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PRESENTING WORDS AS SCULPTURES TO CELEBRATE LOVE

ND How did the Institut für Raumexperimente come into existence? Where and when did it start? Was it an idea that you already had in the back of your mind for some time, or did it happen by accident, a coincidence?

OE I think it really came out of an aspiration I had in developing my studio to see creativity as a driving force. As I started to lecture more and more over the years, I slowly began to realise that the lecturing, the communication and the involvement in schools and with students were also an extension of the studio and the art. So, in a sense, the idea for the school came from thinking about different ways of integrating a knowledge-sharing system into the studio. Sometimes this worked better than others, as we had a flow of younger artists working here or working as interns, and they were sometimes very focused and sometimes less so. Sometimes we were simply too busy to allow for the creative space to evolve, and I would have to push the studio to such an extent that the slowness needed for creativity simply wasn't there. So I'm not trying to mystify the studio by saying this; I'm just simply saying it was an aspiration.

The next thing was that the art school in Berlin, the Berlin University of the Arts [Universität der Künste; UdK] repeatedly approached me, offering me a teaching position. I had previously turned down a number of other teaching jobs because the travel distance would have created a huge gap between the life of the studio and teaching. When the Berlin University of the Arts asked me, I did not even want to travel across town. I wanted to connect the art-making, the teaching, and the artworks directly, even though at the time, I did not have pedagogical aims or a curriculum. The idea was that on a very good day, there would be a sort of overall structure in the studio, where teaching, communicating, and making would all just be seen as one thing and also very dependent on one another.

I think we negotiated with the university for two and a half years, as it wasn't easy to agree, until we finally came up with the solution of being both part of the school and not part of the school, at the same time. This was mainly related to funding, as the institute is supported by a combination of state money and funding from the Einstein Foundation, a scientific research foundation, which had a degree of interdisciplinary ambitions in

testing a new school system. This means that the school probably accepted us as an experiment because we were funded by an external body and would not be a financial burden on the university.

It was also clear to me that I would only be able to offer a part of the teaching talent needed to direct the educational trajectory of our participants. I started to look around, and I quickly found Christina and Eric. They were actually on board before the institute started. So the course evolved with their co-authorship from the beginning, both in terms of the "how" of knowledge production, and also on the structural level of the institute itself.

ND You are a professor at the UdK, but then you have your class here in your studio. How does that work in relation to the university program?

OE My job at the UdK is actually a conventional professorship, except that I'm on a five-year limited contract. The UdK, like many institutions, has lifetime positions for tenured professors, who in my view need to be rotated periodically in order to maintain a degree of contemporariness. When I accepted to teach for only five years, it was important to make the point that you can start something ambitious, and you can also close something very ambitious.

ND Were there any aspirations and inspirations aside from the practice of your studio? When your experimental school project started and when you engaged Christina and Eric, did you do some research on past and present educational structures? Or did you just start to improvise and then saw how it could grow and evolve?

OE I had been interested in different educational systems, but I hadn't done in-depth research, as I wanted to develop a system that was based on how we could potentially maximise the proximity to the studio. Of course I looked into places like Black Mountain College and the Bauhaus, and I knew Stedelijk in Frankfurt quite well and the more experimental class at the CCA Kitakyushu, where I also taught, and the fine art department that I co-started with Angela Vettese at the architecture school in Venice, under Marco de Michelis' tenure.

I had also been interested in educational systems in another way: to what extent does a museum take on an educational component? The museological tradition in Northern Europe—and in Scandinavia in particular—has a very clear agenda about the universal right to have access to creativity. This interest goes back to the fact that I was educated in the Danish system, which was highly influenced by the values of social democracy, coming out of the post-war era.

So I had a general awareness of more or less utopian school-type projects. It struck me, though, that despite the great legacy of schools such as Black Mountain College, their utopian vision had led, to some extent, to socially normative ideas, to this very restricted idea of what is socially productive and what is socially not productive. And there was this hierarchy immediately involved within the educational system. But if we disregard the relatively conservative cult position of the teachers, what is inspiring is that they actually did it, that it took place and this demanded some stamina. And I think that type of stamina is always inspiring.

ND How did you—and maybe this is a question that goes to all three of you... How did you create a programme? Were many things planned? Or was there/is there a lot of improvisation involved? Or is it a combination of both planning and improvisation, as well as one of both the short term and long term? How did it all get started? Perhaps it's a difficult question, because at a certain moment you just have to start... Did you do brainstorming sessions together to get all these young people involved, or...?

OE It's a good question.

EE Because I was teaching, I was finishing a teaching position in Chicago. But I had met up with Ólafur in the fall. We did video calls. He told me about this school idea. I asked him to teach a studio in Chicago, not realising of course the impossibility of this, because we had some similar ideas that seemed aligned. We saw each other every week, every couple of weeks for the course of a few months; I was also teaching part-time at the University of Toronto and then came to Berlin for ten days in January. I made a series of syllabuses, which were just imitations of other classes they did. I looked at these... The content was great, but there was no reason to do this in this school. That's where I started thinking about... How to come in with a plan whose plan is not to have a prefixed plan? It's a lot easier to say than to do. To know you want to experiment, but knowing how to experiment is something different again. You have to learn how to experiment, and you have to learn this inside of doing it. So it is not like something that can be lifted and plugged into some other place. Not like sewing wings to a rat, or something. It's like we are always carrying handrails around from places we have been in, to try and protect us in places we are going to. And at first I was still bringing classes with a syllabus: "Here's

a week; here's what you eat; we could do some experiments..." And then the school started. I came as if it was already halfway into the first semester, and the first semester, of course, was nothing like this at all. It was great.

OE Our confidence in why we were doing it was very high, but then there was the reality of actually having to find people who could come by. It was quite clear that we could not spend a lot of money flying a lot of people around the world, so, early on, we simply had to invite people who were passing through Berlin anyway. This meant that the first three guest lecturers were a scientist working with artificial intelligence, Luc Steels, with whom I had worked before; Ute Meta Bauer, whom Christina knew well and who was at MIT; and then a dancer from Denmark, Steen Koerner, who has a street dance background and had collaborated with me in the past.

We approached people rather informally. We never told people that they should come because we were important. We always said that we wanted them to come because we felt they were important. This is maybe not the right way to phrase it, but I just want to say that our approach to hospitality was crucial.

When Eric joined, it was very clear that he was coming from an American university background, where, as he just said, he had an entirely different experience. And Eric actually had much more experience than I did, and maybe more than Christina, too, in terms of actually teaching actual classes. I immediately saw the difference between the educational traditions of America and Europe. We had to sit down and clarify: what does it mean to be informal? It is still something that has a form. In the beginning, we simply divided the week into roughly three days of teaching and two days off, where the participants could work hard. Interestingly enough, this was already three times as much teaching as any other classes that the university offered. So what we took from the American model was the quantity of teaching. Obviously, we were very ambitious at the beginning.

EW Yes, and we told the participants who applied, before they actually started, about the programme's involvement...

OE We told them directly that, in principle, the programme was to be driven by the works the participants were interested in doing themselves: the works that they were working on. We made it very clear right from the beginning—and we still do that with every new participant—that they are as much artists now as they will be when they finish school, and in ten or twenty years' time. There's not more or less responsibility and seriousness now than there will be later. They might be fumbling more, be less precise and more insecure and so on and so forth, but essentially they are already artists. This is not a school for people who want to become artists; this is a school for artists.

CW I remember that really from the beginning, at that first meeting when Eric introduced versions of the curriculum, it was clear: "There is no curriculum to follow." It was clear that the curriculum had to develop and would only be visible in retrospect. We were navigating by detecting fields of interest in the participants' works and their focus. The content production was oriented towards a co-production where possible.

There were a few ideas we knew we'd be interested in exploring and we started to develop with more depth. We talked about the "Walks" as a repetitive experimental format and a tool for experiencing and connecting to the street. It was more a rough sketch than a theoretical framework for a methodology of getting started. Also very early on, there was a trajectory in motion of inviting a guest to co-invite additional guests. For instance, Peter Weibel returned to the programme on a somewhat regular basis with a number of different guests, which developed into another form of co-production and co-authorship of content and "curriculum" production. It was also something that evolved. We invited him to co-invite a guest and we developed our programme around and into those encounters.

EE And we could see our changes and what needed to be developed while we were changing, by being with the same people a few times over the course of five years. We could see ourselves better by seeing him and the others he brought.

OE Like Oswald Wiener...

CW ... and Otto Rössler...

EE ... and he invited Thomas Macho, who eventually came without Weibel. There were even ideas of bringing all of Hans Ulrich Obrist's interviews and just having a full archive of his interviews as our library...

OE The format became very much about introspective criticism

EE And about repetition. It allows for an openness, a vulnerability, a trust space. I mean, if you could think of a course, for instance, as the same person coming three times or four times over five years, you could put that together as a kind of model for a non-premeditated syllabus, in a strange way. A non-sloppy syllabus that is inflected by each encounter. I think Olafur did this in Addis Ababa. Olafur visited every few weeks, and would structure his visits around this pulse of thought that turned into a rhythm of talks. And the talks were also open to the entire art school and university in Addis Ababa, so the institute turned itself into a kind of inside-out school. Like a glove. And then you can fit the glove from the left hand onto the right hand by turning yourself inside out. Things like this. So somehow the relationships... We've grown this school together from our different relationships. With the students being in University for five years to pick up a degree, some of them will be in the

institute from the beginning to the end, as student-artists. As students, on the one hand, getting a degree, and as artists having a practice somehow outside of the University, but within the energy and conversations and critical energy of the institute. And the guests that come over and over again are also our teachers; the repetition is really amazing.

With me coming from architecture and from landscape architecture, it's responsible for different things. The structure, the education, and the discipline. The school is physically in Olafur's studio, for example... Yet everyone else in Olafur's studio works for Olafur, and Olafur works for the school. There were these overlaps... While we were sharing the same spaces, or systems of art practice, there were spatial and social and creative differences between a teaching practice and an art production practice, between the artists in the school and everyone else that moves through the same studio system. Differences that are structural, responsible for different energy, attention, awareness, relations. The school and the studio share people, and take people's time and attention in different ways, people like Christina and Olafur, people overlapping and trying to assimilate and extract themselves at different times with these different systems, and these overlaps are also the space of the school. The responsibilities and desires squeeze the school—and studio—into different forms, like the way that temperature squeezes water into different forms, or the way in which wind flowing over a hill bumps the pressure systems into crystallising weather into different waters. So the school and the artists in the school each semester, and the studio itself, and let's say the city, too, all pressure us in different ways that overlap without nearly resolving correspondences.

OE You know, there is a kind of naïveté that is full of energy. Because when you're naïve, you can take huge steps in unconsidered, clumsy ways. Although I do think we've done a few things very precisely: we insisted that the "making of" must always be seen before the film, or whatever was being made. Christina and Eric led a "making of" film course. I don't know if you then also watched the actual films.

EE No. It flipped the usual way of looking at what a film means, to look at the relation of how it is made to all the structural considerations, like budgets and tools and emotions and tensions; how the politics of a place affects the film's shooting, rather than its story; tricks to pull things off; a way of working within sometimes painful and unsupportive realities.

OE And I think it allowed for a different kind of criticality. It was an introspective type of working that was not didactically safe, but opened conversations on how and why you make something and how all the *whys* and *hows* meet the world. Inside of *how*, you have to cultivate enough *why*, so that when people are involved in a project, a work, a collective endeavour, they both evaluate *what* they are doing and also maintain the

vibrant feeling of what they're doing, to let the world intensify the quality of why they are doing it. We did not cultivate a dogmatic criticism, where *why* is more conventionally taught as a deconstructive notion. Instead, the *why* has to be in the action itself. It has to be visible.

This kind of class was also created as a way of inviting people. We often invited people to the institute who ask why inside of *what* they do. People like Steen Koerner, the anti-gravity dancer. He talked about making physicality explicit through your body, showing, for example, that you are working in the tradition of mime, like Marcel Marceau... To show the context is also about insisting upon its existence. Whereas traditional choreographers, like Bruno Vandelli, are always about being weightless, Steen actually performed a kind of critique. Steen explained his dance contextually. The narrative in his performance was the context. That context might be very didactic or theoretical or whatever, but still it created an identification pattern, where you can say: "I identify with what you are doing".

EW It also has to do with informality and the opportunities that are tied to this informality; the opportunity for uncertainty... We deliberately invite the guests to present and say things in a way that is different from what they would normally do. The way we phrased the invitations aimed to make them comfortable enough to allow for this uncertainty, to try something else, something unexpected. Then trying to extend this feeling of being in a group where you can show vulnerability and trust the communality was important.

The format of the "making ofs", which alternated with reading practices, a way of starting with a student picking something and then Eric and I responding with another suggestion, was really important for building up this atmosphere for discussion, or rather for an exchange. The "making ofs" helped by virtue of them not having to talk about their own work. There was no need to defend themselves in reaction to criticism. Instead, everyone could exchange thoughts and opinions about the intentions of someone who wanted to say something—by making a film. So through the different media or genres, we could talk indirectly to the artists in the school about making their own art, and about intentions and decisions. And the reading practices were structurally similar: a participant chose something that he or she found inspiring. Something they just read, something they wanted to present and discuss, and our second text is a response, to parallel and accompany their choice, a cross-reading. We could say: "If you're interested in this, maybe this is something else for you and for the group to encounter." We contextualised and searched for common grounds and new directions. And we would take this from week to week. It spiralled—with some guidance—but in ways that were unforeseeable at the same time.

Similar dynamics grew out of Otto Rössler's engagement. He was invited by Peter Weibel the first time he visited the institute, and then the participants invited Rössler over and over again, because it spoke to their

interests and inspiration. This really evolved out of a situation of mutual trust and interest.

EE For sure. You have to be vulnerable. I mean you can be vulnerable in a way that doesn't make you defensive, but which opens up an honesty in a way. Teaching and learning is a trust space. Everyone is exposing themselves; no one can stand outside of it. That outside is a fake peripheral view; some place on the perimeter of the non-vulnerable is where professors usually profess from. But we didn't want to put ourselves in the centre or the circumference, we wanted to move and be moved with the experiment we were in and the experiment we were conducting together. This happened with some of Olafur's teaching, I think. The first two years we talked about demystification of the artist or the artist's career, and still it took a while for the artists in the institute to become comfortable with talking with Olafur about what they were interested in, in a way they were comfortable discussing it, the questions and inspirations that were driving them. It's hard to want to impress and find approval and to find your own way, and not simply imitate or confirm or repeat, and to be able to disagree with someone where there is a felt difference in structural power, or experience, or practice. To be able to say: I disagree, and I think something different, while still saying that I respect the space of being able to say that I disagree and that I think something different. It's hard to trust that space and it is something that is built together. It has to be cultivated. So it's still, I mean, like a dancer, like a ballet, as Jonathan Burrows says, it is that repetition that builds up a kind of patterning of experience and skill, a rhythm of awareness and ability. In that repetition, little changes can become incredibly significant, kicking a known thing into an unknown orbit and in that unknown you become a something else. You are still the thing you started as, the artist, the school... Because the uncertainty, which Christina was just talking about, is restructured into the experiment rather than being filtered out of the experiment.

OE That's why it's interesting to close the school, because we have started to develop a known form. We are on the brink of becoming good at what we are doing, although we're not quite there yet. And this is maybe also a sign that our naïveté is still alive.

Throughout those ten semesters, the skill-sharing between myself, Christina, and Eric created a very robust frame of reference. Christina's network—her relationship to people like you, Nico—and the knowledge she brings from a more political and cultural studies background and her communication skills... She has a sensitivity that few people have, and that sensitivity is based on critical thinking and evolves around her network of artists, curators and thinkers. And this is a very interesting combination, which has turned out to be incredibly important for the school, as it is a special talent, one of sharing and reflecting.

And the same goes for Eric; Eric's background is both in landscape architecture and architecture, and he



is a person who actively translates what he does into who he is: he is what he does, or how he does what he does. But then on top of that, Eric, you are obsessed with language and the shape of language and words and poetry and the breathing of poetry, the body of words, to the extent of the words being almost physical, and the sculpture as a work of sculpturing, and so on. And there's the fact of Eric speaking English and Christina speaking German and I have a third language that's my mother tongue.

But when Sarat Maharaj came in, thanks to Christina's relationship with him from prior projects, he presented to us the idea of stickiness, which is a longer story, a story whose grains of rice, I think, are already in some of the overlaps we have had together with you, Nico, during your Sticky Rice workshop in the school. Just to say briefly: the way Peter Weibel brought in Otto Rössler is an example of the principle of Sticky Rice, which is this kind of informal formality. That's the glue. The stickiness. It's a system, but it stays informal. It's not informal in terms of being anarchic, or in a disruptive sense. It also creates the possibility for itself to be sticky in a vibrant situation. This is Sarat's obsession with poetry, for example, where even the pronunciation of a word becomes part of the poetic momentum. There is a politics of pronunciation. So his presence became a very healthy, let's say, mechanics of knowledge production. And very non-dogmatic.

EE I think Sarat was the first person that articulated so clearly that what is unique about the school is that the curriculum comes later. I was trying out a little experiment in the "Sticky Rice" workshop where we would build syllabuses together and he said, no, that's not so interesting really. And then he said that's actually where you as a school are interesting, because you do not sit and build things like a syllabus before doing it.

ND How does it get perceived by the UdK, of which you are a part? Are parts of your programme leaking into their system, or not at all?

OE No, the informal relationship with the UdK has come through the participants, the students, whose friends visited us and, after the first semesters, came in increasing numbers. They actually started to accept us because we have this open-door policy. We actively tried to present ourselves as not being about inclusion-exclusion. But the university itself has shown little interest in us. Or, to be more clear, it's not that the Berlin University of the Arts is not interested in us; it's just that they are neutral.

ND And the influence towards your studio?

OE That's a long chapter. I think there were a number of things that I had not thought through when the school started. It's important to be very honest about this. I thought that the students would become co-producers of creativity in the studio to a greater extent.

I was mistaken. The responsibility I have towards the students does not allow for a master-student relationship.

The reason I did the school was precisely to get away from this traditional hierarchy. Very soon after starting the school, I made a clear statement about the separation between the two. Having worked so hard to get this department of the school, the institute, in the same building as my studio, it was almost a paradox for me to say: "Of course the students cannot work for me." Instead, we then actively worked to allow for studio/school overlaps, and the kitchen became the meeting place... So the lunch break became important as a social space.

But the truth is that the studio has also been going through a phase of professionalisation, and this means that the studio has become this highly efficient machine, incredibly focused and obsessed with the success of what it's doing. I'm very happy about this, but I also see the problems this creates with regards to the open-endedness of creativity.

But it has certainly meant that the students who come down to the studio get a shock. Because the brutality of the studio's efficiency makes the students immediately feel incredibly inefficient themselves. And I did not want this to happen; I had hoped to create space for the students in my studio in a less clumsy way. I don't want to ruin their dream about what a big studio is. I want them to come in and believe that one day they too will have a studio—not necessarily one like mine, but their own studio, and it will be full of dreams. But I can be very honest and say: "There are plenty of days in my studio when there's no dreaming at all." I have practical problems, but I also have problems with my dreams. And the two are closely related when it comes to demystifying the relation between studio, school and life.

EE Over the course of this time, you are the scale of your practice. Olafur didn't know exactly where it would go, but as Olafur's studio grew in scale. Olafur shifted a lot more into the position of a teaching dean in the school. For example, Olafur comes in and the three of us set up a trajectory for a semester that fills up as we go. I mean we place a few islands in front of us as possibilities to anchor to. I think from the point of view of Christina and myself, we became a bit of a curatorial team as well, curating Olafur back into a dean of the little daily details of school as well. Making sure he stays in on some of the little things. The littleness matters.

Organising the school also started to compete with the school and the studio for Olafur's time. In reality, Christina ends up taking on a lot of the responsibilities within the institute's negotiation structure. So on the one hand, Christina is negotiating between the UdK and the institute and, on the other hand, between the institute and the studio. So these are two different systems with different forces and AC/DC currents... I mean, this is more "making of" details now, but these are positions with real forces and needs, which constrain time and attention and energy. They help shape which overlaps are possible; they help to limit the field of potentials inside



an infinite variety of possible forms the school could take. An hour of teaching is not the same as an hour of making decisions in a meeting, though a lot of professors with practices treat those hours the same. I don't think attention works that way in teaching. It's harder to focus than a laser beam efficiency. It's not like a light switch. Attention has to take the time to get to know the particular ecology of forces in the institute; it is like a cat clawing its way into position. And the artists in the institute, and these overlaps of interests and needs and ideas, are always shifting. To say that dreams have to be short and happen quickly in a school because there is a lot of non-dream territory in the studio space doesn't make it work that way. And while Olafur's studio might be speeding up, this is not the same as in the school, where sometimes we have to slow down a lot, where we have to bring slow-motion dancers like Steen into the school so we can learn how to be slower.

How this all works in the school is really interesting because we don't talk about it so much, but it shapes a lot of what we are because it shapes a lot of how we can work together... I mean, for Christina to have to negotiate as hard with Olafur's schedule as with a school budget, and for there to be five or six teams of fifteen people or so, each of whom want and need that hour or two with Olafur, and Christina has to go in and say: "Look, we've got to drive into the UdK, and Olafur has got to go and wait forty-five minutes for a review to start, which will of course not start on time, and so we need four hours of a day in a week where Olafur is in Berlin for two days and not again for two weeks..." That is not an easy, or dream negotiation. Because it's important to spend time with an artist in the school who thinks folding a paper can change the world, even as Olafur is trying to fold a geometry of the Opera house in Reykjavik. That's an amazing sort of negotiation, which wasn't the same five years ago.

And this is also why we had to close after five years. This is the five years coming at us. We talk like this in the school all the time. Olafur will say something like, stand from a point in the future and look back to where you are now, and change now. Or, there's a writer like Charles Bernstein, who says: "You are not going into the train station. The station is coming to you." So we feel this, and it pressures us, and we have to structure experiments within these backwards times and forward terms, we feel we have to... we are closing but not closing...

OE It's true.

EW What is also interesting in this process of growing both the size of the institute and the studio is that we've gone through different phases of demystification. There have been several ways of doing this actively: tours of the studio, presenting works in process in the studio's workshops to the school, or show-casing the process of exhibition-making—for example, with Daniel Birnbaum—and discussing curatorial questions in front of and with the participants.

In that sense the demystification has always been part of how we have talked about being where we are. They experience artistic practice as an integral part of everyday live. They are part of an everyday structure of an artist's studio as much as they are exposed to the university's structure. They go back and forth, connecting both places through the city, connecting the city and the street itself, since we actively include the street and city and our surrounding reality in programming the "Walks", events at Tempelhof's former landing field, or extending part of the marathon events into the city, collaborating with the local theatre, having grantees from diverse backgrounds such as politics, law, dance, choreography, philosophy, etc. Even if we're not always happy with how we demystify the connection to the studio through all those different phases, it is a very important experience that will stick.

ND It is important not to leave your practice at home when you are teaching.

EE We're also exposing our participants to Olafur's practice by merely coming in and out of the school, by walking up the steps.

EW This even connects into all the institutional collaborations we set into motion. How does a theatre production work? What are the methods and tools of other areas of expertise, in natural science, in dance; how do you produce knowledge in cultural institutions, in an art school in Addis Ababa, on excursions and road-trips...

OE And not just in culture—also in science. There are so many more points to this. You're perfectly right, Christina. Because we're in it the whole time, we tend to forget. When I go to another school, I realise: My God, there's a degree of arrogance or hierarchy. They address the professor as "Herr Professor". Maybe this is a German practice. Essentially, I try to make my studio hospitable to the students. I've always had an open studio to a certain extent, made my studio transparent to the outside world. I've insisted upon sharing everything, even the bigger questions, such as: "To what degree does authorship actually enter my space?", and "To what degree are the people who work in the studio also given credit for what they're doing?" I try to show the successes and the failures.

There have been a number of productive elements in this. People who pass by the studio, great resources of knowledge, also visit the institute, like when Helmut Friedel, who is a specialist in expressionism, just dropped by upstairs and shared his thoughts for ten minutes. SANAA architects Ryue Nishizawa and Kazuyo Sejima were here talking and eating with us, and then Eric asked them if they knew what the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa smells like because we had visited the museum a year before, and also because we had just completed a "Smell walk" in Berlin with Alice Waters, who also came to the school



because she visits the studio sometimes. SAANA just came up to the school and contributed with a few sentences and then left again in an informal way. So we have a flow of people like this, where the students are exposed to the world and the world exposed to the students in this very productive and very pragmatic way.

EE What I also think is good about this... It's like what Francisco Varela says; you can't separate what you know from what you do to know it. So how do we separate art from an art practice? How do we feel the politics of public space from walking down a sidewalk? This feeling of the systems organising the spaces around us can be an art practice. And it can help shape a way of teaching. It's the relationships, it's the bringing the people in, which develops the language of doing and at the same time the language to articulate the doing.

Why do we pick Ethiopia as a place to take a German education experiment? When we went to Ethiopia with the school for ten weeks, we also chose Ethiopia because Olafur has had a relationship there for eight to ten years. So now we ask how do we represent that trip, not as something we did, but as something we are still doing? These are sticky relationships. We stick together. How do we still stick together? What is the practice of stickiness? In Addis Ababa, we lived together as an institute in a compound, and we learned together in a kind of satellite space, on an empty floor in the Alle School of Fine Art and Design at the University of Addis Ababa. The stickiness of that school and city are different from what holds ours together, but how and where and why?

So some of these structural reasons are what we expose our participants to, whether it is why we go to Ethiopia together, or walk through Berlin being led in the directions of the smells. Most of the forces of Olafur's practice are just too far away from the students' practices to feel. We see the shapes and forms produced, but to see the complexity of the stickiness is for the most part way far away from the forces organising their own art practices. Again, it's like ha-ha in landscape architecture; the tiger is standing right by the window; you see how close it is, but it is actually separated from getting there by a deep depression.

OE You think so?

EE Sure. Well, I can speak from my own practice. We may align in a space of ideas in the room at any particular time, agree on something's responsibilities to the world, or maybe why we are inspired by how something is materialised... And then I twist a 100-meter rope into a knot, and you design a 100-meter bridge into a city. I can get the ideas, which organise and generate your bridge, for example, but in order to understand the intricacies of how that bridge forms also requires having a certain amount of bridge-scale work experience. There are artists in our school that have only been in group exhibitions, and sometimes only the exhibitions we have organised. There are others who have

been in the better-known biennales. When a Weibel or Maharaj visits the school, the energy of that content has to be able to plug into all the different scales of practice in the room. The same thing has to be relevant in many different ways. I mean, we can all meet in questions and ideas and feelings and philosophies, but any doing increases knowing what to ask. I mean, I think one of your best works is how you practice, allowing these things to meet in a place, today we call it a school, tomorrow, who knows? The practice also depends on the production...

CW Practice and production are important keywords and not just in relation to scale—comparing square metres of a workshop, team size and logistic support, number and budgets. Artistic practice, both in communication and actual production, could be exercised on different scales throughout the semesters.

This also happened while living and working in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As the context changed, the thinking and doing changed, and the very practice of the participants' art had to change at the same time. We were all confronted with different expectations of what art is, as we always are, whether in Berlin or Ethiopia: how art should be presented, what it means, what it touches, what it may move.

One way to touch upon this is how the institute participated in events like the *Addis Ababa Foto Fest* and *Jan Meda*. We were invited to take part in this international photo exhibition, that had a stronger conventional framework and we hosted another exhibition, which was called *Jan Meda—Großes Feld*. There were installations and performances, and there were also public talks from people like Molly Nesbit, a poetry night and film programmes, a festival out in the open field. The exhibition we hosted was not exactly just an exhibition, but it was our practice of learning and living together; it was exercising and producing reality at once. It was interesting to listen to the very different ways in which each of the artists in the school talks about their experience and about these two exhibitions—facing expectations of what an exhibition is supposed to be—and to be able to relate to those expectations while the place changes and the work changes and the idea evolves, and how this meets in different ways of expressing themselves, of making art, and of living together. Many of the ideas and experiments that were realised formed the energy of the *Jan Meda* experience, not from the goal of producing an exhibition format, but from the urge to share a practice, almost like sharing a language. The practice—the *Umsetzung*—that's how we communicated, the "hows" of seeing a glimpse of the reality we all share and how we invest ourselves in it. Without the growth of the exhibition formats that we nourished, we would have missed an opportunity to communicate via our practice. We would not have been exposed to the local reactions, options, doubts and excitement to enhance the dialogues. Those exhibition formats were a continuation of everyone's practice and work, crystallising and catalysing experiences.

And for this book, and when making a photo essay of our trip to Addis Ababa, it will be a different story again, every time. A different story from the one I just gave, or what Olafur said, or the story experienced by any of the artists in our school, or any of the artists in Addis Ababa, or Molly, who came back to Berlin after sharing experiences in Addis Ababa, and let us talk about it again...

EE It will be a story that happens, not one that has happened. And so we couple together with these different systems, to also see how we do these ideas and languages, in terms of these other places, not just something on the east coast of Africa.

We're trying to do this kind of everywhere, this art-practicing. These people are coming in, maybe to see Olafur, maybe because one of us knows them from before, whatever... They come through here and then we go out of our past and these things they all spin together now into a way that starts to become a form one day, something driving another form the next time, an energy changing something from before.

ND For example, the project in Addis Ababa, is that a new step? Because I felt when I was there, even though I was there for a very short time, it's a way of experimenting or maybe experiencing how to bring many of the ideas that developed here over the years at the Institut für Raumexperimente, to other places... to implement it elsewhere. I mean, to continue it, but...

OE I would not say it's a new step. I would say it's a relatively robust version of the steps that we've been taking all along. We did the same thing we did before and will continue to do afterwards. But, interestingly, a lot of the conditions were different. It was also very different when we did something similar in Brazil. It is also very different to do something on a very short trip somewhere else, and so on and so forth.

EE And in Berlin Tempelhof, rather than in Berlin, couched at home in your studio...

OE... and in Zurich, which was also very important. The project in Addis Ababa was not about going out of where we are, going from the inside to the outside. We were just going! We were just continuing on the inside. Another point was very much to make inexplicitly very explicit that we were not going there to "give" something!

EE We're on an art mission.

OE On the one hand, but to give something to the people there was absolutely not the idea. In fact, we were there to take, to use a line of thought taken from Christoph Schlingensief. We try not to underestimate the

realities of the global north and south and the inequality in the distribution of wealth. It was highly complex, of course, which made it even more robust, because every give or take was robust and strong.

We are seeing, in the times and places in which we now live, a kind of new confidence and creativity in art, but we are also seeing the opposite: there is also a lack of confidence, increasing objectification and marketing, where art and the economy are merging to the extent of taking away the great potential of creativity. That is a big discussion, and I am not necessarily the perfect person to verbalise it. I can see it to some extent, and I can also see that I'm a part of it, because my practice is right there in the middle of that whole complex field. I think that I try to balance it out, and I feel the responsibility of articulating to a young person how incredibly serious art is when it comes to not making the same mistakes that I made.

You have to encourage the students to believe in their own works of art to such an extent that they can actually change the world with their works of art. That change might not be a very quantifiable one, and it might or might not be a qualitative one. It requires a whole other way of measuring.

And this is where I think we have to become a little more utopian. The utopian aspect here lies in having confidence that our actions have effects. We started out with introspection, but I think we have evolved towards "outrospection". In our artistic practices, we find the critical components in the relationship to what is outside our practices. The why is not to be seen in the conventional critical approach, but in a more social, scientific approach, where we actually test the works on the street, test them in reality.

So the institute actually ended up becoming more extroverted and spatial than we thought it would in the beginning. We ask ourselves: "Does what we do have a new sensitivity to, or confidence in the potential for art to co-produce reality?" This might be utopian, but art is a co-producer of reality, and a very vibrant or strong and relevant one at that. It is a currency that is becoming more and more valuable, simply because all the other economies that produce reality are deteriorating. This is something that I am particularly interested in how we are becoming more utopian, not because we are becoming more disconnected or abstract, but because reality is simply deteriorating. Although we are becoming more insular, within that bubble, there is occasionally a vibrating interconnectivity with the world; there's something really important going on when it comes to what an art school produces in today's society, compared to other schools and other systems and other reality production machines.

Interestingly, when we close the school, we will know how to make a school, and not before. This is a beautiful thought because we were students too, and the students were also teachers. Because they are so much more sensitive about what's going on—in this



case, in Berlin. I learned a lot about myself and about others from the students, and also from their art. They were the teachers or the protagonists, and I became a student.

This is why I love it when Molly Nesbit speaks. She's so aware of the unpredictability of the other. Who knows if there's a revolutionary writer in the audience? She does not exclude that. She rather walks in and teaches and takes everything in. This is about confidence, right? This is really about the idea that there is something and it is worthwhile and let's just be very careful that we don't miss it. I think these things seep through to the students, even though they look at her and they might wonder: "What is she talking about?" But the confidence is clear.

That's why the street is important, and public space is important; architecture is important, landscape architecture is important, social sciences are important, comparative sciences are important... But robotic sciences are also important, artificial intelligence is important... You know, disregarding the curatorial, the museum and so on... And dancers are important, street dancers, street activists, all these things. It all ties together in this idea of bonding with reality production. Therefore, it's maybe fair to say, we have not had a very theoretical class. It has been...

EE When you look at... the way Molly was talking about her responsibility as teaching art history, it's a 'doing' theory again. It's in the doing of...

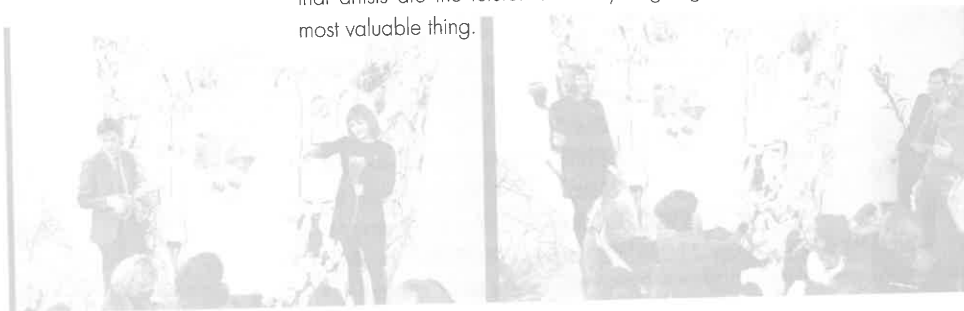
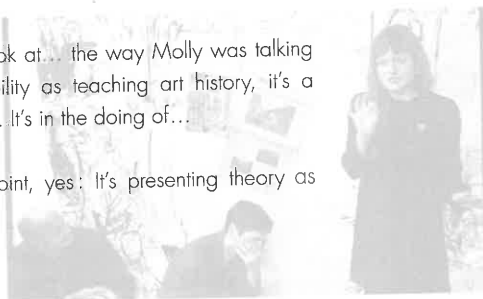
OE That's the point, yes: It's presenting theory as activism.

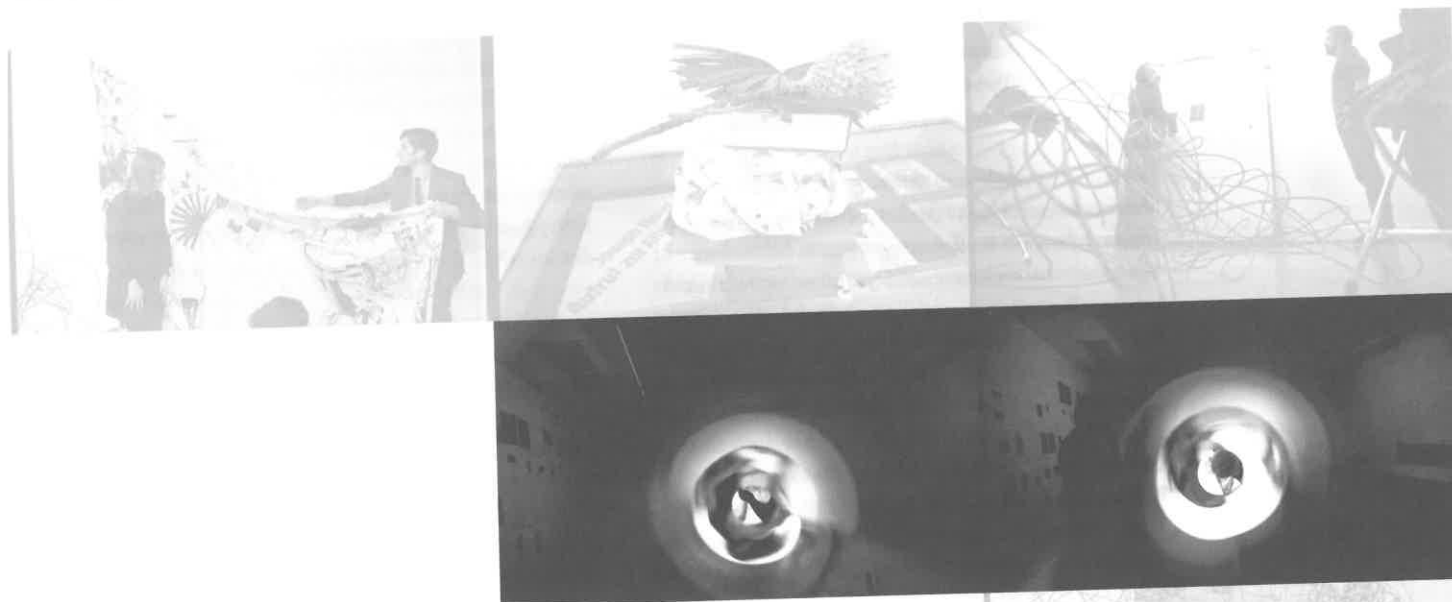
EE Yes.

OE It's presenting words as sculptures to celebrate love, and it shows that words are active and...

ND Performative.

OE I'm really optimistic when it comes to evaluating the five years. Because, as I said before, I really think that artists are the future. Creativity is going to be the most valuable thing.





Nico Dockx see page 8.

Olafur Eliasson (born 1967) is an artist living and working in Copenhagen and Berlin. His work spans from installation and sculpture to photography and film and has been exhibited worldwide in institutions such as MoMA, Tate Modern, and the Venice Biennale. Established in 1995, his Berlin studio today numbers about 80 craftsmen, architects, and art historians. In April 2009, as a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts, Olafur Eliasson founded the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments), a five-year-long arts educational research project, supported by the Einstein Foundation Berlin. The institute was housed in the same building as Studio Olafur Eliasson, so that school and studio would mutually benefit from their respective activities, and the institute expanded the university into the broader city of Berlin. In 2012, together with engineer Frederik Ottesen, Eliasson developed Little Sun, a global project and social business that produces and distributes solar lamps to households where electricity is scarce or unavailable.



Eric Ellingsen (born 1972) uses bio spaces to squat bio poems.

CHANTS OPERATIONS #2 ROUTINES KNOT RITUALS

say IN THE END END IN-ENDED GOT over and over again until you start to hear other words and then start saying the other words you hear over and over and keep going until you arrive in a sense where you started.

Christina Werner (born 1975) has been co-directing the Institut für Raumexperimente since its inception in 2009. Her work at the Institut für Raumexperimente emphasized not only an interest in building programmatic links between art and other disciplines but a comprehensive approach to curating the institute's wide-ranging program of artistic practice and research: workshops, exhibitions and publications; food-related formats; perception experiments; contemplative exercises; field trips; institutional collaborations and collaborative initiatives; as well as an unobtrusive guidance in choreographing and facilitating an open environment for communication and art and knowledge production.

The Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments) was a five-year educational research project led by artist Olafur Eliasson in affiliation with the College of Fine Arts at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). One of the central tenets in the methodology of the Institut für Raumexperimente was to curate learning situations of uncertain certainty. These teaching experiments allowed unexpected ideas and energies to emerge from within the unique micro-ecologies of collaborations with international guests, practitioners, scientists, and institutions participating across a broad spectrum of different disciplines. By cultivating engagement among divergent fields of theory and practice, the program created an atmosphere of experimentation that challenged the norms by which we learn how to learn and, consequently, unfolded its curriculum in retrospect.

Christina Werner earned a degree in Cultural Studies at the Universities of Hildesheim and Tübingen and completed a postgraduate program in Critical Studies at the Lund University/Malmö Art Academy, Sweden. During 2007–09, she was curator for visual arts at the Cultural Committee of German Industries, and its artist award and exhibition series 'ars viva'. Previously, she was director of the gallery Wohnmaschine, Berlin and co-curated various exhibition projects at the nGhK, Berlin. She has served as assistant to the artistic director of Documenta 11, Kassel, in 2002, worked as a research assistant at the Institute of Contemporary Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and freelanced at the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin and ifa, Stuttgart.

Institut für Raumexperimente

graphical concept by Jan Mast

JAN MEDA — GROSSES FELD

HOSTED BY INSTITUT FÜR RAUMEXPERIMENTE

13. 15. DECEMBER 2012, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

In April 2009, as a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), artist Olafur Eliasson founded the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments) together with his team of colleagues Christina Werner and Eric Ellingsen. For five years, the Institut für Raumexperimente affiliated to the College of Fine Arts at the Berlin University of the Arts as been an arts educational research project, supported by the Senate Office of Education, Science and Research of the State of Berlin in the context of its Program of Excellence as well as by the Einstein Foundation Berlin. The institute was housed in the same building as Studio Olafur Eliasson, so that school and studio would mutually benefit from their respective activities, and the institute expanded the university into the broader city of Berlin.

One of the central tenets in the methodology of the Institut für Raumexperimente was to curate learning situations of uncertain certainty. These teaching experiments allow unexpected and surprising ideas and energies to emerge from within the unique micro-ecologies of international guests, practitioners, educators and scientists participating across an expanse of different disciplines. Collaborations with international universities and different institutions were central to these education experiments. Through the past ten semesters, the institute has developed projects in collaboration with university departments from the ETH in Zurich, Harvard University, Sciences Po in Paris and the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

Following an introductory phase over the course of three semesters, in the fall of 2012, the Institut für Raumexperimente spent ten weeks in Addis Ababa building relationships, educational collaborations, and art co-productions. Hosted by and in cooperation with the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design at the Addis Ababa University plenty of local collaborations and surprising artistic ventures formed and an art festival emerged out of this collaborative effort.

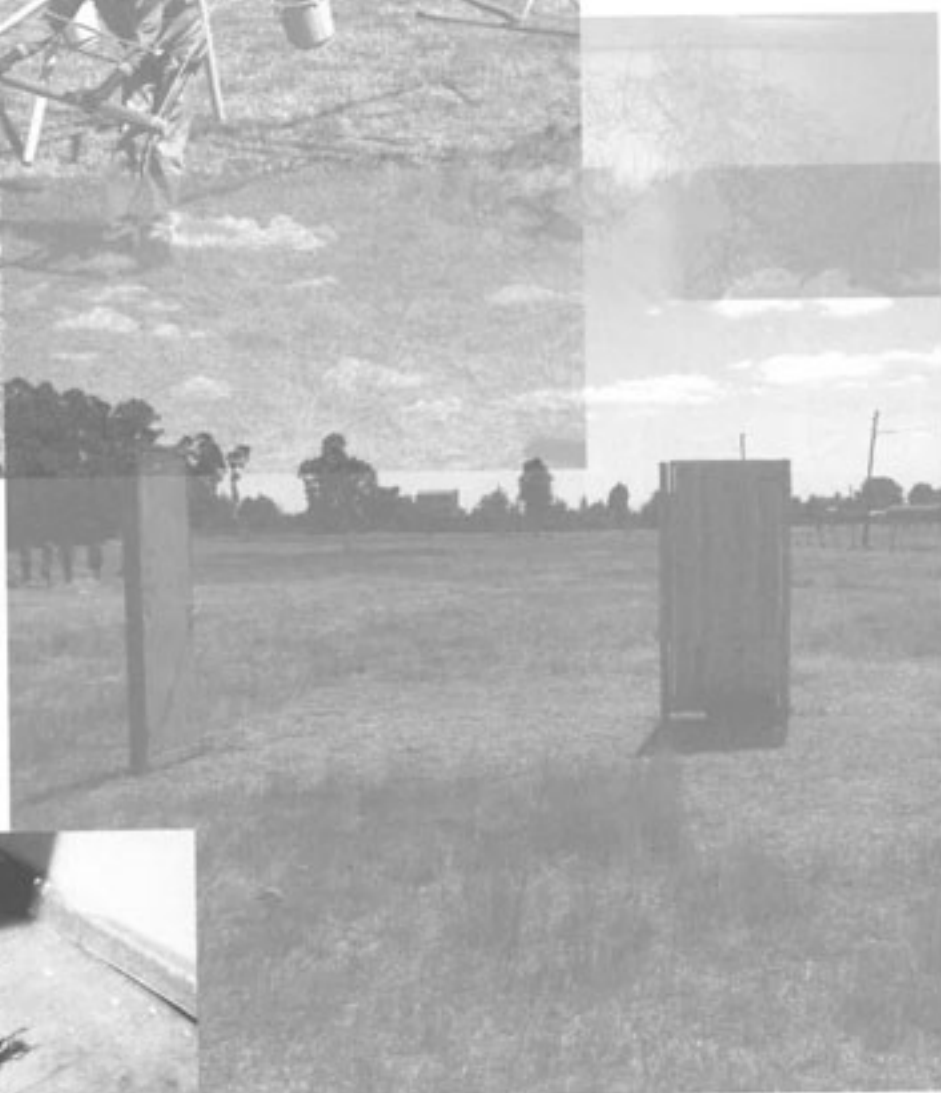
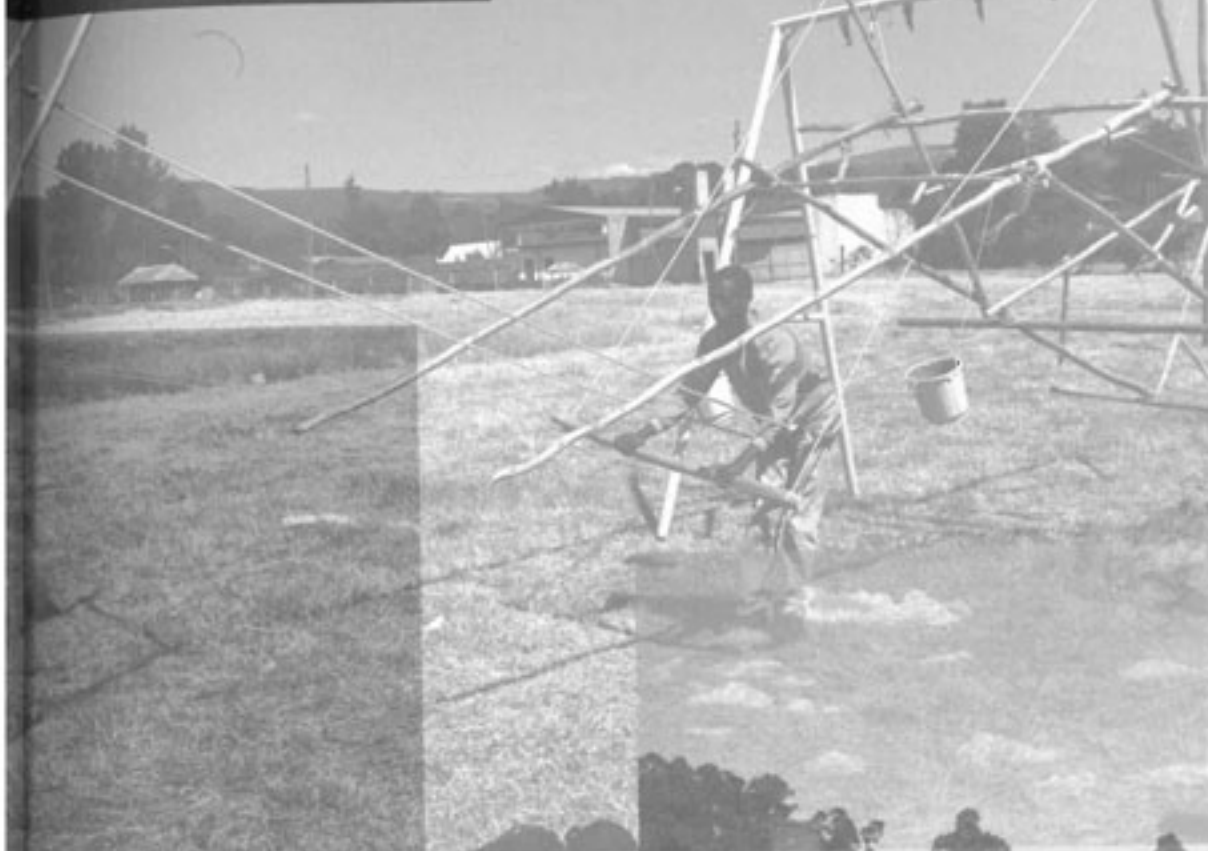




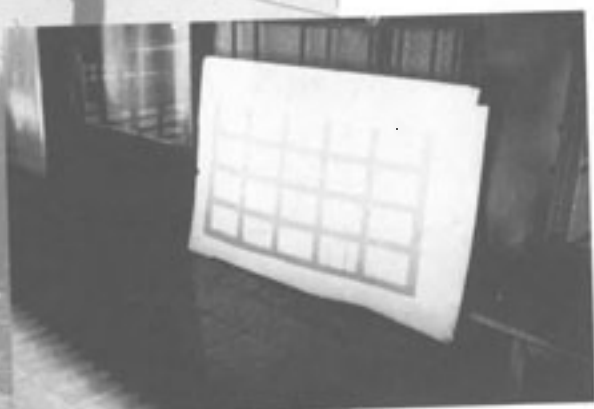


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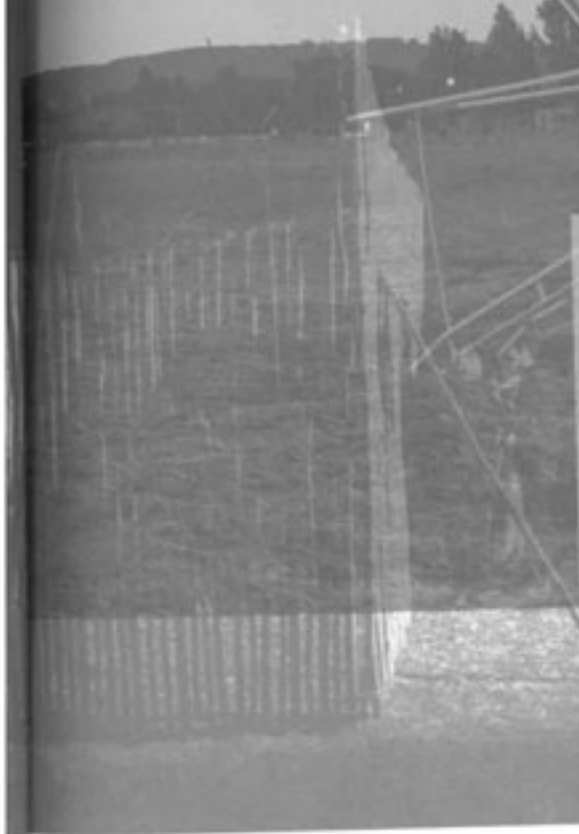






























Photographs

Nico Dockx & Institut für Raumexperimente Archives.

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Choreography

Christina Werner and Eric Ellingsen.

Special Thanks

Olafur Eliasson and the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, Addis Ababa University.