

NORDIC INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, HELSINKI

Title: ***Institution²***
Art Institutions: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Working with Contemporary Art

Dates: From December 3rd 2003 to January 5th 2004

Place: KIASMA - Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki

Curator: Jens Hoffmann

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Institution² is a seminar, an exhibition and publication, which posits an inquiry into the work of ten contemporary art institutions in Europe. The program is part of *The Process* a sequence of exhibitions, performances, workshops, and lectures, which together form the program of KIASMA from September 2003 till January 2004. Here process is understood as a cultural concept of constant flux and change, which places entirely new demands on the operating methods of art institutions. The aim of *The Process* is to propose a more active and open condition for the work of museums and art institutions and to critically investigate their structures. ***Institution²*** mirrors this objective when it presents different examples of institutional work from various cultural and geographic contexts that manifest a flexible and progressive approach to a critical engagement with art and the exchange with the public.

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

The role and function of the art institution has been questioned and discussed widely in the last decades. Particularly what became known as 'institutional critique' focused in its reflection on the art institution as the central element of power in the cultural economy of modernism. In the 1960s and 70s the art institution, particularly the museum, represented a site of old and traditional values that needed to be overcome in order to open the museum to ideas of public and societal interests. Today's art institutions are largely acknowledging what has been expressed as opposition and critique towards their conservative structures. The central focus of critical investigation in recent years has shifted from a critique on the so-called 'temples for high-culture' to the increasing commercialization of all aspects of cultural life. While many art institutions became more and more part of the amusement industry and are focusing on adopting marketing strategies known from the entertainment sector

their role within society and their relationship towards the public became increasingly unclear. What can an art institution do today? Why has it persisted to be such an important means of presenting art and culture? What is in fact the role and function of an art institution today? What can it offer to the public? What possibilities does an institution have in shaping an understanding of culture, art and politics? What does the public expect from an art institution? These are some of the questions ***Institution***² will investigate when it brings together some of the most vital institutions working in the field of contemporary visual art in Europe.

In collaboration with curator Jens Hoffmann and NIFCA, KIASMA - Museum of Contemporary Art is inviting the following institutions to present their investigations at KIASMA in form of an exhibition and a two-day seminar to examine a diverse set of contemporary art institutions.

- Basis voor Actuele Kunst, Utrecht
- Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius
- Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw
- Index, Stockholm
- Kunstverein Frankfurt, Frankfurt
- Oslo Kunsthall, Oslo
- Palais De Tokyo, Paris
- Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul
- Rooseum, Malmö
- Witte de With, Rotterdam

In addition the organizing institutions, KIASMA and NIFCA, will take part in the program and present their specific models in the seminar as well as the exhibition.

THE SEMINAR

While the invited institutions are asked to present their work and current projects the seminar will see a variety of panel discussions considering issues such as the relationship between art institutions and the public, the current state of institutional critique, ethical responsibilities of art institutions and others. The participants will include the curators/directors of the invited institutions as well as a group of international artists, curators and critics. For a more detailed program see the

attached seminar outline. The seminar has been organized in collaboration with NIFCA curator Nina Möntmann.

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition will include contributions of the invited institutions that present their particular institutional model in form of various interventions throughout the ground floor of KIASMA. The entire ground floor is accessible for the public free of charge and includes the lobby area, the coffee shop, a bookshop, seminar rooms and various spaces and corridors leading to the exhibition spaces. Maps available that will guide the visitors to the various presentations that are spreading through the existing institutional structure. An information and reference space will be installed near the entrance enabling the audience to view the web-sites of the invited institutions, look at their programs and publications allowing them to gain more information about the various activities of the invited institutions. It is crucial for the understanding of the exhibition that the invited institutions find a format of presenting their activities that corresponds with their particular institutional approach and goes beyond purely displaying documentation of their previous work. The presentations will include films, publications, wall texts, sound installations, participatory projects and other formats of which most have been developed in collaboration with artists.

THE PUBLICATION

A publication will reflect through various contributions the objectives of the program. It will document the exhibition as well as the seminar and in addition include a reference section that will present each participating institution individually. Contributors will include: Maaretta Jaukkuri, Jens Hoffmann, Andrea Fraser, Nina Möntmann, Mary Jane Jacob and others.