

Double Institutional Articulation

GUNNAR SANDIN

Associate professor

Department of Architecture, Lund University

Lund Sweden

gunnar.sandin@arkitektur.lth.se

Abstract

When the rules and architecture of hosting institutions are turned into the working matter of artistic articulation, we can still – in times of post-criticality – speak of institutional critique. Contemporary forms for criticality may by traditional standards be oxymoronic, showing for instance alignment with capital at the same time as criticising the constituents of neo-liberal hegemonies. In regard of emancipatory techniques that foster “release rather than opposition” (Easterling 2013), and non-aggressive “instituent practices” of art (Raunig 2009), institutional transgression is here discussed in terms of different modes of what could be called *double institutional articulation*. Both Easterling’s and Raunig’s version of criticality contain elements of fleeing or escaping; they reject complete transparency and straightforwardness. One difference however, between Easterling’s “sneaky techniques of dissidence”, and Raunig’s “instituent practices” is that if Easterling’s modes of non-alignment are based in actions that are hard to recognise for the opponent as oppositional, Raunig’s do contain clearer elements of opposition. His main source of inspiration is the foucauldian interpretation of the classical Greek conception of *parrhesia*, which denotes someone courageously telling the truth to other people.

In a reflection on the semiotic figure of “double articulation, originally” stated in linguistics as a way to model the fact that speech contains both meaningful and non-meaningful phonetic parts articulated in one and the same utterance (Hjelmslev 1969), and later appropriated as a concept by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze to function as a generative principle in an object theory, this text attempts to show how institutional critique, by addressing its own fundament, is critical not to one, but at least two, social institutions in one and the same artistic act. With “double institutional articulation” is here meant artistic acts where an art institution and a societal institution is jointly addressed.

Through a rendering of works by Meirle Laderman Ukeles, Michael Asher, Anna Odell, Center for Urban Pedagogy, and Beate Hølmbeck, institutional transgression of this double nature is here discerned, exemplified and discussed. At least five modes of such double institutional articulation appears as: 1) acts that conjoin different types of institutions, thus activating otherwise separate types of societal agency; 2) acts that make spatial alterations to existing design of institutions, hence influencing institutional administration as a general issue; 3) acts that initially operate unannounced in one institutional context, with a postponed effect in other contexts; 4) acts that contrast hermetic institutional decision-making with public involvement; and finally 5) acts that temporarily disregard normal institutional existence in pursuing autonomous practice.

Critical modes like these, illuminate not only the institutional regulatory framework and its material features, but also the societal task that an institution has of hosting, representing and ordering human subjectivity. Transferred to research, and research strategies, these types of action, these types of precarious positioning, point in a direction where the researcher bring into play her own fundament while interrogating institutional constituents.

Keywords: Institution, critique, art, space.

Key references

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