

## ARTISTIC RESEARCH – INTERVIEW FILE

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### PROBLEMATIQUE

My current practice evolves around an inquiry of materiality. As a drawer, I developed an eye for the flat rather than for the dimensional. Nonetheless, last year I started working with materials. This is when I realized I have a different way of working with these materials then, for instance, a sculptor. I work with planes and shapes instead of volumes. Furthermore, rather than creating new objects, I focus on representation. I aim to create a scenery referring to the landscape around us as it is, whilst transforming voluptuous elements to flattened imagery. Here, the basic principle of my practice arises: striving for a maximum output with minimal intervention.

In my studio, I try to identify key features of that what I represent. What is it that makes a stone a stone? Can an object made from solely non-stony materials still appear as a stone? Can a representation of the stone be reduced to these features? By working with questions like these, I aim to create a new materiality for the object studied. I have now started to realize that a material, in fact, is nothing to be sure of at all: do we value them for the unique identity they behold? To what extent are we aware of what is *really* there, and what is all imagined? Do I abstract from landscapes, or do I create new figurations? Right now, the question of matter is: when does the real shift to the imagined?

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### FESTIVAL PROPOSAL

During the Theory Festival, I aim to display these theoretical as well as practical explorations of (im)materiality in my work through a series of projections. The use of these projections will both be an embodiment of my research as well as a case study I can refer to when explaining for instance the concept of rasterization.

This text was published in a special issue by the Art History journal on Material Practice and Critical Consciousness in Postwar European Art, published in September 2016. Karen Kurczynski is an American art historian, currently teaching at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She completed her PhD thesis on the Danish artist and key-figure of the CoBRA-movement Asger Jorn, to whom she refers repeatedly in the text currently discussed.

Within this source I particularly focus on materialism rather than intersubjectivity in the cobra movement during their active period from 1948 to 1951. Throughout her text, Kurczynski reaches out to (neo-) Marxist, Bachelardian and occasionally surrealist theories in her inquiry for cobra's materialism. I choose, however, to focus on Bachelard's influences on the Cobra movement, as I am particularly interesting in learning about the term 'material imagination' in relation to the works Cobra artists developed in post-war Europe.

In the first part of the text, Kurczynski outlines how material transformation functioned as a figure of survival after trauma for Cobra artists, ultimately in an era of material deprivation. In this process of material transformation, pre-existing symbols are being redefined. She refers to Constant's 1948 *Reflex* manifesto, when stating that meaning is activated through material encounters (677). By re-inventing the use common materials and imagery, these shift away from the memory of their prior meanings. It is exactly this understanding of creativity as a force to unite human subjects with materials, which contributed significantly to the discussion of materialism, argues Kurczynski (677).

Then, Kurczynski introduces the concept of 'material imagination', as described by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. She pulls out an example of Jorn's art to illustrate how a work of art can be received as socio-political, even if this was not intended to be so. Cobra's approach to materialism, according to Kurczynski, does not suggest a 'pure' material presence but rather posits materiality as an explicitly social experience (679). In Jorn's writings in the 1924 manifesto, it appears that he believes that there is no other way to arrive at common art, then through matter. In materialism he finds sensation; a way to *feel* the world.

Dotremont first encountered Bachelard's work in 1940 and attempted in his 1950 essay 'Le grand rendez-vous naturel' to bring Bachelardian and Marxist theories together. The absolute condition for Marxism is recognizing within matter an intense life, according to Dotremont (680). This very condition can be found throughout Bachelard's writings and underpins the essential concept for Cobra in his groundbreaking recognition that matter itself plays a significant role in the development of imagery, and that in return, imaginative imagery shapes our material encounters, as Kurczynski puts it (681).

Already becoming evident in Bachelard's way of writing, he values images over words. Jorn later quoted Bachelard's statement that 'one always wants imagination to be the capacity to *form* images, it is rather the capacity to *deform* images, furnished by perception, ... to liberate us from initial images, to change images' (682). By stating that cobra artworks suggest a materialism based not in the properties of materials in themselves, but rather in the creative transformation of one symbol or object into another (685), Kurczynski suggests that the way Cobra transformed imagery through materialism, was crucial in the post-war period at stake.

In Kurczynski's study, materialism in Cobra's work is often measured in terms of the agency it carries out on society, thus being a rather social measure. This is especially important since the Cobra movement is known to have a prepossessing qualities in an age of post-war trauma: a peculiar condition that, luckily, is not anymore applicable today. What I do consider still very relevant, however, is the proposition that Kurczynski establishes in consultation with philosophers such as Gaston Bachelard on material imagination: that matter itself plays a significant role in the development of imagery, and that in return, imaginative imagery shapes our material encounters.

This statement puts forward that materials have agency; meaning, that materials bear within them the capability to affect our way of thinking. Even though Kurczynski's text describes the heavy use of materials of the Cobra artist as agent of change, I believe a similar sense of agency can be achieved by striving for the non-material. What is this kind of agency and how is it different than agency in works of the Cobra movement? And if it is established that materials have agency, what is classified as material and what is not?

A handle to answer these questions, can be found in Asger Jorn's 1924 manifesto, in which he states that in materials he finds sensation, or a way to *feel* the world. This statement is in line with Bachelard's writings on the capability that we all share to thoroughly know or feel a material by solely looking at it. An answer to these questions, thus, might be found in the concept of material imagination: the belief that materials reach out to our knowledge of the four elements, inclining a larger sensory response through our triggered imagination of fire, earth, water or air.

When using this finding to determine what a material is, a material would then be understood as a trigger of our material imagination. I believe that in my practice I search for this trigger within the immaterial. In this case, I incline with immaterial the untouchable and ungraspable, yet visible, such as the projected images I make use of. I find that also in these rather immaterial images, one may also find a way to feel the world. It is the image, in the end, that speaks to the imagination, albeit it is composed of materials or not.

I do feel, however, that this should be further nuanced, in order to prevent a certain laxity. By proposing how the material imagination can also rely on the immaterial, I do not mean to generalize the concept of materials and what they can trigger; this is not a testimony to open up the domain of materials. "Anything goes" does not apply, quite on the contrary: I believe that maximum concentration is required to achieve this trigger of material imagination through immateriality; or, rather, without the use of physical materials.

Not every image carries within the capability to trigger a response. In my practice, it is this search for a trigger that might take up the form of a minimal gesture appealing to the imagination as it within its minimalism refers to bigger, perhaps even ungraspable notions, such as order and the landscape. So far, however, I haven't been able to put my finger on what it is exactly that makes an image do so. Looking back at Kurczynski's findings, perhaps this quality lies within the capability of this imaginative imagery that shapes our material encounters instead of only the other way around. Perhaps its feasibility lies within a mutual affection.

Rick Darke is a Pennsylvania-based creator and conservator of livable landscapes, grounded in an observational ethic that blends ecology, art and cultural geography. Believing that managed wildness will play an increasing role in tomorrow's urban and suburban landscapes, Darke published several books in addition to his botanist and horticulturist practices. Currently discussed is his contribution to *The Good Gardener?*, which is a collection composed of essays by participants of a symposium on both the foundations and after-effects of humanity's deep-rooted impulse to manipulate the natural environment, by the University of Delaware in 2013. In 'The Accidental Landscape: blind to order?', Darke looks into the act of keeping order in relation to gardening, ultimately studying the existence of an accidental landscape, which is a concept that can be understood as orderly alignments in a landscape caused by natural causes; without interference by a gardener. By stating that "it takes a good gardener to appreciate order where non is apparent" in the introduction of his text, he already hints towards a gardening approach which enhances a natural environment's nurturing features.

According to Darke, we become blind to order. By this he means that landscape design practices too frequently conceal inherent order, instead of revealing it; bypassing a landscape's ability to nurture an accidental landscape. He believes the foundation of this tendency lies in the human psyche, as the ability to maintain order confirms the appealing notion of dominance. This results in an approach in landscape design and gardening that typically values the static over the dynamic and the predictable over the unpredictable (260). Here, his interdisciplinary practice allows him to understand that the complexity of obscure order is celebrated for its beautiful influence in art. Darke notes that in reaction to the homogenizing effects of standardized design and culture, a growing global aesthetic elevates the irregular and the spontaneous (261). This feature he wishes to enhance in his landscaping practice, not only for its aesthetics, but also in terms of global research management which will inevitably will be exhausted.

His text pleads for for the functional character of places where order is superficially masked by apparent disorderly characteristics antithetical to neatness and simplicity. Accidental landscapes are rich with diversity, according to Darke, since they harbour the autonomy that sustains ever-evolving life, and this intentional preservation of the living process makes them worthy of observation (262). Darke discusses several of his own photographs and paintings by artists other than to understand the orderly aesthetics of the accidental landscape. In the work *Untitled* (2003) by New Jersey artist Michael Doyle, several aspects of the accidental landscape come together. The painting depicts a scene of cleared scrub in a forest area to safeguard high voltage transmission lines. In this painting, utilitarian activity introduces elements that create readily apparent visual order and focus, while the whole of the scene reflects the response of autonomous living elements and processes (264). Put differently, this work is not only a simple depiction of the accidental landscape, but also uses the visual qualities of the scene for painterly expression.

The spontaneous plants that grow in accidental landscapes bear a sense of authenticity within them, as they are a direct result of the autonomous living processes: no intervention has been necessary to establish them, and they wouldn't be thriving unless their needs were being met by conditions on site (270). It is exactly this resilience of autonomous living communities that made Darke conclude that to anticipate on the wildlands of the future, we need to look toward the accidental landscapes of today (278).

The concept of the Accidental Landscape as described by Darke develops a vocabulary to discuss landscapist aspects of my practice which are structural rather than formal. Where I previously believed I derive images and other visual aspects from landscapist features such as stones, trees and infrastructure, Darke's text highlights the friction of what is understood as a natural structure and what is not, typically contradicting with order and structure inclined by natural factors.

Whereas Darke looks into the act of keeping order in relation to gardening specifically, I propose to apply his findings on (dis)order to artistic practices. As Darke does in his text, I refer to order as a formal quality rather than a chronological feature or otherwise. For a long time, order has been an established notion to vocalize comments on aesthetics with, such as the establishment of the golden ratio as well as understanding composition. Generally, artists in their practice can choose to either adhere to order or move away from it, but they will have to choose either way and by doing so, eliminating the other option.

Darke, however, implies that order as understood by the human mind is radically different than the natural order in the accidental landscape. This complicates my previous finding that order is inherent to an artistic practice, as multiple factors are at play when understanding order. Inclined by the tendency of the human mind to seek order, we often forget to look for logical explanations why things are different than that we'd find logical.

In an attempt to understand factors in my studio other than visual order, yet possibly affecting this order, I am prompted to search for orderly and structural factors of the materials and media I use. Various projections and objects come together in an installation as a whole, yet within each of these components, there are factors at play that I take for granted but – I've now come to understand – nevertheless cannot neglect, such as the rasterization of an image and the opacity of a material.

Moving away from the landscape as visual inspiration for my practice only, Darke's understanding of the Accidental Landscape invites me to search beyond visual signs of order and structure, pushing me towards an inquiry of what is already there instead of what I wish to see, especially taking into consideration how a landscape comes to exist.

Roberto Burle Marx (1909 – 1994) was a Brazilian landscape architect, also practicing painting, printmaking and ecology. As a nineteen-year-old, he visited the Dahlem Botanical Gardens in Berlin as a part of his German painting education, where he first encountered Brazilian species of plants which had gone extinct in his home country. It is during this visit that he envisioned himself to become a landscape architect, ultimately attempting to win recognition for South American flora. His practice is defined by modernist principles such as a recalibrated understanding of the relationship of people to space, of the individual to nature, and of nature to the urban environment; a way of working strongly affected by the modernist core in Berlin's 1920s society (Gould ix).

Modernist influences are also evident in the aesthetics of his work, by formal markers such as strong colors, geometric patterns and large-scale gestures (Gould ix). Hoffmann and Jens note that his work can be classified beyond the fantastic and beyond the geometric, inhabiting a rare space between the rational and the lyrical, becoming increasingly evident after his encounter with European Expressionist painting (2). Vincent van Gogh's paintings were particularly influential for Burle Marx's practice, as he felt overwhelmed by Van Gogh's ability to liberate color from form, exploring contrasts of saturated color and moving away from description (Montero 17).

Burle Marx was being educated as a painter, yet looking at his garden designs as paintings with plants might be too shallow to fully understand the aesthetics of his practice. However, painterly concerns with harmony and contrast, and structure and form, are explored in all dimensions of his practice (Hoffmann and Nahson 4). Landscape architect Jose Tabacow (qtd. in Hoffmann and Nahson) remarks that Burle Marx successfully "reduces the designer's conceptions to compositions devoid of volume, which was precisely one of his garden's distinctive features" (4). In this aspect, his interdisciplinary practice certainly enhanced his mastery in individual fields. According to Montero, Burle Marx held in esteem the quality to capture the unique spirit of a space, discovering the dominant lines, the mysterious undercurrents, deferring to them to create a garden like a composer, in harmony with the landscape (24).

Even though his work is characterized by strong aesthetic features, Montero argues that this was never his primary concern: rather, Burle Marx was occupied creating harmony between the natural environment and the human life, in an attempt to achieve a symbiotic co-existence (28). This strive for connecting the individual with the natural is also forthcoming in his studio, as he established a chain of interaction between his landscape work and his gardens. Montero notes his canvases enabled Burle Marx to create his gardens as visual art, and simultaneously his gardens opened the way for a new expressiveness in his painting, enriching and transforming it (43). Burle Marx defines art as 'a believe in instinct, albeit controlled, so that once the composition is finished there is nothing to add or to take away' (qtd in Montero). Hence, for him, his practice is much like a circular path, in which elements have the perfection of simplicity once they are in the right place.

In his garden designs, many aspects of Burle Marx' personal life come together. It is described by Gould as a turning point in Burle Marx' practice, when he first encountered Brazilian flora species in a German botanical garden: species that he had never encountered before, urging him to win recognition for species from his home country by incorporating them in his gardens. Another unique feature of Burle Marx' landscape architecture practice, are the many cross-references with that of a visual artist, as his painterly education grew increasingly visible in his landscape designs.

Even though studying his personal motives might help to understand his practice better, it is particularly the rather universal understanding of harmony in his work that I am interested in. Harmony, in Burle Marx' practice, is both a formal quality as well as a more natural one. By the latter I mean that – as little knowledge I have of designing and keeping gardens – there establishes a chain of interaction in his practice: one that is only feasible when harmony is ensured. Since his gardens are composed of all sorts of living flora species, such as grasses, plants, shrubs and trees, these individual units form a communal living entity. In both visible and invisible ways, these individual units are continuously affecting each other as they are sharing their supplies necessary to survive; thus, when in imbalance, the community will automatically deconstruct.

This chain of interactions prompted by natural necessities I find exemplary for formal characteristics that reach beyond Burle Marx' design. Distilling these natural factors from his practice, I would like to develop an understanding of this chain of interaction in any practice, albeit it includes living species or not. Rather, through studying Burle Marx' gardens I now have gained the insight that various individual parts of an installation or exhibition will *always* function like a living community that relies on a symbiotic co-existence to survive; this, of course, being a superlative as most of the materials I use are lifeless and therefore cannot truly die or deconstruct.

This insight, however, in relation to Rick Darke's reading of the Accidental Landscape, offers me a more profound understanding on the conditions of order. Whereas Darke suggests that order is sometimes overlooked by men as natural order is not always recognizable as such, in Burle Marx' practice order is used more formally and thus more appealing to the human mind. What both sources have in common, however, is that order is inherent for survival with minimal or no intervention. In Darke's study, this means that order is developed naturally to achieve a sustainable community. This, by proxy, is different in Burle Marx' practice, as he designs landscapes instead of allowing them to come to exist naturally. For Burle Marx, then, it is necessary to predict and gain insight into the symbiosis within a natural community. It is exactly this process of prediction that Burle Marx is forced to do in order to guarantee the viability of his gardens, that I feel lies very closely an aspect in the process of my own practice.

The German-born author Boris Groys (1947) is an art critic, media theorist and philosopher, working in both Northern American as well as European cultural climates, specializing in the role of art in Soviet postmodern societies. His 1992 publication, however, focusses more generally on postmodernism, as the title *On the new* might already suggest. In this novel, Groys investigates the continuous shifting of the line when creating something new that separates the valuable from the worthless, as ideas move from one context to another.

Postmodernism, which Groys interprets as fundamental doubt as to the possibility of historical novelty (1), is key when studying the new, as no subject seems as ultimately renounced as newness during this time of contradicting with modernism; i.e. in a time of outgrowing the dogma of cutting off the past. As the future no longer promises something new, it is inviting to imagine endless variations of that what already exists.

Nonetheless, what remains unchanged is that the development of culture is governed by the impulsion to innovate. This innovation, however, tangent to the search for the new, shifted from an aspiration to discover the truth, essence or meaning beyond cultural differences in modernistic times, towards an understanding of the new solely in relation to what is considered old and traditional in a particular culture during the postmodern discourse. The new thus becomes new to the relation to its old, as there is no need to refer to a hidden dimension to understand it (11).

Groys continues to explain how the same principle resonates in the evaluation of art, as extra-cultural reality became superfluous, making space to determine an artwork's value in relation to other artworks instead. Effectively, the act of innovation which was already considered key to central to cultural development, has come to mean re-evaluation of existing cultural values, making this the new standard of social life accordingly.

Having come to understand the main lines of Groys' investigation, I now focus on the incentive of the new specifically. In the second chapter, *the new is not the other* (29-33), puts forward the idea that it is merely the difference that constitutes the new. Relying on his findings that the new is merely a cultural construct, he continues to explain in this section that the cultural change highlighting something as new, can be understood as a consequence of extra-cultural action. Using the example of a meteorite, which moves steadily until an external factor makes the object change slope and speed, Groys proposes that the new is merely a matter of how something enters our culture; the new thus being a matter of interpretation; of how we come to understand it. According to Groys, change of interpretation can only be influenced through exercise by the hidden forces such as God, nature, a particular author's irreducibly extra-cultural individuality, the power of unconscious acting through that author, or difference (29).

The fifth chapter of the book, *the new as valuable other* (45-52) elaborates on this idea of the new as a matter of interpretation, by stating that an interpretation reveals nothing one did not know earlier; rather, the value of that what is interpreted changes (45). Here, Groys uses the example of reproducing masterpieces to clarify his point. Referring to Walter Benjamin's theory of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, Groys notes how these reproductions previously considered as a loss of originality and aura, acquire a new relevance. By doing so, the new is not just the other, but becomes the valuable other instead: one that we cannot anymore neglect.

Groys offers a thorough reading of his theories and refers to philosophers like Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin and Jean Baudrillard to testify his findings. Continuously searching for loopholes to solve, he creates a dense theoretical framework as to understand the new. What I find particularly interesting, however, is understanding the *what* that it is, that makes something appear as new. Previously taking for granted that making art is creating something new, in my own practice as well as in examples such as Duchamp's ready-mades, I now wonder: what is new, and where does it come from?

In the second chapter of his book, Groys puts forward the idea that it is merely the act of making a difference that constitutes the new. Condition for this difference, however, is that it is made by an extra-cultural variable. He proposes a couple of these extra-cultural factors, that, according to him, makes society alive rather than limb and inert. These factors, instead, force a culture to abandon traditional patterns only to create new ones; hence distancing itself from functioning like a machine. By adhering to God, being, life, or difference, these seemingly inalterable patterns can secretly be changed, thus bringing forth the new. Now I can't help but wonder: am I exercising extra-cultural influence, and how?

This question bears within the assumption the creation of something new, as this extra-cultural influence is a condition for doing so, at least according to Groys. This prompts me to consider the new in my own practice. Many of my works have a strong and often visible connection with what inspires me. In fact, reproduction has been a key in my practice over the past few years. Not necessarily engaging with mimesis, I have been busy with creating interpretations of reality instead. In a more practical way, I often work in series, creating multiples similar to each other however with strong individual characteristics. Often, these series refer to the landscape, yet they do not attempt to be one themselves.

Instead of engaging with complex notions such as the new and the extra-cultural, perhaps an important insight lies within the word *difference*. Even though I am not sure whether I create something new, and thus – in line with Groys' findings - what makes us interpret it that way, I am aware of the fact that I create something *else*. In my practice, it is not the material that is radically changing, but our interpretation of it. Groys' text invites me to revisit the notions of landscape and material through my practice.

John Berger (1926-2017) was a British essayist and cultural thinker as well as a practicing artist in various disciplines. Being invested in the arts both practically and theoretically, he developed a belief that great art should reflect society. In many of his writings, he connects societal notions with an artistic practice and vice versa, showing an ongoing dialogue between his interests. His work raises searching questions about how images continuously affect our everyday life and help constitute its inequities. For Berger, looking was therefore much of a political act, meaning that altering factors like time and location determine what we perceive.

In his 1980 novel *About Looking*, Berger notes that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century a turning point occurred in western Europe and North America, concerning a break in every tradition previously mediated between man and nature. This change appears as an incentive to study the relation between man and animals, as all bodily creatures used to be in the center of the world together. Where animals first entered the human imagination as messengers and promises, they later became known for their meat and horn.

With their parallel lives, based on the similar needs and urges, man found in animals a companionship different inter-human interaction. The animal does not distinguish between species. But by no other species except man will the animal's look be recognized as familiar, according to Berger (5), hence acquiring the capacity to distinguish themselves. It is this capacity that – amongst other factors - prompted pre-19<sup>th</sup> centurial anthropomorphism, which is the recognition human traits, emotions or intentions in animals, towards a new solitude in which animals have gradually disappeared, causing anthropomorphism to provoke uneasy feelings instead.

It was only until Descartes' theory, who internalized, within man, the dualism implicit in the human interaction with animals (11), that animals became reduced to the model of a machine. In absolutely dividing body from soul, the redundancy of the animal's soul caused them to be physical entities only. With immediate effect, animals became known by bodily qualities such as power and precision, connoting with a sense of innocence, as their character traits are no longer appreciated.

Eventually, during and after the industrial revolution, machines would overhaul animals as they – too – could carry out capacities such as strength, yet machines do more efficiently. This development debunks Descartes argument, as in post-industrialized societies animals were treated as raw material. Simultaneously, the physical entities of the animal grew superfluous, prompting the practice of keeping animals albeit their uselessness; the invention of the pet.

Having shifted away from their primary functions over the centuries, animals ultimately served as a mirror to society as caricatures of themselves. The cultural marginalization of animals grew more important than their physical marginalization. We observe animals, still, yet we became ignorant of animals observing us, too. Berger notes that what we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them (16). The disappearance from animals in daily life resulted in the invention of the zoo, marking their ultimate marginalization.

This source is both a reading to understand my fascination of and inspiration by the zoo, as well as a study of the politics of seeing. A banal condition of an artistic practice is after all looking. John Berger has written many texts on this topic, such as his famous essay *ways of seeing* (1972). I find his writings on the interrelation of animals and humans especially interesting, because it concerns subjects of perception that have a way of seeing of their own; one, however, that we fail to appreciate.

The zoo, in fact, is a collection of animals. Like specimen, the individual animals symbolize a larger community of a long lost wildlife. The diorama in their cages hint towards what once was their natural habitat. The fundamental difference with an image from Google search, and what makes the zoo an interesting concept to study for me, is that there is a life animal inside it. Alongside looking at the animals, one is forced to come to the realization that they are looking at something completely marginalized.

The animals are free to move to some extent, but both the spectator's as well as the subject's behavior rely heavily on the mutual presumption that the animal is closely confined. There will always be a glass, fence or other kind of barrier dividing both parties and functioning as a décor at the same time. The conditioned responses of the animals towards the public, therefore, are typified by indifference: for them, the other is inaccessible and hence insignificant; at the same time, the spectator's response is utterly dull, as there is no incentive to flee for the potentially dangerous species they are looking at so closely. In addition to this, the animals are dependent on their keepers, and have no needs they need to take care of on their own. Thus, living in a completely artificial and illusionary environment, these animals are rendered completely marginal.

Even though this sense of marginalization is modeled around a life animal, I do feel like a similar process is what may provoke uneasy feelings in my own practice – whilst I don't make use of animals in any way. Instead, in my practice, abstraction is key. Notwithstanding that abstraction and marginalization are two very different processes with very different connotations, I believe that both of them rely on the common ground of taking things away. The animal becomes marginalized, as it is deprived from its own incentives to live, as well as from its natural habitat. In fact, the animal is reduced to its sole function of being an animal.

It is exactly this reduction that I aim for in my practice; however, in a formal manner rather than an ethical one. My own practice I believe relies on a universal understanding of the landscape, nature and infrastructure; yet it does not depict these. Instead, it reduces these notions to their fundamentals. But is this marginalization? Defining marginalization as the condemning of minorities towards utterly uselessness and insignificance, as happened the animals over the time slope of centuries, I do not believe I exclude the landscape in my work, and neither do I aim to create minorities. Rather, the landscape renders itself fundamental, as it underpins my practice.

In January and February of 2019, I was so lucky to stay in Fondazione Pistoletto / Cittadellarte in the Italian region of Piedmont for a period of 5 weeks. Michelangelo Pistoletto (Biella, 1933) is an Italian practicing artist and art theorist, founder of his foundation Cittadellarte, and one of the main representatives of the Arte Povera (poor art) movement, that initiated in Northern-Italy and took place between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. It's signature exploration is defined by a search for non-common materials beyond the traditional ones at that time and in that area, such as oil paint, bronze, or carved marble.

During his career, Pistoletto developed and communicated through his artworks and writings a profound understanding of the fundamentality of the arts in society. Not only did he believe that social interaction enhances the artwork; he also believed that at the institute of the arts is much like a rhizome, connecting and holding together various aspects of society. His foundation, Cittadellarte, a title translating to 'city of the arts', as well as referring to Cittadella, the Italian noun for citadel or fortress, has been running since 1998 and could be considered as an impersonation of his artistic viewpoint: a physical place in a local community, that through artistic practices connects various disciplines, groups and individuals within its society.

Pistoletto his dedication to cross-enhance his art practice with society, is articulated in the work of the broken mirror (*specchio spazzato*, 1978), in which a mirror with gilded frame is broken and displayed in two pieces in the Guggenheim museum (NY). In his 2002 writings "*Cittadellarte and its 'Uffizi'*", which translates to offices, the meaning of this work is described by comparing it to the structure of his foundation. By breaking a mirror, according to Pistoletto, the reflection of one of its pieces into the other, allows one to see more of what is already there: an eternal image in which a reflection is reflected, and so on. Even though the outcome of this broken mirror is to see more, this gesture is ultimately defined by division, rather than multiplication.

It is exactly this finding which underpins the structure of Cittadellarte, in which several independently operating offices focus on different aspects of society, yet in very close relation to each other. By relying on what is already there, Cittadellarte attempts to be in relation with the already existent through the concept of division, instead of creating a separate, caged multiplication of real-life features. Based on the idea of sharing, collaboration and communication, the structure of Pistoletto's foundation pleads for the principle of division as the germinal characteristic of creation.

The time I spend in Cittadellarte was in many ways very inspiring. A fundamental part of being there, was developing an understanding of the organization and structure of the foundation. Pistoletto's mirror paintings, a key series of works within his oeuvre, propagate many aspects of his artistic viewpoints, such as the inclusion of the spectator within the artwork and the necessity of the artwork to reach out. I have chosen, however, to focus on the mirror painting in relation to the organization of the foundation specifically, because I am interested in his idea of division through multiplication in particular.

This idea of division puts forward another insight in relation to creating something new. Whereas Boris Groys, for instance, believes that something new comes to exist when it is interpreted that way, and is thus being constructed by cultural confines, Pistoletto, instead, proposes a more hands-on understanding of creation and innovation. In this comparison, the word responsibility comes to mind: Pistoletto pleads for an active approach towards creation, through taking up responsibility to multiply through division, whereas Groys proposes our interpretation is dedicated by our cultural confinements changing slowly yet effectively by meta factors such as God and nature, omitting the responsibility of an individual.

Responsibility I find important to understand, as I believe as an artist I am the most active factor in my studio, responsible to put my materials to use. Of course, there are other factors at play, such as weather, light, chemicals and brushes that affect materials, but none of them do so as actively and responsibly as I do. Hence, when studying Pistoletto's idea of multiplication through division, it feels like it is very much about me; as a friendly reminder that I carry responsibility for what I do in my studio.

Resonating in his artworks, writings and organization, the socially engaged characteristic of Pistoletto cannot be neglected. In relation to my practice, however, I choose to focus on merely formal aspects of Pistoletto's work, and his responsibility-based approach towards creation, as I believe here lies a common ground. What I find particularly interesting in his mirror work, is that he ultimately reaches out to see more of what is already there, hinting towards an infinite pool of possibilities.

This idea of reaching out to see more, is something I strive for. Even though in my practice I do not literally break materials apart, as Pistoletto did with his mirror, I do believe that my art practice, even if it is through abstraction, offers ways to see more; or, at least, to see things differently. It opens up possibilities of all that a landscape could be. By dividing the landscape into multiple versions, there come to exist different versions in a non-hierarchical manner, ultimately inviting to reach out for more possibilities. Besides solely artistic concerns, I am also very fond of the idea of sharing and dividing rather than endlessly copying and producing.