

**BACKGROUND:** Initially written for a specific residency/fellowship program in an hour after a phone conversation with a program officer, this document should be edited and added to by anyone who has ideas about the ways that this work can be supported (not exhibited).

**GOALS:** I hope this document can (1) help institutions understand what social practices are, (2) support the development of social practices, but also (3) create and honor under-recognized or newly imagined institutions of support.

**GUEST BOOK:** Imagine if all of the people who visited this google link could be in dialog about this issue in the future. If you decide not to edit this document, but want to comment on it generally or suggest other readings, please comment right here.

**EDITORS/CONTRIBUTORS:** Please write your name at the end of this draft if you'd like to be visible. We have a working deadline of **July 1st** to get a nice draft out to the public at <http://freesocialpractice.com/> but that's just an attempt to move this along. If you don't want to edit this draft, but would like to write something else and contribute that text by the July 1st deadline, please send it to: carolinewoolard at gmail dot com . Thank you for your interest in supporting social practices!

## **WORKING PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT SOCIAL PRACTICES**

Dear XXX,

YYY was my first major residency, so I am thrilled that you are expanding your understanding of contemporary art to include long-term, process-heavy, socially engaged art. When I made a project for other Fellows at YYY, I felt a bit out of place, so I want to humbly offer the following suggestions for supporting what are now called social practices, as I think this working style deserves the time and commitment that ZZZ offers.

To clarify the types of projects that might get support, I have outlined 4 types of social practices as I see them today, from short-term engagement to long-term engagement, with recommendations tailored to these approaches. Please understand that this is a rough sketch of an evolving field. Social practices are not product oriented, and, like radical pedagogy, often work best when given time to develop without concerns for institutional visibility.

**1. The Visitor Approach:** this is where an artist/group act as a catalyst for unconventional interactions and/or conversations. The artist serves as an “excuse” for otherwise difficult partnerships, meetings, or actions. The artist remains separate from the group, community, or site that s/he interacts with. For example, the Ghana Think Tank connects groups in conflict by creating platforms for dialog and action: <http://ghanathinktank.org/>

To support the Visitor Approach, you could ask artists to submit a Letter of Inquiry, and then ask the top 5 artists to submit site-specific proposals. If you want to lead the field you should model this after architectural proposals, you should pay these artists to submit well-researched, site-specific proposals when they advance to the next round. As in architecture, you could create books or shows to honor unrealised proposals, making this a norm rather than something special as when Hans Ulrich Obrist does it.

**2. The Embedded Approach:** this is where the artist/group work in contexts that are not sanctioned or codified as art-contexts, where s/he slowly builds relationships (the Embedded **Identity** Approach) or has previously established relationships (the Embedded **Fieldwork** Approach).

To support the **Embedded Identity Approach**, you could solicit artists who are interested in doing a weekend, week-long, or month-long retreat with the group that they s/he is already embedded within. This would mean housing the group as they visit ZZZ together. It may prove very difficult for a group to collectively find two months to retreat from other things (work, life, etc.) even with pay, but perhaps some groups would be able to retreat for longer if a stipend was provided.

Alternatively, for the **Embedded Fieldwork Approach**, you allow artists to find a place to work with. You could ask artists if they are interested in embedding themselves in the Garden, Kitchen, Administration, or other existing social format at AAA. For example, Maureen Connor embedded herself in the Queens Museum and Mierle Ukeles is artist in residence in the Sanitation Dept of NYC:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/html/panyc/ukeles.shtml>

To start from the local groups around you, and to avoid a sense that long term residents of your area are being “practiced on” rather than with, follow the Center for Urban Pedagogy model and ask community groups near BBB what kind of artists they actually might want to work with, or what issues they are focusing on, and then make a call to artists based on what these local groups actually want. Ideal artist candidates would be humble rather than presumptuous of the needs of the community.

**3. The Lifetime Approach:** this is where the artist/group build long-term projects in/with/for participants, often blurring the line between art/life completely. These artists are so embedded in the location and/or group they work in/with/for that there would be no way for this artist/group to do the project at ZZZ. Often, their projects become housing options or institutions of their own right. For example: <http://messhall.org/> or <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2010/dec/15/elements-of-vogue-a-conversation-with-ultra-red/>

To support the Lifetime Approach, you could offer the artist/group a residency of a weekend, week, or month to reflect upon the work done so far. Clearly, they cannot do a whole project at ZZZ or in ZZZ (unless they are already from the area), as these are lifetime projects, not short term interventions. Outcomes might include a publication, sanity and clarity for improved work in the future, and group strengthening (if it's a collective or participants, non-organizers should be invited as well). For example: <http://www.temporaryservices.org/booklets.html#91to100> or <http://projectrowhouses.org/>

**4. The G(local) Open Access approach:** this is where an artist/group creates a model or method that is distributed to local artists/groups/organizers to use and alter, creating a network of nodes around the world that communicate with one another while modifying the model/method for their context. This approach produces an international network that may not be able to come together for a single residency, as each node is working in their own context for the long haul, but the closest local chapter could be supported in ways similar to the Lifetime Approach. For examples of these projects see: <http://publiclaboratory.org/home> or <http://tradeschool.coop/> or <http://sundaysoup.org/>

#### **General recommendations:**

- TIME: Social practices take time to develop. Do not think you are going to get a Lifetime project if you invite someone for a month. A month will give you a Visitor approach only.

- LOCATION: If you house this artist downtown in an apartment, rather than in a space away from the community they are working in/with/for, chances of deep relationship building will be improved.

- PARTICIPANTS: Social practices must incorporate ethical considerations. Please ask artists engaged in social practices to submit recommendation letters from prior participants, and consider bringing in participants of past projects as part of the reflection process or retreat for the Lifetime Approach. Please read Ben Kinmont's work with Laurel George and students: Towards Ethics in Project Art (a free PDF is available online)

- INTENTIONS: If you are looking to work with social practice artists as a kind of community outreach for your institution, please enumerate your expectations and goals in advance. Artists are not necessarily going to fulfill your goals, and you can be more clear about this if you have a direct conversation about it.

- INVISIBILITY: Consider funding groups that have a commitment to limited visibility or art-world invisibility, limited scale (the project is not for everyone), and anonymity (the project might need to protect the participants and organizers). These projects may be collective projects or grassroots institutions.

#### **General questions for the institution:**

- DECISIONS: Can you provide the artist/group with a clear explanation of the decision making structure of your organization?

- FUNDING: Can you explain the relationship between your funding stream and your mission statement? This has been done on college campuses by <http://www.endowmentethics.org/faq/>

- CO-CREATION: Are you interested in working with the artist/group to alter your organization in terms of decision making, process, and funding?

- SUPPORT: Will you consider having a frank conversation about support, and what it might look like, between the artist/group and your institution? Some very unusual alternatives (see below) may emerge.

#### **Alternative institutional support:**

- HEALTH CARE: Would your institution consider adding the artist/group to your health care plan?  
See

- LAND > MONEY: Would your institution consider giving land (long term real estate support) rather than money to the artist/group? See <http://eyebeam.org/projects/hacker-house-community-land-trust-0>

- MENTORSHIPS: Would your institution allow an organic mentorship to develop between someone in your organization and the artist/group?

- COLLECTIVITY: Would your institution allow one collective to invite another collective to work together on an issue?

#### **Alternative economy and mutual aid models:**

- HOUSING: Artists already live collectively and create financial, intellectual, and emotional support

networks through their homes. See <http://www.fluxfactory.org/> and see the notice board in the local co-op for more ideas. If community land trusts or cooperative housing can be bought, more stability could be found. Consider strengthening and supporting existing structures.

- WE KNOW WHAT IS ENOUGH: all artists band together to agree that one of them will make money selling work. Rather than compete for that one chance at celebrity, all artists in the world (or at least 10 friends) can make a collective agreement that they will share any money made over \$40k (or whatever amount) a year. This way, we can collectivize the risk of becoming an artist and care for one another by agreeing on what is enough, and hold each other accountable to redistribute surplus.

- BE OUR OWN INTERNS: Sweat Equity Co-Production (a.k.a. Intern with Each Other!) : Artists could form rotating work teams, a sort of cooperative production house, so that a group of 12 artists/designers/writers could focus one person each month and receive help from the 11 others for one month each year. Or work in a group of 6 and get 2 months each! This works at WOW for the past 30 years:

<http://www.wowcafe.org/thestory/>

- BARTER, TIME BANKING, ROTATING LOAN FUNDS, AND WORKER-OWNED BUSINESSES: There are many ways to value work outside of the cash economy. Artists do this all the time. See

<https://ourgoods.org/> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susu\\_account](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susu_account) and <http://cultivate.coop/> and

<http://solidaritynyc.org/#/about> and <http://www.artandwork.us/> and

<http://artsandlabor.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/WhatDoWeDoNow-v1-2012.pdf>

and <http://www.artandwork.us/> and <http://www.wageforwork.com/>

**Thank you so much for your time and consideration,**

Caroline Woolard, li pallas, Name Name, LIST YOUR NAMES HERE

Anonymous

**ENDORSERS:** If you did not edit or add to this document, but you support the statements written here, please add your name here:

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**COLLECTIVELY GENERATED IDEAS:** If you talked about this document and added comments based on the feedback of people who were in a group conversation, but who may not edit this actual document, please list the event and people involved in conversation in this space:

May 16th: This draft was work-shopped at Eyebeam in NYC with the “Social Practice Eats” group organized by Helen Park and Stephanie Diamond with the following people: Jo Q Nelson, Noah Fischer, Tal Beery, Susan Jahoda, Imani last name,

# INITIAL DRAFT

## WORKING PROPOSAL TO RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND REFLECT UPON SOCIAL PRACTICES

Initially written for a specific residency/fellowship program, this should be edited and added to by anyone who has ideas about the ways that this work can be supported (not exhibited). I want to dream up institutions/formats that can support the development and production of these projects, not so much the dissemination of these projects. Focusing on process is what I would like to talk about, not presentation/exhibition.

Dear XXX,

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To clarify the types of projects that might get support, I have outlined 3 types of social practices as I see them today, from short-term engagement to long-term engagement, with recommendations tailored to these approaches.

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Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

Caroline Woolard

XXX Fellow

<http://carolinewoolard.com/>