



THE SIX FIRST ANSWERS
TO THE OPEN CALL
HARBOUR FOR CULTURES

P | Venice, Palazzo Zorzi
D | Friday, May 12th, 2017

IARA BOUBNOVA

P | Sofia, Bulgaria
O | art curator

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at a HfC?

To perceive that the place is harbouring unpopular, but beautifully crazy ideas, gives refuge to “art criminals” of different types, that it’s possible there to meet those who produce and are ready to exchange (ideas, products, “futures”).

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

Not very normal experience of a person sharing time between artists association and state institution, positives and negatives of still underestimated post-totalitarian cultural luggage.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

Gems of unusual, atypical, and diamonds of utopias from known and unknown lands.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in a HfC?

Through gleaning of others wisdom, negotiating values, bargaining for skills and exploiting experiences.

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

I presume that our globalised contemporary society very will see critical art as a risk to normality, as it happened before. So, if you ask about “risk taking”, every individual public visual expression of disagreement could be seen as a risk to the status quo. So, again and again we have to keep out at our modest spaces, platforms, areas and volumes. The same, if you are talking about the tasking risk. The Porto of art has to defend it’s status of metaphorical Porto franco - a community with less up to no hierarchy, open kindness, active exchange of thoughts, goods and people.

6. How can you produce “social capital“ in the frame of a HfC?

Through education, role modelling and exemplarily activities that protects independence of critical art production, presentation and studies.

MAJA ĆIRIĆ

P | Belgrade, Serbia
O | art curator

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at an HfC?

The acknowledgement that the cultures are not viewed anymore in the plural, but as one culture that emerged from erasing the "S" standing for the superficial, superior and segregating approach to undeniably embodied hybridity of post-globalism.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to an HfC?

An open mind; A wise theoretical lens; A wide span of information in relation to the topic from C.P.Cavafy's *Ithaka*, Hito Steyerl's critical discourse on *Freeports* and ICOM'S *Code of Ethics* with a special emphasise on the Conflict of Interest part; Ecological awareness; State of the art technology; Hybrid language practice.; Spirituality rather than religion; Wide and unpredictable network; Will to fight for the integration of the already existing but politically controlled relations.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

A possibility to make exhibitions that will simultaneously reflect upon the existing structures, but also allow curators to confirm themselves as authors. Something like a possibility to make exhibitions like Kubrick set up the movies while simultaneously allowing the artists to take charge and promote new hybrids.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in an HfC?

It is not mine unless it is based on the lived hybrid experience of the "we".

5. How can your practice of taking risk increase an HfC?

By avoiding the recycling of colonialism that is perpetuated by adding various prefixes (de-; post-; new;) to it in order to justify the hegemony of the Western art world.

6. How can you produce “social capital“ in the frame of an HfC?

To dribble past the political predictability of the funding bodies that could idealistically result in the opening of new political gates.

Please list 5 tags related to your answers:

#curatorialethics
#transnational
#transconnectivity
#transgenerational
#postglobalism

CĂLIN DAN

P | Bucharest, Romania
O | artist

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at an HfC?

The possibility of unloading and loading goods.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

Information, above anything, it all starts from there.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

Exchanging ideas.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in a HfC?

If “ensure=protect”, communication and digitization are the best ways to preserve cultural goods.

Please list 5 tags related to your answers:

loading / unloading
information
exchange
communication
digitization

SHAMINA DE GONZAGA

C | USA
O | director of a non-governmental organization

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at a HfC?

before arriving, I know it to be my destination. I feel that I have a reason to be there, that I am implicitly welcome. I'm happy to arrive. entry is facilitated, not intentionally treacherous. mechanisms that could arbitrarily withhold entry/passage, or force expulsion, simply don't exist. since permission is not required, it is granted. the system for acknowledging entry, functions on the basis of interest / positive curiosity, not suspicion. questions of identity rooted in circumstances beyond one's control (i.e. place of birth/ status of statehood) are not determining factors. there is no system in place to maintain different standards for different groups of people. the arrival zone is well communicated to other areas; transitions are accessible. I don't have to speak or understand the language(s) spoken; multiple methods of communication exist. There are no signs that would automatically define me as an outsider. There are no insiders/outsideers. or perhaps difference is, in itself, the norm. upon arrival there are maps and people describing alternate

ways to explore the space and available activities for work, service, or recreation; lively spaces for congregation among residents and newcomers with ample opportunities to showcase their respective cultures, or creativity; multiple currencies, and modalities of exchange are employed. there is always a way out.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

both material and non-material goods: seeds, books, and insights I have collected along my journey. my curiosity, and senses to serve as a mirror for whomever and whatever comes my way. all variety of potential services that my experience enables me to provide (e.g. as - a teller, or scribe of stories, people and places, - a translator between languages and generations, - a practitioner of divination methods, - an instructor in the basics of certain disciplines, - a researcher, editor, mediator, advisor) as well as other general services that may be useful in the HfC, putting my body, mind and time at the disposition of the HfC's needs, be it as a caretaker, cook, cleaner, picker of crops, whatever is useful. all goods and services I bring are adaptable and available to contribute to the HfC as needed, or upon request, in non-exploitative manners.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

A profit on the material and non-material levels. work, recreation, and rest; access to activities and environments that engage mind, body, and spirit. exchanges of services and ideas that may not be available elsewhere. change, that part of me evolves, perhaps appropriates something new, such that I am no longer the same from having interacted with the HfC – whether what has been acquired is cultural, intellectual, material/physical, relational, or spiritual. If my stay comes to an end, I am well disposed to move on to my next destination; hopefully the experience of having also contributed something beneficial to the HfC.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in a HfC?

before it can be ensured, I'd have to articulate what my culture is, or what aspects of it are to be maintained or discarded, way of life, or thinking, language, identity, practice or tradition, etc. I may find I don't have a culture to ensure, other than the culture of non-belonging. In the midst of diverse cultural identities that retain the richness of their respective traditions, I may hold an empty space for reflection, a receptacle for everything and nothing in particular, devoid of roots or definition. I ensure my non-culture by avoiding all pretense to own or belong, and by consciously engaging with others who are not like me, thereby preventing the creation of a tribe of expats like myself; the HfC would allow individuality and freedom of expression, including the ability to question or respectfully not adhere to any norms developed within the HfC itself

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

the risk I take is a consistent relationship with the unknown, being open to it, systematically questioning the impulse to take for granted what appears to be true, the tendency repeat the past, including practices or modalities that have been deemed successful. it can increase the HfC by preventing its calcification, engaging with discomfort, unravelling the threads that would lead to the formation of a fixed group identity and narrative of the HfC, inviting uncertainty as a connector of human experience, perhaps a more honest basis for a collective than any ideologically or ethnically rooted premise.

6. > How can you produce “social capital“ in the frame of a HfC?

through exercises to facilitate the continuous interaction, dialogue and mobility of groups and individuals in non-contrived or rote ways; the creation of open spaces where ideas and strategies addressing actual needs or visions for improvement can be posted and matched with the necessary parties; centers for people to express their concept of the sacred, initiate festivities, share stories and histories; opportunities to switch places/roles, experience different trades; hands on learning from one another, through both local and long distance, tech-facilitated means; workshops to support the formation and dissolution of collaborations, offer tools for mindful interactions; developing mechanisms for creative initiatives or enterprises started in the HfC to travel or partner with initiatives elsewhere; forming associations and projects with a view to benefiting future generations.

BERAL MADRA

P | Istanbul, Turkey
O | art curator

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at a HfC?

Arriving to a harbour is always an exciting but also uncanny experience; one can have good or bad surprises. Some harbours are alive with people coming or going, welcoming or satisfy the unsatisfied needs of mass-tourism. Venice harbour, despite protests, is the un-canniest harbour in receiving giant ships every day. Yet some harbours are deserted after Neo-liberal economic collapses or have fulfilled their functions long ago. I have lately seen these deserted harbours of 19th and early 20th century in İstanbul and in Thessaloniki that are destined to be culture, tourism and entertainment hubs. Currently we should consider that some harbours in the Mediterranean and Blacksea Coast are shadowed by threat of political violence and are on the edge of war. War ships are occupying these harbours. Harbours of culture and art are currently the most welcoming spaces in a city and they are representing the benefits of social capital.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

Any kind of good “goods“ to be brought to harbours should be decided with the people of the city. Workshops with the volunteers and NGO's of the city, architects, designers, artists and other related experts will help to find “the good“ to be launched into the post-harbour. Evidently creative people can make proposals to be considered by the people. I would like to recommend to bring a multi-cultural contemporary art centre to a HfC, related to the production of contemporary art in the larger Mediterranean region from 1980's on. In addition many kinds of museums and archive buildings and recreation spaces...The best example is Thessaloniki harbour. Last month I was there and witnessed a special lunch for the refugees. Istanbul Karaköy harbour is due to transformation and to our regret it will be the victim of Neo-capitalist interests rather than serving the people of the city.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

If I will work actively, giving my time, energy and network to the project, I would like to have a fee, under the standards of EU culture policy. Otherwise, I will be pleased to be a voluntary part of this timely project. As a curator and art critic from Turkey, I feel the responsibility to empower the networking and joint projects with EU countries. This goal is

very essential at the moment, as the political power in Turkey creates a conflict with EU. The rupture from the democratic system of EU will be destructive for the advanced local art production and obstructs the path of the artists and curators. The profit I expect will be collaboration and further communication for the sake of our artists in Turkey.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in a HfC?

Under the limited economic conditions exhibition making is quite difficult; therefore I would like to show videos or give conferences and workshops on the current art production in Turkey. Donation of archives is also a possibility.

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

If I am involved in transforming a harbour into a culture space, the main risk will be the lack of interest of the local people; if there is no awareness and appreciation of the population, it is difficult to realize projects in official spaces. The second risk is the potential resistance arising from the politicians and local governments. First of all these two risks should be eliminated through collaborative, collective strategies. I am not mentioning the financial risks, as it is public and private investment that should be prepared beforehand.

6. How can you produce “social capital“ in the frame of a HfC?

In the age of Post-truth the term “social capital“ seems to be vague, hard to measure and to reach as the social capital is a concept that is attracting interest among politicians and policy makers with its increasing effect over marginalisation in our societies. Within the current global socio-political context the most effective way of empowering social capital is contemporary art concepts, practices and activist performances. Contemporary art has the resources of networks, collaborations and relationships that are essential for social capital. HfC can be designed as a center for social capital, through collaboration of city planners, ecologists, architects, sociologists, social-psychologists, artists and art and culture experts. The outcome of a collaborative/collective document will secure the sustainability of HfC.

ANA PERAICA

P | Split, Croatia
O | art curator

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at a HfC?

Trajectory experience of boats and harbors I have myself fully realised in years of travels, back and forth, the longest coastal connection on the Adriatic; Rijeka - Zadar - Split - Hvar - Dubrovnik - Ancona. Only a sequence of this travel, Rijeka to Split, took a full twelve hours night shift. I used to spend two of such nights on the sea, weekly. This line was discontinued back in 2010. The old sixties boat from Yugoslavia managing it was sold as a metal waste. The boat itself was, as captain told, itself a sign of socialist type of luxury, had two hair salons, piano room etc... and it us to travel as far as Cuba. Cabins were large, with wooden furniture, and a large working desk so I used it to write during nights.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

I made literary thousands of photographs of this boat, Liburnija. It was my Boat log. I will share this ethnographic research in a reduced size and capture the idea each travel towards arts changes the meaning of arts. I will be trying to compare the art piece of my personal experience with the one of the artist/capt. Zlatan Dumanić, who passed away recently, himself participating on Biennale in Venice.

3. Which kind of "profit" will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

The profit, according to my theory of arrival and changed experience, will be in a shift of the meaning of the very same art piece. Namely, once we can demonstrate to ourselves that our consciousness has 'shifted' on a single object of interpretation, we have a proof of our own advancement. Moreover, when multiple exposures of interpretation occur, in a social environment - this shift happens more radically advancing the state of consciousness. And then; our meeting and even small conversations during coffee breaks are the ultimate profit that can be. So, even the same harbour cannot be the same one as in between two arrivals a travel has changed the consciousness.

4. How can you "ensure" your culture in a HfC?

I have uploaded my boat diaries on the web, taking time to chose from few thousands to eight hundreds (only?). But, as it is impossible to show eight hundred photographs even in a large show, I will focus on few that changed the interpretation the fully and travel through travels in order to see the changes on the coast.

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

I would say that taking ethnological research to document and archive each approach to a single art piece is risky enough, as it seems as an unfinished process (thus it cannot be fully scientific). Moreover, there is no necessity of the induction that can convince us that all the upcoming travels will be the same; or that we will ultimately reach the harbour as maybe one day there will be no harbour to meet. Finally, such a method will risk a psychological effect of clinging between departure and arrival, never actually managing to fix the identity-in-place. But then, would such an un-fixed, floating and undefined identity be of the ultimate profit in the culture of identity designs?

6. How can you produce "social capital" in the frame of a HfC?

The world culture is enforcing air fare, as a short travel, thus leading to disappearance of long travel experience of the boat (not a floating experience of a cruising boat). My own idea would be to enforce the idea of the ship, contrary to cruising boat that endangers both cities I arrive to and the one I come from with mass tourism. While in Venice, I will go to a meeting with inhabitants of the old city centre, which I am myself back here in Split. And, with assistance of curators from various countries, I would like to address the issue of the pollution of cruising boats, now already moving south and destroying new countries becoming merely "destinations" as; Montenegro, Albania.

MAREN RICHTER

C | Austria

O | art curator

1. What makes you feel "arriving" at a HfC?

A Harbour aims to bridge two territories: the fluid and the 'solid': Harbour of Culture is a harbour connected to an undefined territory, which needs to be still discovered. It is an imaginary space, which is able to host the known as well as the unknown - equally. HfC is a space of negotiation of what it means today that we are a society of coming and going. It marks the journey itself. It is a vivid place of a culture of trading ideas that stretch the concept of welcoming and hosting.

HfC is able to deconstruct the current collapse of dichotomies characteristic of the present and which results from the disappearance of a 'constitutive outside', where old binaries - such as city/hinterland, local/foreign have disappeared - which leads to a strong sense of totalizing phenomena and therefore a resistance to conceptualize totality. The HfC therefore bridges this dialectic tension of (be)coming and leaving filled with rites and rituals of betwixt and between.

2. What kind of "goods" will you bring to a HfC?

HfC is an epistemological as well a speculative space, which incorporates 'goods' as time and space for imagination and negotiations. As a matter of fact the major goods are 'tools of providing': Providing space and time to experiment and experience the unknown or the notion on welcoming and first and foremost transformations. The goods are to learn to understand the between and betwixt - the liminal stage - we have entered and being articulated by crises and conflicts, which cause a claim of 'securing and guarding' the system, such as capitalism or nation state.

It is the space that encourages us to experience the unknown not as something, which produces fears but rather enriches our lives.

3. Which kind of "profit" will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

The goods to be traded and profit to be made in the HfC are the same. It is time and space for learning from the alien.

4. How can you "ensure" your culture in a HfC?

Culture is nothing to be ensured but rather secured. The culture is the space of re-learning and of de-colonizing our thoughts. It is about creating tools to read and profit from what makes us feel 'insecure'.

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

Sorry I am not sure whether I understand that question. Or did you mean taking risk instead of tasking?

6. How can you produce "social capital" in the frame of a HfC?

The social capital is unconditional hospitality in the HfC. In ancient cultures hospitality involved welcoming the stranger at the host location and offering him food, shelter, and safety. Hospitality is a fundamental element of civilization, where the stranger's right to protection and shelter has been honored since time immemorial. This meaning of hospitality centers on the belief that strangers should be assisted and protected while traveling. Against the background of today's migration

situation caused by (civil wars and natural disasters hospitality as a micro-universe exemplifying some of the challenges we face in terms of coexistence today.

The social currency it to raise the question if today hospitality is still a matter of protection. further on it poses the question of how hospitality can be still proposed as a criteria for free circulation, mobility of people, cultural values and enrichment of communities.

Please list 5 tags related to your answers.

Unknown territories,
(un)learning,
the liminal,
speculative space,
hospitality.

BAŞAK ŞENOVA

P | Istanbul, Turkey
O | art curator

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at a HfC?

The first feeling should be **curiosity** with the desire to learn or know about the content that HfC offers. Furthermore, the idea of diversity and getting acquainted with new comers excites me.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

My diverse experiences of curating and collaborating in different geographies and fields have shaped my approach and effort to understand cultural differences, different **perspectives**, political, and social situations. Each time, the social, political, and cultural circumstances have shaped the development of my projects. In this respect, I would refer “my approach and experience“ as my goods to bring to HfC.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

The new ways of communicating through technological developments propose perceptual changes with multi-layered realities and identities. Art production inhabits a potential to be an alternative news channel, as well as the **production of knowledge**. Therefore, my profit will be to discover new ways that produce knowledge.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in a HfC?

Following and being influenced by the global and local political and economical settings, unresolved refugee crisis and fears of terrorism, as cultural workers, our roles has been shifting. It is time for us to built collective new structures of thinking to reflect on political, social, economic, and cultural realms of the globe. In this context, I would not ensure anything, but I would be open to reconsider meaning of “my“ culture today.

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

Tasking risk is equal to taking “responsibility“ for me. Therefore, I already take the **responsibility** of my stance with my curatorial projects and it would be the same for HfC.

6. How can you produce “social capital“ in the frame of a HfC?

As I see it, the only way to produce social capital is to consider each individual as a **resource**.

Please list 5 tags related to your answers.

curiosity
perspectives
production of knowledge
responsibility
resource

MICK WILSON

C | Sweden
O | artist

1. What makes you feel “arriving“ at a HfC?

The ‘figure’ of harbour, as the place where people and things come and go, where time may be re-framed by a ship being becalmed or storm-bound, waiting to arrive or depart. The liminality of harbour as the point at which we enter or leave a smaller enclosed world - the temporary total and closed institution of the ship at sea. The liminality of harbour spaces as spaces of storage, as spaces of transfer, as spaces of exclusion or safe-passage, as spaces of unexpected arrivals, of creole, of news-from-elsewhere, of working the docks, of the revolution in Haiti (1804) informing the slave uprising of Capetown (1808); of the general strikes from New Zealand to Ireland (1913), and of all the liminalities of the social order engendered by the maritime trade of colonial modernity. The spaces of the black atlantic; of the opium wars; of the plantation trades of chocolate, sugar, tea, coffee, palm oil, wood, rubber and mineral extraction; and of the diasporas of indentured workers, convicts, of colonised and colonists, of refugees, and of people smugglers.

2. What kind of “goods“ will you bring to a HfC?

Metaphors – transports – and stories of people and food moving through the world.

3. Which kind of “profit“ will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HfC?

To better know the horrors of “our sea“ and to harbour something in response.

4. How can you “ensure“ your culture in a HfC?

Is this what is needed – to ensure my own stuff?

5. How can your practice of tasking risk increase a HfC?

Interrupt the metaphors we play with by attending to the horrors of “our sea“ and of “fortress Europe“.

6. How can you produce “social capital“ in the frame of a HfC?

Social capital is not a concept I use so much, but I think the spirit of the question, is how to make something of public good that is not a transaction, investment or privatisation of the world. Reasoning and imagining can be public goods, if they are oriented by the horrors of our brotchrs and susters drowiung in “our sea“.

other (your ideas and comments on the topic, crucial or imaginative)

The harbour can be a figure to think about the way 'capital-colonial-modernity' harnesses and mobilises differences to extract value, and generates chaotic transitional zones, but nonetheless holds these in subjection to the rule of profit. The post-harbour, the place where business has reduced and moved on, might be an excess of the logic of 'capital-colonial-modernity' that can operate new social and political possibilities. But the post-harbour can be the relentlessly privatised dock-lands re-development scheme that piles a new robbery upon an older one. It is the obligation of critical imaginations to propose something other, something harbouring more than grievance, something harbouring word-from-elsewhere.

MARINA GRŽINIĆ

D | April 2017

P | Ljubljana and Vienna

O | philosopher and artist

1. What makes you feel "arriving" at a HARBOUR FOR CULTURES?

The HARBOUR FOR CULTURES in the present moment can take a positive and a negative path. It can open a place inside the Fortress of Europe to exchange and evaluate possibilities. It can stand against the failed EU politics to think of Europe as a place of encounter. On the other side, a harbour can be seen as a repository, a place of calm. I hope for a storm and therefore a re-politicization of culture.

I can elaborate further on this with making a reference to Martí Peran who in 2015 in Barcelona presented a project *General Indisposition. An Essay about Fatigue*. Peran was interviewed on his show and his writings by Renan Laru-an in 2016 and there some interesting thoughts on culture were formulated.

<http://temporaryartreview.com/extensions-of-fatigue-a-conversation-with-marti-peran/>

Initially in this interview Renan Laru-an identifies several points that are key for the discussion on the HfC and that is "internationalism, collaboration, cultural development, economies of critique, and tensions across an "autonomous" artwork, the artist, and the curatorial." Though the interview with Peran centers on fatigue that is not of our primary interest, the analysis of culture by Peran is fundamental. I quote, "as from [the time] of postmodernism culture has disappeared. On the one hand, it has become a production area of desire and consumption, far from its traditional role as a critical account installed in non-reconciliation with any given condition of reality. (...) On the other hand, the field of cultural production has become the paradigm of the new labor and exploitation mode: self-management of creative projects in order to ensure the general mobilization in the infinite repetition of the present."

Therefore I am coming to the HfC with a set of questions regarding the possibility for the future. It seems that European politics failed to take culture as a place of encounter and exchange, even less as a possibility to give a shelter, to protect, to work with those who ask for shelter, protection and work.

2. What kind of "goods" will you bring to a HARBOUR FOR CULTURES?

I will bring in relation to Martí Peran and Renan Laru-an the idea of that what Peran calls "delocalized cultural capitalism" that works internally with operating with arts and culture as raw facts, as today it seems that institutions and curators are performing "the occlusion of knowledge" on history and present. They are even proud of this (such is the situation in Ljubljana regarding the state art institution, contemporary art, history, curators and printed media journalists). But the outcome is not amnesia, but capitalist aphasia, that has its source in what is known, in reference to Ann Laura Stoler, the colonial aphasia, that presents as elaborated by Stoler "an occlusion of knowledge, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things, and a difficulty comprehending the enduring relevancy of what has already been spoken."

On the other side we see what Peran calls the recurring projects of "bad" internationalism that links money from the center and "undiscovered modernist periods" on the margins with art branding spectacle.

3. Which kind of "profit" will be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the HARBOUR FOR CULTURES?

For me the possibility to put apart the nation-state's power structures that presently racialize spaces, practices and potentialities and to reconnect transversally and pluriversally will be an important outcome. I am as well interested in the critique of culture and its regime of racialized geographies.

4. How can you "ensure" your culture in a HARBOUR FOR CULTURES?

I can state that I cannot ensure "my" culture as I do not have any; I have a set of proposals to act and intervene.

5. How can your practice of taking risk increase a HARBOUR FOR CULTURES?

The practice of taking risk is to formulate these new conditions of culture being delink from contextualization.

6. How can you produce "social capital" in the frame of a HARBOUR FOR CULTURES?

I will conclude with Peran that states that "the only alternative (...) is to abandon the space of the cultural machine capable of processing all the accounts and, instead, retrieve genuinely collaborative practices." More, he states that "the surplus of images has reached the maximum degree of pollution. (...) In this situation, the political task is to return to the linguistic battlefield. It won't be possible to do things differently if we do not start talking differently. The most urgent imperative is language inventiveness. We are too blinded by the supposed need for consensus." Maybe the way I tried to answer to these questions is precisely a different set of phrases and words, a different grammar and vocabulary of how to think culture here and now.

Please list 5 tags related to your answers.

Martí Peran
Renan Laru-an

ANTAL LAKNER

D | May 2017

P | Budapest, Hungary

O | artist

The Harbours of Culture

Around the millennium, in 2001, I represented Hungary at the Venice Biennale with the Artmobile project. Artmobile was a human-powered two-seater tricycle that visitors could use to explore the spaces between the national pavilions, the transition between these fin de siècle products of the so-called civilized nation states – including civilized nation states that by that time had fallen apart, ceased to exist, lost their empires and shifted borders. Some of them haven't always acted in a civilized way, either. By the globalized millennium no one used the word civilized anymore and no one was sure what words like nation and state meant. With Artmobile, I focused on the intercultural places between these empty shells of nation states, I focused on making visitors aware of getting from one place to the other, on making visitors aware of the spaces in-between, the spaces of cultural exchange.

So maybe it should come natural to me to talk about Harbours of Culture and to answer 1 > What would make you feel "arriving home" at an H/C. But it is not easy.

Hungary, like Austria, is a country which once had access to the sea but does not have it anymore. The coastal areas with the two rival harbours of the Monarchy – Austria's Trieste, and Hungary's Fiume (now Rijeka) – were lost after World War I. The central topos of Hungarian national fantasies is not the sea but the mountain. "Give me back my mountains!", a revisionist book by a Transylvanian count, is still one of the most popular books in Hungary. This topos of the mountain ranges – so to speak – from peaceful yearning to fantasizing about new genocides; from wisely demanding minority rights to insanely replacing the EU flag with Transylvanian flag on the Parliament building.

Unlike the mountainous regions of the historical Hungary, partly or fully populated by ethnic Hungarians, the littoral has always been sparsely populated by Hungarians, making this loss less dramatic in everyday life. But as we are told by Foucault "In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates".

With a bizarre twist, the right-wing, authoritarian interwar police state of Hungary – where every schoolday started with a prayer asking God to restore the borders – has not forgotten about the sea. It heavily invested in maintaining marine research and also tried to make up for the loss by building a research institute on Balaton, the giant lake of Hungary. A copy of the Fiume lighthouse was installed next to the Danube. And so on. But the multi-ethnic, multicultural air of the harbours was lost forever.

Speaking about harbours poetically – à propos Trieste, à propos Fiume – should one feel like arriving home at these harbours while thinking of their histories of switching countries and cleansing minorities? Which memories should one let go and where should one moor one's memories? Some of the mooring bollard's of the Rijeka harbour bear the Hungarian name of Skull Mátyás, later ones have the Italian Matteo Skull cast on them, other advertisements have his name in Croatian as Matija Skull. Could this German Slovenian industrialist really be all three or was that an illusion? If we let all chauvinism go and let him be all the three again, would that restore the multicultural idyll that perhaps never existed?

5 > How could your risk-taking enhance an H/C?

We think of ports and harbours as the scenes of risk-taking: smuggling, shady deals, exotic smells, tattoos, brothels, gambling dens. We do so despite the fact that a harbour is supposed to be the place of absolute control. In an ideal harbour all items shipped in would be quarantined, investigated first. An ideal harbour would be like the airlock in 2001 Space Odyssey. Not 2001 Venice Biennale, but 2001 Space Odyssey. There even the spaceship's crew can be denied re-entry by a higher intelligence, once they start to ask questions about the real destination.

The real destination of that mission – and apparently our ships' as well – is to meet the aliens. And the reason the crew should not know about it is Project Barsoom – an experiment revealed in the book version of Space Odyssey –, an experiment carried out prior to the mission to test people's reactions when they are made to believe they have met aliens. The reactions are so violent that the experiment must be kept a secret. Thus, when the crew wants to know about the destination, artificial intelligence takes over and tries to get rid of the crew in the name of "The Mission."

So risk-taking can also mean posing uncomfortable questions about the mission of the ship and locking yourself out of the port.

"Avoid empty phrases" the Blue Frog Society rightly advises, referring to the sad career of "sustainability", now an empty word. Indeed, the famous caricature diagram comes to one's mind about the frequency of the word sustainable– once per every page by 2036 in, once per every sentence by 2061 and by 2109, texts will be made up only of the word "sustainable". But there are

phrases, gestures and rituals which are empty but which we still rather practice every day than do away with – out of comfort, out of politeness, out of faith. So what is the case with the most beautiful words suggested in our context, like „shared society” and „borderlessness”. Shall we try to save these words or shall we let them go? Shall we keep the Barsoom research a secret? The Piréz people say that would be useless to keep that a secret. But the Piréz people never existed. They were invented for major Hungarian surveys on xenophobia ten years ago. They were used to check people’s refusal of groups they know (or may know), contrasting that to their refusal of the Piréz, a group they cannot know. Over 60% percent of the respondents opposed the immigration of the Piréz. One may find this result sad or one may take comfort in the fact that general human xenophobia seems to precede any specific racism.

The Piréz people, now, with their fictitiousness having become known, are unsuitable for any further scientific purposes. Their memory is harboured in the poetic name of an obscure but renowned Hungarian band called Piresian Beach.

Staking the risks, I will continue mixing up the order of the questions in trying to answer question 4. How could you “ensure” your culture, while also enriching it at an H/C?

Speaking of movies, there is a lighthearted Woody Allen film titled You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger. But there is no movie called You Will Meet Many Short Dark Strangers. In another movie, District 9, however, a floating heterotopia of a spaceship gets stuck over a metropolis, and then the aliens are let to settle down there. The stranger is not beautiful here but ugly; natives and aliens are both xenophobic – integration or “shared society” is not even imaginable. The lesson the movie suggests is that you still shall not mistreat, shall not kill the other. That is not the loftiest idea but a pretty good one if all parties agree in it.

Maybe it is possible to achieve that. As we know, the suspense, the period before clashing can be quite comfortable. As Constantine Cavafy asks in his most famous poem, Waiting for the Barbarians:

Why isn’t anything happening in the senate?

Why do the senators sit there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.

What laws can the senators make now?

Once the barbarians are here, they’ll do the legislating.

[...]

Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?

(How serious people’s faces have become.)

Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.

And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what’s going to happen to us without barbarians?

They were, those people, a kind of solution.

2. What kind of “goods” would you bring to an H/C?

I started this talk mentioning that Hungary has lost her sea. But how could that happen?

There exists a receipt given to Austro-Hungarian naval officer Miklós Horthy, written out by James Joyce after having given English classes to him in 1904 at the Berlitz School in Pula, halfway on the Istrian shore between Trieste and Fiume. While Joyce had Ulysses published from 1918 to 1920, WWI was lost by the Monarchy, and Admiral Horthy, now ruling as a regent, signed the peace treaties, making Hungary a kingdom without a king and without sea.

So how could all that happen? The answer is simple: the English classes never took place – Horthy never met Joyce as he was learning Croatian in Pula (albeit from a friend of Joyce). The receipt is a playful forgery from two decades ago by the Hungarian Museum of Literature, based on the legend of more fanciful Joyce biographies. These two souls, the coarse officer and the man of letters never met.

As you see, only a little better understanding of each other’s language and style could have helped a lot. A little more artistry.

Only if Joyce gave classes to Horthy...

Only if Esperanto worked...

Is there a way to transcend these boundaries of communication?

As you may recall, during his travels Gulliver gets to Balnibarbi (a nation ruled from the floating island, Laputa) where the Academy pushes for new ways of communication. First, to use only nouns – as nothing else is really graspable to the human mind –, then, to erase words completely and to communicate through things. A pocketful of stuff for small talk and bags full of things – carried by servants – when one has to discuss serious issues.

As Gulliver recalls: “Another great Advantage proposed by this Invention, was that it would serve as an Universal Language to be understood in all civilized Nations, whose Goods and Utensils are generally of the same kind, or nearly resembling, so that their Uses might easily be comprehended. And the Embassadors would be qualified to treat with foreign Princes or Ministers of State to whose Tongues they were utter Strangers.”

The problem with this v Platonic communication is, of course, the difference between the singularity of an idea and the infinite diversity of the actual things which constitute that idea.

But what if we imagine these goods as art-goods? Art-pieces – tangible or virtual, singular or multiplied – which are really communicating ideas. Which are ideas themselves, ideas that we cannot and do not want to circumscribe. Ideas without which we cannot express ourselves

So to answer 2. What kind of “goods“ would you bring to an H/C? – it would be art. Whether it is just me smuggling art through quarantines or my servants carrying my art in two large bags, it would be art.

I do believe that art – at least some art, sometimes – is able to convey meanings, revelations hitherto unknown or inaccessible

6. > How could you produce “social capital“ within the framework of an H/C?

Should artists even run and control the harbours of culture, then? (Or should curators run them, for that matter?) Well, let’s not get carried away with art.

The Italian artist D’Annunzio, who in 1916 placed the memorial here on Palazzo Albrizzi about the “barbarian” Austrian bombing of Venice (and retaliated poetically by “bombing” Vienna only with leaflets about Italian superiority) famously created a Harbour of Culture. Fearing the loss of Fiume to Yugoslavia, the avant-garde adventurer occupied the city, cut off one head of the Austrian Eagle at the city tower and made the Ouroboros the symbol of Fiume. His manifesto declared:

In this crazed, despicable world, Fiume is now the symbol of liberty;

in this crazed, despicable world, there is one pure thing: Fiume;

one truth: Fiume;

one love: Fiume!

Fiume is like a splendid lighthouse shining in a sea of baseness...

As it is well known, his one-year rule, mixing red syndicalism with proto-fascism, dictatorship and gender equality, orgies, street fights and avant-garde oddities was not clearly a success. Having been recognized only by Lenin and the Berlin Dada Club.

But if asked about 3. > Which kind of “profit“ would be useful for you in order to be part of / to contribute to the H/C?, I would still say art. For one does not have to create art to be part of a harbour of culture. Happening onto ideas, thinking about ideas also makes one part of it. And a harbour of culture is a place where you may find ideas so huge that even two servants can’t ever carry that away.