

LICKING CURATORS ASS, 2005

by Ondrej Brody & Kristofer Paetau within the experimental exhibition format *Extra Features Series (1)*, curated by Jan Van Woensel who invited us to do a surprise intervention in this exhibition / decor / documentary project at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts, Antwerp, Belgium.

View the "Licking Curators Ass" Quicktime Video (DSL required):

<http://www.paetau.com/downloads/LickingCuratorsAss/LickingCuratorsAss.mov>



From: **jan vanwoensel** <janvanwoensel@hotmail.com>
To: **ondrej_brody@yahoo.com**, **kristoferpaetau@gmail.com**
Date: **Nov 27, 2005 12:41 AM**
Subject: **Super**

Dear Ondrej and Kristofer,

What can I say, our meeting at the Extra Features Series (1) - project was remarkable and unexpected.



I actually think that in order to initiate a true and intense collaboration with any curator you meet in the future, you are obligated to plan and perform such a (perhaps) scandalous and physical action/provocation to create an inspiring working atmosphere and mutual understanding which will - obviously - benefit the working conditions between you and the curator in question.



Which is, as I try to say, a good thing. In fact, I was writing about this topic for a lecture I have to give in Amsterdam, stating that the Extra Features-project is a method to evoke the direct confrontation with the ideas and works of the artists again.



Going back to the studio environment, working on the spot, spontaneously and directly, confronting each other and trying to give shape to the works and development of the artists themselves, being a witness of the production process and giving the space and time to the artist to share his/her thoughts...



Because in contrast to exhibitions such as *Thin Line: The exhibition, the movie!!* and *Scenery 2 (a reconstruction)*, the real interaction and perhaps even the importance of the artist and his art work - forgive me if this sounds too arrogant - gets banalized and neglected.



So, apart from disliking being tied up to a pillar and finding my pants on the ground with two freaky artists kissing my butt, you did confront me with the important and constantly opposing position of the artist. And that is very good, because now I can reproduce this action into my exhibition venues and strive to even more interesting shows and provocative presentations.



As a curator, I think that the interaction between the artist and the curator is a very important thing. And although I try to add something very valuable - at least in 'my' opinion - to the field of contemporary art exhibitions, which is the field in which I can express myself, I feel that the artists themselves are not always keen of these methodologies that I'd like to introduce.



This doesn't hurt me, but raises questions about the mental capacities and about the openness of artists nowadays... As if they are not aware of the Siegelaub-projects, as if they think that "one of those curators practicing a more creative kind of curating" are eager to take over the position of the artists.



On the CONTRARY, I have great respect for contemporary art and artists. I try to avoid building up any inaccessible conceptual statement that should co-ordinate or dominate the exhibition and I even evoke the confrontation with the artist and with his work of art.



Whatever, I am not trying to justify my position, it is just striking me that this cat and mouse game between the curator and the artist is still something that young artists as yourselves are involved with; as if it has become a topic in art practice, just to find another cheap and easy, almost ready-made reason for provocation.



Back to the subject:

It was a challenging meeting. Especially because my curatorial work balances on the verge between curating, producing, reporting, acting, interviewing and documenting, you have nearly succeeded in undermining the role that I had decided to play for this exhibition project.



I am sure that we will have very inspiring future collaborations, and that the stories and gossips that will hopefully follow to your brutal violation of my butt and status, will form the base of our following projects: "we collaborate because we kissed the ass of the curator", or "yes, I think they are great artists because they kissed my ass"...



Jan Van Woensel
Independent Curator
Antwerp

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