

2014-2015 - Dutch Art Institute

Action Unites, Words Divide (On Praxis, An Unstated Theory)

Course tutor: Jon Mikel Euba

Coordination: Tanja Baudoin and Susan Gibb

Guest tutors: Itziar Okariz

Students: Maria Barlasov, Michelle Browne, Charlie Dance, Martha Jager, Jammie Nicholas, Panagiotis Panagiotakopoulos, Marie-Andree Pellerin, Mathilde Sauzet, Malina Suliman, and Melissa Tun Tun.

Short description

'Action Unites, Words Divide (On Praxis, An Unstated Theory)' consisted of monthly workshop sessions with tutor Jon Mikel Euba. For each new workshop session Euba wrote a new text. He delivered these texts as lectures that were live translated from Spanish to English while the students engaged in 'active listening' by simultaneously translating the text into other media.

The first part of the course involved an explanation of production conditions, where participants looked at other works that became pre-production material, gradually contextualizing their approach to the subsequent practical exercise. This phase encouraged reflective thought, while underscoring the fact that the aim was not to generate a debate, but rather to attract different people towards a certain subjectivity; to make shareable a subjective creative experience that, in the course of the action, became educational. Specific problems based on readings and/or viewings of different materials (examples of specific production strategies and practices) were analyzed. During the subsequent collective production/practical working phase, an exercise or set of exercises was defined in connection to questions regarding performance, production and dissemination, with a particular focus on issues related to recording.

The course included a two-week trip to Marfa, Texas, organized in collaboration with TAAK. Together with tutor Jon Mikel Euba, If I Can't Dance's director Frédérique Bergholtz and curator Susan Gibb, the students participated in an intensive workshop set against the backdrop of Marfa's desert plains and the legacies of the artist Donald Judd and Minimalism.

In 2017, the publication *Writing Out Loud* was released by If I Can't Dance and the Dutch Art Institute. The book brought together the transcriptions of eight lectures created by Euba during the course *Action unites, words divide (On praxis, an unstated theory)* across the academic year 2014 – 2015.

Syllabus

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Documentation

- See [Google Drive folder](#) for pictures and other materials

Course description by Jon Mikel Euba

ACTION UNITES, WORDS DIVIDE (ON PRAXIS, AN UNSTATED THEORY)

"Over the past few years I have been working on a form of artistic collaboration that allows for the development of personal bonds between participants, through a real working experience. This collaboration consists in bringing together a number of volunteers – people who did not previously know each other – in such a way, that during a limited time period, they are able to create whatever they require to produce a collective shooting or a live event, adapted both to the number of people involved and to each person's specific capabilities. These works are based on the concept of 'first take / single take', which consists in entirely avoiding the idea of preparation, understood as a prior rehearsal geared towards a subsequent (re)presentation, in such a way that the work or situation must take shape at the same time as it is 'rehearsed'. This technique can be seen as a militant means of avoiding, at all cost, the convention implicit in the idea of the 'Project'. In most of these works there is a fundamental involvement of different recording instruments, incorporated as an issue to be dealt with within the event itself. The result of this first take allows the work to take shape repeatedly: whether it be through a variation/rotation of the people involved, for whom it will always be their 'first time'; or through a subsequent construction derived from the editing of the recorded material.

The course

The course will include two parts. In the first, involving an explanation of production conditions, participants will look over other works that will become pre-production material, gradually contextualising their approach to the subsequent practical exercise. This phase will encourage reflective thought, while underscoring the fact that the aim is not to generate a debate, but rather to attract different people towards a certain subjectivity; to make shareable a subjective creative experience that, in the course of the action, will become educational. Here we analyse specific problems based on readings and/or viewings of different materials (examples of specific production strategies and practices). Different materials will be approached in the course of this first phase, with the aim of defining a shared space that enables communication; a space to analyse conceptual approaches, contents, and experimental solutions developed earlier, which can then be applied to different purposes. During the subsequent collective production/practical working phase, we will define an exercise or set of exercises in connection to questions regarding performance, production and dissemination, with a particular focus on issues related to recording.

Throughout the workshop we will pay particular attention to 'technical' issues, such as:

- On specific strategies for separating the performer's body from that of the mediating instrument, and the instrumentalisation of the camera as a mediator.
- On subjectivity and objectivity, what is objective view (camera's external view) + subjective view (person's internal view) = objectivised view.
- On the ideology implicit in the choice of certain production processes and media.

- On restrictions, stressing the limitation on materials and time.
- On production and zero expense, when to delegate and what to delegate.
- On writing in order to force expression, sharing the creation of my 'writing method'.
- On Score versus Storyboard.

With ACTION UNITES, WORDS DIVIDE (ON PRAXIS, AN UNSTATED THEORY) I propose the creation of an experimental workshop where I am not interested in setting or defining exercises that are consumed in their execution as a presumed educational experience; but rather where my intent is to share with other agents the real artistic process and problems that I am myself immersed in".