of Circumstances

Description:

Specificity of Circumstances is a project conceived by Soi3 (collaborative duo formed by Irina Baldini and Masako Matsushita in 2009) for an Artist Residency at Residency Unlimited headquarters in Brooklyn, NY (2nd July – 2nd September 2012).

It is derived from fragments documented during a period of a year (allowed by a Residency at Southbank Centre which, encouragingly, supported the research and provided space and time in which to invest towards a development of previous performances) that was be the basis of this project.

Location: Residency Unlimited, 360 Court St. Carroll Gardens Brooklyn, NY

Dates: July and August 2012

I was invited by Residency Unlimited, NY, to further develop the following:

- finding ways to keep alive the potential of interactiveness in art galleries;
- considering and exploring the problematics of that;
- observation of visitor's behavior in site specific dance performances with a view to sensitizing audiences to the gallery space as a site-specific entity.

I went to NY with my work partner, Masako Matsushita, to develop the project we had proposed to RU in Brooklyn during a two months residency. The length of the residency allowed me to deepen many aspects of my work, both as an independent artist as well as in relation to concerns about collaboration with other professionals in the field of arts. Few collaborative works started during the Residency, although some of which are still ongoing and will stretch to 2014. The two months allowed participation in a dance festival in LIC, NY; movement and performance interventions during open studios by other residents; production of a new piece of work which has had a very positive response and participation in a discussion panel together with two other artists who deal with forms performance in art galleries. Invaluable experiences, all of these. There were also many opportunities to discuss the nature of the work and the concepts behind it with many curators who work in the NY area and abroad and with whom it was challenging and nourishing to talk and share a performer's vision with that of, most often, a visual art curator.

Very soon after the US residency I was accepted to participate in another residency program in Italy, Pesaro, still with Masako my colleague. We had the opportunity to share with others the experience we had just lived and put into practice what we had learned leading workshops, involving artists from different mediums in the work, talking to an audience about our practice and making it available to viewer of all backgrounds.

I would recommend being open and available to shifts in the project embarked upon, as it can be much more enriching than what one would expect. Personally, I had a clear and structured schedule for the first two weeks of the residency and a rough outline for the rest of the time. It was perfect to then allow influences from the place and the people that I met, once settled, to feed into the investigation and stretch the work itself to take different shapes.

It has been a wonderful experience which still resonates in me, not only in my work but also in my everyday life. It signed deeply how I think and act in various environments, making me aware of many aspects of the artistic practices through all mediums.

Many, many thanks to all those I encountered and who made this journey possible,

Irina Baldini

Before I left I had these questions in mind...

- How does performing in a closed, defined space (a gallery or a studio) compare to other settings?
- How does the audience/performer relationship differ?
- Does the relationship between the dancers differ
- Does the relationship to space and to time (of viewer and performer) differ?

And all these questions found answers in various situations during the residency.

What follows is a summarised diary of the rich and intense production time in NY:

On the 30th of August we had our final performance and sharing of the outcome at RU . . .

*“ Time Menu :45/:15
a work by Irina Baldini & Masako Matsushita - Soi3
August 30th at RU - Residency Unlimited
360 Court Street Carroll Gardens _ Brooklyn*

*Time is a meter with which we can measure value of our performance.
A visual-art piece usually has no time restraints (you can look at it for however long you want).
Performance tends to have a beginning (or a sense of it) and an end (or a sense of it).
If you can measure the value of an object with money by buying it for you to experience it for a longer time, could you make of a performance a durable experience? ”*



During the whole period, we benefited from studio visits with a number of curators and directors of galleries and art organizations: Maud Jaquin, Jodi Waynberg; Matthew Lyons from The Kitchen; Juan Betancurth; Todd Shalom founder of Elastic City; with Sasha Dees; Abrons Art Center.

We met with Adriano Clemente, a sound artist and designer, with whom we started a project filming samples of movement functional to the development of a collaboration we called "voice to movement".



We took the chance to assist rehearsals with Riley Hooker, a visual artist and graphic designer, who is currently collaborating with a dancer Alvaro Gonzales and this was also wonderful and inspiring. He uses sculpture and photography to create images that re-arrange objects from everyday life.

Much of the time was spent filming for documentation purposes: investigation of a space and it's character.

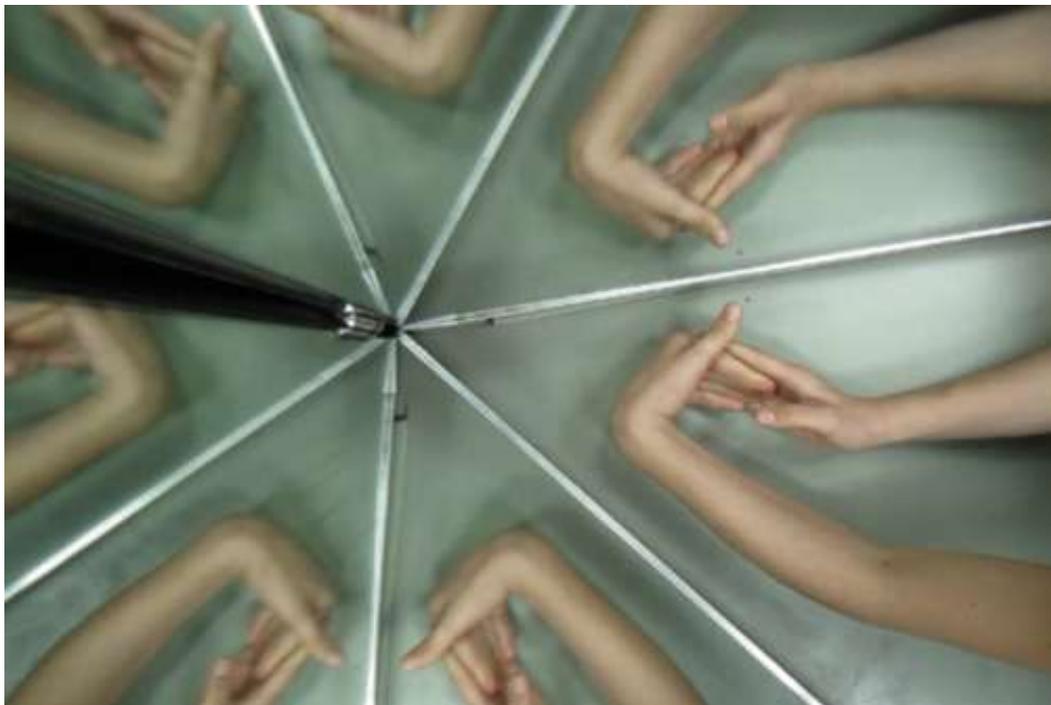


We explored several different settings for performance and made clips which we used towards our final performance and installation. The mix of old and new, traditional and modern, classic and off-beat objects has a particular impact on one's behaviour in the space. The tendency is to move at a slow pace, the gaze pays attention to the detail and keeps awareness of the peripheral vision, sometimes getting surprised by the detail. The body follows the pathway designed by the clumped objects, stopping and turning when needed and reacting to the organization by accommodating their various levels and directions.

There is a constant shifting between 'becoming' the object or the space; being a moving object and/or a still body amongst the objects and being a visitor of the space. These states of embodiment are interesting to the performance when taken outside in the streets, where spatial restrictions are only a memory as are the impressions of the pieces encountered inside:

- We discussed the value and currency of time, when dealing with a fleeting medium (movement) that does not leave tangible products other than memory or visual documentation/footage.
- We had conversations based on description of Soi3's work through imagination: just the same way one would read a book rather than watch the movie about the same story. This way there is room for imagination and space for reflection (considering that nowadays most concepts are expressed through delivery of clear messages which aim to 'sell the product' readily, even before this is on the market).

We performed at The Secret Theatre, LIC: Opening the house with a video installation *Suppietij* and performance on stage by Soi3.



We performed *Held in Trust*, prior to the panel discussion at RU; setting up the structure for a flexible conversation on the theme moderated by Emily Zimmerman in relation to the exhibition she curated *Uncertain Spectator* at EMPAC.



We had conversations based on the relationship between the artist/the work and the viewer, empathic engagement (active or passive) with the work, expectation on both sides, communicativeness in the moment of interaction with the work and how does **trust** come into play in the practice of each of the panelists:

Annie Dorsen, David Levine and Irina Baldini + Masako Matsushita.





We performed @ Union Square as part of NY Portuguese Short Film Festival during a show by Mark Bolotin organized by Arte Institute.



We interacted with installations by Mark Bolotin, Sonya Schönberger, Guy Goldstein and Man Bartlett for an Open Studio event @ RU.

Performing during the event led to a post-event discussion with curator Jodie Weinberg about why/how/when to include live dance performance during visual art exhibitions. In this context, performance was a 'service' provided to the context of a presentation of the work of four artists and not 'work presented' alongside the rest.

Performance may have a function of facilitating a relationship between the viewer and the work by suggesting ways to approach it - proximity to the work, interaction with the work. Performers may

also take the role of 'activators' of a work or of the space, by encouraging freer dynamic movement within the exhibition space and connecting the individual works one with the other just by 'moving' the space; or they can be integrated in the work. In the last case it is necessary for the visual artist and the movement artist to talk about the union of the two forms of expression and understanding is needed from both sides. It is not always necessary that the performance (as a product of collaboration) grows collaboratively and culminates in a piece, but as long as there is reciprocal and deep understanding of the work of one another, the co-existence of two or more art forms can enhance the experience of the viewer. A performer can interpret an existing work and stay detached from its concept, he can embody the concept and generate material that stands on its own separately from the work it was inspired by (it then becomes a translation of the concept through a different medium), or he can be entirely independent as a living sculpture animating the environment and contributing to its dynamicity (moving object in the space). For a curator the decision between these functions of a dancer within a gallery setting is very delicate and, therefore, it is important to understand what is the intention behind such decision to work together on how to go new places with this.

In conclusion:

This opportunity with Residency Unlimited NY has contributed to my better understanding of communication within the arts field and has given me a great trust in the role of art in our society and the freedom we must hold onto.

As a core of professional development, I investigated the function of a mainly performance-based medium in art, but I found that all mediums can talk the same language between being a means of representation of the social concerns (and of what may be the needs of contemporary society) and responding to the circumstances as well as being individual needs of expression.

This period of time was a trampoline for projects to follow (as I could prove during the residency which followed in Italy) and a great push for all I will do next, between working with performance in art galleries as well as site-responsive!

To see further info about the work see blog <http://soi3.tumblr.com/>;
development in the next residency <http://corpodipesaro.tumblr.com/> ;
website: www.irinaosterberg.com