

## **Do artist-in-residence spaces and programmes help to put the focus back on the production process?**

„Alternative to what“ was the question raised by the First International Artist initiatives' meeting in Istanbul this autumn. Encouraging artist's initiatives and non-state-run institutions, the meeting aimed at shaping new models for fostering and displaying art at both local and international levels. Quite evidently, all possible alternatives to the current institutionalised artworld do not only touch upon the structure of an organisation, but also - and perhaps more crucially- question the definition and distribution of roles within the organization itself: what is at stake is the relation between the artist and the art professional, the curator. Recently, roles have been exchanged and freshly combined by means of the concept of the "artist-curator" or even the curator taking the artist's place (think of Obrist's interview-series); but they have never ceased to be contradictory in their very essence: the art-maker on the one-hand-side, becoming the "object" of an exhibition, and the art-"facilitator" on the other, choosing and combining works, creating a theoretical and spatial framework for their understanding and reception. The curator's role has ranged from interpreter to collection manager and artists' agent. He/she- has shaped a profession for which no academic training was available, until recently. Nowadays, curatorial training programmes abound. Many young professionals seeking a career in the arts tend to enounce "curator" as their future job profile.

And the artist? How can she/ he react and respond to this tendency? Is she/he eclipsed and sometimes occulted by curators? Can she/he still show work without a curator's managerial help? To consider the question, both parties must be heard and understood. The setting at Istanbul's artist initiatives-meeting was particularly favourable to such discussions: artists, curators and curatorial students in one room, they could start redistributing the roles anew, starting with the choice of appropriate naming: art manager or aesthetic theorist, artistic collaborator or exhibition maker? Surprisingly, the tendency among the participants, artists and art professionals alike, was to emphasize the collaborative nature of exhibition making in a process of exchange and mutual influence, allowing the artist to intervene in the conceptual part and actively work on the reception of his art. If collaborative curating really *is* the future of curating, one should be able to subsequently observe a new focus on positions in the curatorial field together with a decline of big, single names. In this sense, is Istanbul Biennial a starting point to reverse the tendency?

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