

Shifting (of perspective; and thus, understanding)

As an artist, one embraces the challenge to engage with communities, however physical or incorporeal; present, past or future, using a variety of media, venues and methodologies. As a curator, one is engaged in creating and taking care of the situations originated to determine and allow the artists' work – realising a project interdependent on the audience, the artists, the work and the medium. This turns out to be an exhibition, festival, symposium or other 'platforms' where audiences have actually complex control over the content. Curators, artists and producers' perspectives will be tested, subverted and used 'against them'. The viewer, reader or listener owns the capacity to consider what it is that they are intended to see, read or hear and in which way it is intended to be experienced. I subscribe to this. I'm sceptical about curatorial projects (including my own) where I tend to see the authorial position excluding the antagonistic space, or the possibility of shifting perspectives; where the content and the way of experiencing it is dictated, either by the artist, the curator, the set-up, the interpretation material or something else.

A curatorial agency not only has to raise questions but also inhabit the problem and be skilled in defining the problem. One effective method to achieve this is to decentralise a field of inquiry, shifting ideas across multiple borders – physical and metaphorical. In my experience, a fruitful approach is to expand the existing boundaries of art by introducing another system, say science, law, or mass media. These channels are a site for artists and curators to push the boundaries beyond their comfort zones and commit to making new ideas readable, accessible, distributed and diffused. It is also important to discuss the intention of these ideas, and forms of contamination, with the audiences.

The bottom line is that both curators and artists, who want to effectively work with an audience rather than for one, would be in a more relevant position if they pursue a collaboration with other systems of a given society, rather than expecting an ad-hoc opportunity while working within the art world. Reciprocal influences are not foreseeable and will depend, crucially, upon a significant reception by the audience.

Alfredo Cramerotti

The text is a revised version of an essay published on switch, an event, project, and book that archives the first three years of an artist led project by Triona Ryan & Harald Turek in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Ireland. It began in 2008 as a ground up approach to showing contemporary pieces of moving images in a small town, rural context, a conversation between artists, audiences and artworks which takes place outside of the big city and applies itself to the rhythm of smaller places. <http://www.s-w-i-t-c-h.org>