

**SOMETHING  
ABOUT  
THE CONDITIONS  
FOR A GOOD  
COLLABORATION**







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**A project by Giancarlo Norese, 2002–2006**

**from a discussion via email with  
Ayreen Anastas, Rene Gabri, and Vladimir Volnovik**

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A project by Giancarlo Norese

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**SOMETHING  
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Subject: a+

Dear Ayreen and Rene,

I'm initiating a project (a collection of texts) about the concept of collaboration in art: on antagonism and common goals. I'd like to write this text in the form of a dialogue with multiple interlocutors, and the first people to come to mind were you. What do you think about it?

Giancarlo

**Subject: Re: a+**

**Yes, it sounds interesting... the question is...  
how to start???**

**Ayreen**

**Subject: 1**

**Hi, I'll start this conversation, I suggest replying to all the members, even if the number grows, and trying to update this correspondence with daily emails.**

**The topic of this discourse could be the sense and the advisability of making collaborative artworks, considering both the advantages and the handicaps of this kind of production. I know this is your attitude, as it is mine. "Antagonism, and common goals".**

**Giancarlo**

**Subject: 2**

**Back to the question... your question?**

**Do we work... together or against each other...**

**with each other against one another... I am not sure anymore...**

**"Antagonism, and common goals," you wrote.**

**But where did you get these words from?**

**As for me I always work alone together.**

**we**

**we + me = two (omit does not make sense unless...)**

**you + me = two (sometimes the one and othertimes... no)**

**me + me = two (a dangerous we, mostly affected by high levels of alcohol and...)**

**Ayreen**

**Subject: 3**

**> as for me I always work alone together.**

**I know that even if an artist works alone, (s)he never is alone. But what do you think about the meanings of a collaborative art project? The kind of project the nature of which intersects and shades individuality?  
Is a shared idea more significant than a single idea?**

**Giancarlo**

Subject: 4 (but much of it comes before 3, fell asleep writing it)

**It seems some lessons are never learned and others are willfully forgotten.**

**It is true in love, in friendship, and in collaboration.**

**Maybe this is the way to begin this note and to describe my relation to collaboration in general.**

**To say there is sense in collaboration may be telling less than half the story, because the only things I have known to be “sensible” deal with measure and accountability. Getting a normal job and raising a family, is “sensible”. Eating healthy foods, not smoking or drinking too much, and exercising daily makes “sense”. Subjecting yourself to the many risks involved in collaboration makes little “sense” in the conventional understanding of the word. When I decide to embark on a collaboration, “sense” and “measure” have little to do with my decision.**

**In fact, if experience serves me right, there is much to that does not make sense about collaborating.**

**But, before I begin to write the death of collaboration, I will stop short, because like love and friendship, there is something that is hard to evoke in a collection of words that makes collaboration something I keep gravitating toward.**

Maybe somewhere within it, there is the possibility of friendship (greater friendship?), of exchange, of negotiation, maybe within it rests the possible, or communication?, or community? Difficult words to say or write or think about, riddled with problems, but at first glance, these continue to draw me into collaboration. People, the other, the friend, the friend to come, draws me into collaboration.

Derrida, starts the “Politics of Friendship” with a quote from Aristotle, which amounts to something like this (I will find the proper quote later): “My friends, there are no such thing as friends.”

“And didn’t your grandfather encourage you very early on to learn that friendship is nearly impossible to find, difficult to maintain and even harder to count on?”

Hmm, yes he did.

By writing this letter, I begin to collaborate.

(these sentences can also be followed with a question mark: ?)

By writing this letter, I subject myself to a risk.

By writing this letter, I offer myself an opportunity to grow in a direction unforeseen.

By writing this letter, I attempt to locate an inbetween space, to possibly draw you closer to me, or draw myself closer to you.

By writing this letter, I enter a contract of sorts, to give time to you, to share thoughts, hesitations, stories... I subject myself to possible embarrassment, failure, resentment, cruelty, betrayal, and emotional torture. And whenever I begin collaborations, it seems more and more often I try to begin with what is furthest from these thoughts.

As for advice. Hmm, she TRIES not to give advice.

As for antagonism. Hmm, he prefers to think about this one further.

As for me + me = two. Hmm, she will bookmark that one.

Rene

**Subject: 5**

**Today the Israeli army invaded Bethlehem\***

**The Oslo agreement was an example of a bad collaboration\*\***

**At both ends of the spectrum are two words starting with C**

**Collaboration-----Competition**

**Competition = a bad habit + anti social.**

**Compete = don't work together.**

**My mother and my sister collaborated on me—and so I had two mothers: my own mother and my sister. They had also another project—my niece—she also had her own mother and my mother as a mother.**

**It is better to have two mothers than one mother.  
(this is an advantage of good collaboration)**

**My mother and my sister had a good collaboration.**

**The result is she.**

**The result is me.**

**Great results! Congratulations!**

**He + he were not so smart? No, sorry! I mean—he was not so smart!**

**With Oslo you thought a new project was coming to life—you were deceived—the conditions of the collaboration were not right.**

**First of all**

**a good collaboration is only good if the two 'he's are equals—or at least if each 'he' considers the other 'he' as equal as himself.**

**This was not the case in Oslo!**

**It was a mistake! That kind of collaboration!  
and frankly... this kind of thing happens!**

**But it does not prevent us to collaborate and hope that the conditions are the right ones in the next ones!**

**Good luck!**

**Ayreen**

**\* Bethlehem is a small city in occupied Palestine.**

**\*\* Let us call this one mail 'remarks to good and bad collaborations', or 'conditions of good and bad collaborations' or 'examples of good and bad collaborations'. This does not answer your questions. But hopefully with time questions get answered with more questions, and so the more productive the discussion goes. English is not so good in footnotes. And so you may add to the conditions of collaboration, which are as relevant as other questions that address the relation to the works directly. Or let me do the homework and add the question to our lunchbox: "What are the conditions of good collaborations?"**

**Subject: 6**

**What are the conditions of good collaborations?**

**I've read about this concept today: "The conflict subsists not only between good and evil, but even between good and good." If the "collaborators" use their freedom too freely, something "wrong" could happen. This means liberties don't have to be too communicating, maybe. I'm not sure.**

**The risks of collaboration.**

**Can anybody be neutral? No. Neutralize him! I'm against the notion of experience, I don't know why. But I want to collaborate. It behooves me to do so.**

**Giancarlo**

**Subject: 7**

**The conditions of a good collaboration are conditional.**

**Depending on the persons involved. And even if the conditions of person A are X, they are subject to change depending on the conditions of person Y.**

**There is a chemistry question involved.**

**Then there are the conditions of the everyday.**

**Time.**

**Mood.**

**Food.**

**Sleep.**

**Political Realities.**

**Patience.**

**We should keep a running list of the conditions.**

**And I am still thinking about my conditions.**

**Rene**

**Subject: 8**

**... Let me talk again about collaborations.**

**Even if I acknowledge to be a misanthrope, I've spent a lot of energy in past years in the realization of projects conceived collectively. These kinds of projects can contain a variety of intuition, sense, and innovation whose origins are difficult to credit within a group of authors.**

**At the same time, sharing a concept with other people could be more attractive for the final accomplishment of the project and for daily life.**

**Can you describe one example of a collaborative project in your past?**

**Giancarlo**

**Subject: introducing me**

**Dear Giancarlo, my friend Ayreen told me to write you, and I am a shy person. I am not sure if I can participate in these confessions. My English is also not very good, but I found interesting what she already sent me forward. Also the fact we do not know one another, makes hard the collaboration. Maybe...**

**Ayreen and myself collaborate now together, by mail and without mail. By telephone and in person when the time is there. So this is why she found it interesting to mail you.**

**If time is good, I will take a number in mail and start games together with you. But also not so good too many men maybe. The gender question is a question, also in collaboration... but I am not a girl, so I will be silent for now... and let me know your opinions.**

**Hello to Rene, we have to meet when you are in Europe, Ayreen as much.**

**Vladimir**

**Subject: Re: introducing me**

**Dear Vladimir,**

**you are welcome to our discussions, of course (maybe “confessions”, as you wrote, is the right word). So I suggest all participants to forward you future messages.**

**Please find below the message “No. 9” from Ayreen.**

**Giancarlo**

## Subject: 9

**You:** of projects conceived collectively... origins are difficult to credit... within a group of authors...

**Can you describe one example of a collaborative project in your past?**

**Me:** it is a hard question... one can speak easier about collaboration in general... in the same way one can easier speak about love in general... and well through the general... there is the specific... maybe... hopefully.

It is intimate to speak about a specific collaboration... yet I will try to do so... I am at the same time finding it difficult... maybe I will take the aspect of authorship that you (GN) already mentioned above.

I think there are real collaborations in the sense that the ideas start to go back and forth, back and forth till the idea of separating the ideas becomes senseless... if this is the case... we are dealing with a real collaboration... or first degree collaborations.

On the other hand... if you always can locate entities that is mine and that is yours in a work... it is still collaboration. But for me... not first degree... maybe a second degree collaboration... since the sum of

**you + me = you + me (in terms of ideas shared)\***

**whereas in the first degree collaboration**

**you + me = we**

**Now this does not mean that a first degree is necessarily better, it is just harder to achieve, and it also requires a total trust in the other and a selfless self in the most positive sense... so it is about giving... because the basics of the relation to one another is the mutual trust.**

**In the second degree collaboration... you are not sure about the other... the other is not sure... my part of the piece... vs. your part of the piece... in this piece this was my idea... I did this... if it comes to that...**

**So in areas of conflict, we see that the tendency is always to read the collaboration as a second degree. And possibly it is.**

**But the second degree, can also be a good start for a collaboration. And maybe all collaborations start as second degree ones: X initiates something, Y says OK, let's go... and later on... this may develop into a first degree... where ideas float in between... instead of here and there.**

**I am sure there is a spectrum of the degrees of collaborations... but I thought I share this with you... and maybe you can add more to the spectrum...**

**Ayreen**

**\* This is why we here in second degree collaborations, "this was my idea, that was your idea..."**

## Subject: 10

And now how can I start this conversation that has already started and thanks to Giancarlo that I am able to start by repeating a question, that is

> Can you describe one example of a collaborative project in your past?

And sure I would like to, and I would describe it despite the fact that Ayreen brought about the impossibility of such description, as this description is too intimate to be inscribed or described? (if I understand you in the right way correctly? Ayreen)

And sure I would try to describe such a project directed towards togetherness against aloneness, in a general sense of an existence.

We know we are alone, anyways alone, and maybe it is not the general sense of existence, and maybe I was wrong more, so it is the specific kind of resistance rather than existence that requires the two, the three, and the four of us—our togetherness against the oneness of a normality—and the idea of the one that brings us back together as one or two, and despite the fact that this sounds like empty crickle crackle while it is not so the case, and the case of antagonism lies outside and against a collaboration in a world of multiple isolations.

**And so the idea about multiple goals and common antagonisms as I would prescribe it.**

**Vladimir**

**Subject: 11**

**I'd like to tell you briefly about an example of solipsistic collaboration.**

**One fine day I decided to dedicate my attention to the production of a new video, and since I don't have a videocamera and I don't like to talk, I started a collaboration with myself.**

**Black and black, silent, with captions: "Silent Film (with no pictures)" was a self-discussion about art and love, quoting the names of real people (which is politically incorrect), private letters, and some excerpts from dialogues I heard around there. I recorded the master on a VHS tape and made copies until its total disappearance, selling them to my fans at the modest price of \$2.**

**With the money made from the sale I didn't buy a video-camera, so I would like to work now on the English version of the film.**

**Giancarlo**

**Subject: 12**

**Hell of an interesting concept collaborating with oneself, and I congratulate you Giancarlo for this brave attempt, and would like in advance to ask you to see the project as it resurfaces in one or the other ways, and I have never imagined that this thing is possible, and how could one deliberately cut oneself into another and become a self that is not one self, and not another self at one and the same time.**

**My question to you is how this other self differs from your self, and what difference does it make to the work as such than to a work that you usually would have done so.**

**Or have I misunderstood your concept of “solipsistic collaboration?”**

**Vladimir**

## **Subject: 13**

### **In V's words**

**... it is the specific kind of resistance rather than existence that requires the two, the three, and the four of us. Our togetherness against the oneness of a normality.**

### **In G's words**

**“solipsistic collaboration?”**

### **In A's words**

**If your assumption Vladimir is true i.e. in a togetherness there is resistance involved—not working towards a ‘genius one’ but towards a communal genius,—against the tendencies of individualistic isolations.**

**Where is the resistance involved in the “solipsistic collaboration?”**

**Ayreen**

**Subject: 14**

**Collaboration is about communication, miscommunication is a part of that.**

**I wonder where we are in our communication right (write) now?**

**I am tired, without much sleep, working on 2 collaborations, maybe 3, maybe 4, maybe 5, maybe 6, there are so many, easier to count the things that are not, and then again, in your discussions, it would seem that even those are also collaborations, and well they are, but how to sort them, or should we.**

**Examples, will come shortly.**

**Rene**

**Subject: 15**

**There are some interesting ingredients emerging from our inquiry on “collaboration”: resistance, miscommunication, intimacy, authorship, conditions, negotiation, risks...**

**And in your opinion, does an art piece conceived collectively have more relationships, or effects, or connections to politics than the one conceived by a single artist?**

**Giancarlo**

**Subject: 16**

**G...**

**> And in your opinion, does an art piece conceived collectively have more relationships, or effects, or connections to politics than the one conceived by a single artist?**

**V...**

**Yes, I think there is too, there is something like that involved in relation to that, that is the not working alone, that is working in a team and together makes a collaboration as a form of a political statement.**

**And on the other hand it is something that is what Rene was talking about, and what I agree about a hardship involved if not hardships that vary from kind to kind of persons involved, projects involved and so on. Hardships that trouble you and sometimes worry you, that make you think alone maybe is a better bet.**

**One major worry that troubles me is the quality of a work produced, especially if the group of two or three or four do not have a history of working together... since over time you and yourself, the two of you, have a certain way that another's presence and the urge to decide as quick sometimes is not very helpful for the work, as it might suffer from those quicker decisions for the good**

of production... so maybe it is the time factor that you and you negotiate in better way than you and her and him and so on.

But having said that the flipflop side of that is a work that never ends constantly, revised constantly, added since there is no urge to bring up a final decision... when negotiated between others and you it's easier to decide...

Vladimir

**Subject: 17**

**Our talk about collaboration concerned hereto those kinds of relationships including two, three or a few more members.**

**I'm thinking now about togetherness among dozens or hundreds of people, as the one I was involved in in the past. The dynamics of such a group of individuals can be considered from a psychological point of view, but my attention is currently focused on the form of "political statement" mentioned before.**

**It's now the time to dedicate my sensitivity to a wider political awareness.**

**Giancarlo**

## Subject: 18

I feel so disconnected and sometimes this happens with collaborations, sometimes it just seems like two people speak a language and the words just do not reach each other.

Sometimes it is willful, other times unintended. But this interest in communication in relation to collaboration is very important. Someone suggested recently on a Monday Night at 16Beaver that collaboration allows artists or curators or ? be clearer about their ideas and concepts in the work, because they have to communicate to one another. I think this is an interesting component, but what happens when this communication breaks down? What if 2 or 3 or 5 or 9 think they are collaborating, they are communicating, but that they are not.

How long can collaborators miscommunicate, or not communicate? Is it maybe false to assume that individuals who collaborate communicate? What would a miscommunicative collaboration like? I wont take the question to the philosophical coordinates of... "can one communicate?" Commune, community, communion, communicate, communications, common, hmmm.

So we would add communication and community as two words to revisit in relation to the question of collabora-

tion, because inherently there are some politics implicated in those questions.

Questions of voices, speaking, speaking together, with someone, as one voice, as a we, or as separate voices, bifurcated, distant, parallel, in relation to, against, unrelated...

Let me try again.

Questions of voices and voice, speaking with, to, about, against... some... one, thing, idea, choice, issue emerge in this question of collaboration.

Maybe we are trying to “flesh out” this question of collaboration, the questions of collaboration.

And within them, yes there needs to be a focus on the political implications of work that is with an other.

But there is so much to write, and I feel like I am writing too much with out saying enough, and saying too much at the same time.

I will try again, later.

Rene

## **Subject: 19**

**Giancarlo**

... now about togetherness among dozens or hundreds of people...

**Rene**

... it just seems like two people speak a language and the words just do not reach each other...

**Vladimir**

... about a hardship involved if not hardships that vary from kind to kind of persons involved projects involved and so on.

**Ayreen**

It is about conflict... someone asked me the following question and I thought I ask it further as my contribution for the day as I am still thinking about... the question is:

“We would also be interested to know if you have any thoughts on the role that art and culture play in the conflict.”

**Ayreen**

**Subject: OK**

**I think our correspondence can stop for a while, it will be edited and maybe new people will be involved: in this case the new dialogues will be forwarded to you.**

**Thanks for your contributions, more info when available.**

**Giancarlo**

**Subject: Re: OK**

**OK good idea... we reached the point of edit and refreshments. Rene does not think so, he still has stuff to write and I might too. But probably it has to do with time limits???**

**Vladimir is out of town now, that's why he does not check e-mail. He'll be back soon.**

**Ayreen**

## Subject: Resume

Maybe we could add a brief résumé of all participants, as the following example.

**Giancarlo Norese.** Born 1963 in Novi Ligure, Italy, lives in Milano. Graduate of the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, his work has been exhibited in one-artist exhibitions at Galleria Neon (Bologna), and in group shows in such venues as Villa Medici/Academie de France à Rome; the Venice Biennale; P.S.1 at the Clocktower Gallery (New York); Galerija Škuc (Ljubljana), Viafarini (Milano), Le Botanique (Bruxelles).

He was one of the initiators of “Progetto Oreste” (1997–2001), a network of international artists and curators dealing with residencies, publications, meetings, and exhibition projects. Some of his books have been published by Galleria Massimo De Carlo, Placentia Arte, Istituto Svizzero di Roma, and Charta.

So I'm waiting for some short descriptions of your lives.

**Giancarlo**

Subject: Re: Resume

Below is what I already have. If you want me to write it in the same way of your example short let me know.

P.S. I decided to replace the seven letters that constitute my name i.e. A, Y, R, E, N, S, T, with -, -, -, -, -, -, -.

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**Ayreen**

**Subject: Re: Resume**

**Dear Giancarlo,**

**Here is something close to an official version.**

**Rene Gabri. Born in Tehran, Iran, relocated to Los Angeles and is currently residing in New York City. After completing the Whitney Museum of American Art, Independent Study Program, he co-initiated 16Beaver, a physical (located near Wall Street) and virtual (16beaver-group.org) site which serves as a meeting point and platform for various artistic, curatorial, political, and cultural interventions/projects. In addition to 16Beaver, his most recent projects have ranged from solo works (often video based) to collaborations with Ayreen Anastas and e-Xplo (initiated by Erin McGonigle, Heimo Lattner and Gabri – e-Xplo.org).**

**Also, I wanted to include some of the notes I referred to when we last spoke, I often require time to think about things, and I have to say, these responses are still rough, they evolved from your questions and Ayreen and Vlad's input. I am not sure if they will help, but they are more engaged with some of the things we were all discussing at that time. This is not even the complete notes, they are just the most coherent ones that I could find.**

**OK, hope you are well**

**Notes from discussions:**

**What about antagonism and collaboration?**

**It is necessary, antagonism. Inevitably, even the most tranquil and easy going collaborations run into a wall with an interface that is hard to locate, a site of conflict, antagonism, contestation, negotiation, the latter word being the most diplomatic. But I think I have worked with some people who see antagonism and think, “oh, well we are having a parting of ways, maybe we should no longer work together”. I am not of this camp.**

**Antagonism can be productive if utilized in the right way. For example, it can motivate parties to more accurately formulate their positions, their thoughts, their desires. Often I found that with each crisis, with each antagonism, there is an opportunity to build a stronger collaboration, to work through it rather than see it as a failure. Because again, it is inevitable, we cannot always agree, there will always be ruptures in the narratives, in the commonalities. I hope this does not sound negative, but how can we possibly communicate, understand, agree with one another without also giving room for the mis- and dis- prefixes of those words. I know, this is all very dry and rudimentary.**

**You started a list earlier of conditions that effect a collaboration, have you anything to add to the list?**

**Everyday Issues:**

**Time.**

**Mood.**

**Food.**

**Sleep.**

**General Health.**

**Political Realities.**

**Family Issues/Problems.**

**Relationship Issues/Problems.**

**Sexual Issues/Problems/Disfunctions.**

**Personality Issues:**

**Communication.**

**Trust.**

**Honesty.**

**Patience.**

**Sensitivity for the other.**

**Openness.**

**Adaptability/Flexibility.**

**Tolerance.**

**Work ethic.**

**Discipline.**

**What are the conditions of a good (or bad) collaboration?**

**I almost answered this question, but I suppose I am ambivalent about my response, because if I recall cor-**

rectly, somewhere in there, was the word trust. I guess sometimes I wonder if distrust could also be a necessary condition somehow. It is tied to my thoughts from the other day about antagonism I suppose. But I guess what I am interested in are models that allow for ruptures and failures, rather than models that strive for an unattainable ideal. Again, maybe I am way too pessimistic, but I think we can look at an example like marriage and understand that if we construct a model based on unattainable ideals, it is bound to break apart at some point.

However, if there is room for the shortcomings, the failures, the futures, that are on their way, there is a possibility for a long-term collaboration.

But all of this is based on an idea of constructing a collaboration that lasts. Some collaborations are temporary by design.

Can we discuss collaboration without invoking experience?

Giancarlo, you note that you do not believe in experience, and I am not sure what you mean here, but I think I can still try to respond.

Yes, maybe you are right, maybe in some fatal way, everytime we collaborate with others, we tend to repeat (at some point) the same mistakes (Freud's repetition

compulsion?), the same issues we have experienced in previous relations/collaboration, only re-animated with new “partners”. Thus, maybe experience is not a guarantee of a more articulated or nuanced view of collaboration.

Yes, maybe as many times as you may do something, you are better off imagining that “this time” is your “first time” doing it (e.g. If this is the first time I am going to be working with an other, a friend, how can I make this work?). Most people I have worked with, and I include myself in this category, have had some horrible collaborative experiences. And these experiences can introduce certain blocks, or traumas that can easily undermine the new collaboration.

Also, I agree, anytime anyone starts with recollections and experiences, or begins to sound like some sage, I get really turned off to listening, so I apologize if I have taken on this rhetoric. Better to speak out of some ignorance, not offer up too much advice, etc., but then the question is, “what is left to say?”

Can you describe one example of a collaborative project in your past?

While I was at the Whitney Independent Study Program, a friend and I began to explore the possibilities of con-

tinuing our work together after the end of the program. Our ambitions grew to creating something closer to a dream we each had of a larger space involving more people, when a realtor suggested a site near Wall Street that had a very reasonable rent.

We negotiated and signed the lease and took the space, used the address as the name (16Beaver) and invited other friends we had met to rent studios or be involved in creating it. From its inception, the work involved many people, ranging from those with minimal commitment to those who committed and backed out, and yet others who grew more and more involved later in the story. This is probably the most intense, diverse, and sometimes painful collaboration I have been involved with. Even though much of the initial physical and monetary investment in 16Beaver was made by me and my friend, it always needed and implicated a wider group of people. By implicating a community, an open community, thus several communities, it eventually invited difference, risk, & contestation.

How would this platform be used, who could take part, which communities did it serve? These and other questions became points of conflict with my original partner. They could have just been an ongoing debate, good questions, but they and the relationship with my partner grew into something quite draining.

Needless to say, we had a parting of ways, my friend and I, but fortunately, the space survived and now there is a new we, with a new set of questions and dynamics.

I still sometimes wonder what that collaboration would have looked like without that conflict, or moment of crisis. Or I wonder, what if it has come later? Maybe foolishly, my hope is that I have learned from the 16Beaver experience.

But I am in no way done learning. It is funny, I find a lot of artists are more prone to start out working with groups and as they get older, they get wearier and wearier. Maybe it is because of the market, maybe it is because of the risks involved, maybe it is just because it is so damn hard sometimes, not sure. I am still looking for the groups that survived. I also try to learn from families and relationships, which I admire.

What do you have to say of first and second degree collaborations?

I think it is one nice frame to consider and I think Ayreen is correct in pointing out that ideally things form over a period of time, between individuals. I also agree with her that a collaboration that starts with an invitation can also be strong, as long as equality is what grounds the work together, otherwise it is more likely that someone becomes unhappy.

**On collaborating with yourself, with the other?**

**I have always believed that in loving someone, you often love the other, as much as the you love the person the other brings out in you. It must be some really unoriginal concept, so I do not claim it, I just believe it. So I think in collaboration almost the same can be said. Sometimes you can tell a good collaboration when it brings out parts of you, interpersonally and creatively that you want to have brought out.**

**And in your opinion, does an art piece conceived collectively have more relationships, or effects, or connections to politics than the one conceived by a single artist?**

**I think the likelihood is greater in collective work, because working with others requires a sort of politics, something akin to a “politics of friendship” if you will.**

**For example, conflict is more likely to emerge working with an other.**

**Of course, one can be ambivalent, I find myself in conflict with myself quite often. But I think what distinguishes the collaborative conflict is that it requires verbal dialogue and communication in order to arrive at a resolution. This communication or intervention at resolving a dispute invokes for me something political.**

But maybe that is more of a digression. So disregard and read further.

I think as soon as you involve more people, you extend beyond ego questions quite possibly, and start to engage on a more social level. This is not always the case, but more likely. So even if it involves two people or three people, working together, moving to some remote location and building structures and living together, working together, a notion of community is involved in that, an idea or ideal regarding social relations is invoked in that, and there are political suggestions implicated there that may not be there if a person goes to this location by him or herself. I mean I give this example, because I want to underline that sometimes the work itself may not even seem political. But the implications for collaborative work are always more likely to link to a politics.

Time and collaboration?

I always liked the model of the ensemble in theater. I always appreciated the Wooster Group for example, in fact the name 16 Beaver Group is part homage to them. I like their collaboration on many levels, most importantly I suppose is the work they have produced together, but I think the quality of the work (in collaboration) depends a lot on their history together, on their dedica-

tion to one another over an extended period of time. This level of commitment is so hard to find. Did they have conflict? Did they run into personal problems, ego problems? I am sure they did, in fact, I am familiar with some of the history preceding the Wooster Group, but the point being that I have this idea that the richest collaborative work can emerge over a period of time. But I find today that giving time to an other is one of the hardest things to do.

Can we go back to the question of politics and collaboration?

Yes, I think working with an other, and possibly more others can be a type of resistance. I think it can introduce dynamics that are inherently subversive to the dominant practices and discourses that surround us. Imagine one person making work that critiques and deals with the media censorship or distortions taking place in countries like Italy, the US, or Israel. Now imagine a group of people doing the same, the ramifications and implications of a group doing this type of work, are far more threatening and political I think. As soon as you introduce relations between people, you have the possibility of alliances or unions and this threatens the existing powers.

Those interests would much rather have the people work individually, live individually, be entertained indi-

vidually. It is far easier to control things this way. Most artists, like workers, or citizens in this current context are disempowered, the balance of power rests far too heavily on institutions, galleries, top down structures. Collaborative projects, particularly ones that engage or tap into larger networks, offer an opportunity of giving some power back to artists/independent thinkers/curators/activists/people. They also allow artists an opportunity to create and direct discussions/alliances with other artists, groups, arenas, networks, possibly even other contexts. That is why as difficult as collaboration can be, I think I gravitate towards it. It holds the hope for learning from others, for negotiating, for communicating, for locating an inbetween space within the body of one's work. Often these inbetween spaces are the most interesting because they can become transformative spaces.

Rene

**Subject: Re: Resume**

**Dear Giancarlo,**

**I am orienting myself on Rene's mail (or stealing his style, then it is part of the exchange in collaboration) to write about myself, since it is hard task to do so; so I will do this, and this is what I will do.**

**Forgive me Giancarlo for not replying, but I thought I had to do a bigger thing and my big thing is in the comp. And my dear iMac flunk died for a while, only questions on the icons, and so what happened to few of my friends macs.**

**Rene, is this all new? I like it... I did not know if we can play more, I thought the game was sort of declared ending? Giancarlo do we get points if we play now? I need my iMac to resurrect for that, now...**

**Anyhow here it is.**

**Vladimir Volnovik. Born in T'bilisi (Tiflis), Georgia in 1972. Relocated to Berlin in 1977 and is currently residing in Paris and New York.**

**After completing his masters at the HDK Hochschule der Kuenste in 2001, he co-initiated (together with Ayreen Anastas) the resurrection of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, a symbolic society in**

**structural terms, that is between the real and the imaginary. The most important concepts for SDUK is the library of Useful Knowledge (under construction), containing different video and audio works.**

**In addition to SDUK, his most recent projects have ranged from solo works (often audio based) to collaborations with performance artist Najwa Mourad and composer Viktor Kourdii.**







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