
Mutual Dependencies

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with

Jeremy Akerman

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Gefn Press

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Katharine Meynell

Jim Mooney

Virginia Nimarkoh

Kit Poulson

Emily Richardson

Maria Walsh

H.F. Westley-Smith

Gary Stevens

Will Stone

Live Art Development Agency
and Artwords Press invite you to
the launch of

Mutual Dependencies

Monday 5 December 2011

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Live Art Development Agency
Rochelle School, Arnold Circus
London E2 7ES

We hope that you will be able to join us. Booking is essential, please RSVP to Aaron Wright of the Live Art Development Agency on aaron@thisisliveart.co.uk by Thursday 1 December at the latest.

How to get to the Live Art Development Agency:

http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/how_to_get_here.html

Mutual Dependencies is part artists' book and part academic research. It contains a range of collaborative and inter-dependent work exploring what the practice of art writing might be.

This book includes drawings, recollections, photographs and diagrams, recipes for pigments or preserves, writings, ruminations and tentative articulations. Taken as a whole, it engages with the overlaps between score, script, performance, concept and drawing, *including scoring the table or drawing conclusions*.

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Pedagogies
H.F. Westley-Smith
Jeremy Akerman
Maria Walsh

In the final part of Jeremy Akerman's contribution to *Mutual Dependencies*, he describes an incident during a residency in Korea when while blindly walking backwards from the painting he is working on (to get a more objective view), he finds himself reversing into his mother. He had forgotten, for that moment, that she had come to visit him. He was in the process of making remembered portraits of his father.

Such complexities – metaphorical, psycho-analytical, physical – of how artists position themselves and identify the frameworks in which essential dialogues inform their work are the subject of increasing controversy, not only in academia or in relation to the gallery setting but also, as Ackerman seems to indicate, in what you might at first expect to be the splendid isolation of the studio. To speak of collaboration and collaborative practices is also to expose how you map and identify the cultural climate in which you are an active participant. The views of the contributors here, at least, demonstrate radically different standpoints on both collaboration as an approach to contemporary art production and the climate in which it might operate and take effect.

For Maria Walsh, the collaboration can have a disturbing habit of confirming the status quo rather than providing anything resembling 'an answer' to the crises that beset contemporary art and its myriad dialogues. For her, the increasingly common assumption of collaborative artist/good versus individual artist/bad, the encouragement of sociability over introspection beloved of policy makers, dovetails worryingly with Nicholas Bourriaud's proposals in *Relational Aesthetics* favouring the facilitation of forms over meanings. In stark contrast to Walsh's view that it is naïve to consider collaboration a 'counter model of behaviour to dominant structures of power', H. F. Westley-Smith (an academic collaborative partnership) question whether collaboration as a device can have much effect beyond the studio in what they consider 'a maniacally individualistic' society. Countering Walsh's problem with collaboration as a tool that cannot entirely separate itself from already existing power

trends, it remains for them – though in need of substantial revision – a device that could develop to again upset or challenge pedagogic forms as they currently exist.

Their model for review is Peter Kardia's structured engagement with students in 'the Locked Room' of St Martin's School of Art Sculpture Department in 1969. Staff agreed to act as though mute, providing students with an array of varying materials for undisclosed periods of time, giving no indication of the parameters of the work they were expected to make, thereby removing the student's dependencies on the system, relationships, or support structures they may have believed were their right. Freedom in this way became inseparable from utopian nightmare. The authority figures were still there, but bound by a withdrawn, obscured, alternative set of rules.

If Kardia's 'experiment', though a real event, has the Ballardian undercurrents of a future or parallel period, the construct of Brown Mountain College with its lessons *via* the Re-Skilling Department or among others, Escapology, Stage Fighting, and Giant Origami Making, presents a parody of art college education that nevertheless feels very much of our time. The authority figure is the only voice heard, seemingly demonstrating knowledge of any subject in any field, appropriating imagery from art and popular culture to illustrate the points made.

If the contributors here have anything in common at all, it is recognition of the unstable ground upon which collaboration as a pedagogic tool currently sits. The artist will always seek to define the dialogues most useful to the development of her/his work at any particular time whether inside or outside the academy. However, at least for the moment, perhaps, the loudest voices heard are not necessarily those most effective in taking this matter forward. The contributors here set about this challenge.

Nicky Coutts