

## *Process as Form?*

Between the Formal and the Informal



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„Initiated by the gallery *Sign* in Groningen and the artists Osterholt/Uitenhuis, the project *Sign to Eutopia* consisted of a six-week long artists-in-residence program followed by a documentary exhibition lasting two weeks. Eight artists were invited to work in a performative way with the overly organised public infrastructures of the city. For the period of the residency they lived in the gallery space itself, where eight sleeping cabins and a common space were set up for them. On the third week of the residency, Adrien Tirtiaux dismantled his sleeping cabin and took it on a journey towards the sea. Transformed into a functional autonomous capsule with toilet, radio, opening mechanism and provisions for one week, his sleeping cabin set off from the canal in front of the gallery. With steering only done by the current and the wind, he drifted about 15 kilometers, and in six days he managed half of the distance to the nearest coast. In *It's a Long Way to the Sea* an unreachable goal is used as a pretext to experience the journey towards it. Questions the project raised are how the apprehension of boredom turns into a struggle for survival because of the terrible weather conditions and how creating a space for solitude turns into a social project.“<sup>1</sup>



Adrien Tirtiaux  
*It's a long Way to the Sea*  
2006

The contemporary artistic work is based on communicative, semiotic and linguistic research that can produce tangible processes by means of images and language. As a process is inseparable from the element of time, it is related to the course of time. The subjective experience of time can be described by the term process, which does not mean that the experience of time has to be in a linear progression. The smallest temporal entity is an instant, but instants in a process can be experienced by randomness, overlaps or backpedaling.

An objective description of time does not exist, which makes it difficult to characterize process-related art projects. Scientists, from the ancient Greek philosophers to physicists like Newton, have tried to describe the abstract idea of time. All manner of explanations of time exist, from the spiritual to the rational.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quote in Adrien Tirtiaux | *It's a long Way to the Sea* | 2006 | Groningen (NL) | [www.adrientirtiaux.eu](http://www.adrientirtiaux.eu) | 14.2.2011

<sup>2</sup> See *The Vedas*, the earliest texts on Indian philosophy and Hindu philosophy, dating back to the late 2nd millennium BC, describe ancient Hindu cosmology in which the universe goes through repeated cycles of creation, destruction and rebirth, with each cycle lasting 4320 million years. Ancient Greek philosophers, including Parmenides and Heraclitus, wrote essays on the nature of time. | <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time> | 14.2.2011

Consequently, only with a broad approach is it possible to deal with such a complex question, apart from describing what has come before. To show what kind of process-related art projects I'm interested in, I focus on works by the artists Adrien Tirtiaux and Simon Starling.

The following work, *Flaga 1972 - 2000*, is similar to the work by Tirtiaux, described at the beginning of this text.<sup>3</sup>

„A Fiat built in Turin, driven to Poland, and reconfigured with Polish parts – is the final outcome of processes that encompass research, travel, and a seemingly absurd personal initiative. The transformation took place when the artist grafted parts from a white car onto the original red one to create a rather sporty looking red and white version, which he now exhibits bolted onto a wall. Starling can be understood as a process-oriented artist. Accordingly, his approach to sculpture can be seen, in part, as elaborations on the themes of process art, site specificity and an artistic interaction with everyday life. And the heart of his particular elaboration lies in his incorporation of a narrative dimension into the process.

What is also interesting about *Flaga 1972 - 2000* is that if one did not know the story behind the piece and saw it in a gallery, bolted to a wall, one would be singularly unimpressed. It would look like yet another addition to the ever-expanding catalogue of Readymades. In terms of an exhibition context, it demands an information panel that will tell the viewer its story. Without this it loses most of its significance.“<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I exclude from this subjective approach time-based media such as video and sound as well as traditional time-based forms of art such as performance and happenings. The PICA's annual Time-Based Art Festival (TBA) has a broad approach to different time-based art works. It attracts artists from around the globe for a meeting of contemporary performance, dance, music, new media, and visual arts projects in Portland, Oregon. | [www.pica.org/tba/](http://www.pica.org/tba/) | 14.2.2011

<sup>4</sup> Quote in Graham Coulter-Smith, *Installationism: The Expanded Field of Sculpture 1985 - 2005* | <http://www.installationart.net/PDF/Starling.pdf> | 9.2.2011

What kind of aspects do these process-related works include, and how can we describe these works? Several aspects can be brought together to describe the phenomenon of process-related art projects. First of all, processes are related to an empirical time lapse. An empirical time lapse can be perceived in the passage from day to night or in the changing tides. Secondly, time lapse constitutes a basic element of a process-related art project. Time is used (exploited) as a fundamental part of a development of the art process. Thirdly, the time for the production is part of the project, compared to a more traditional way of art making in which the production time is part of what happens before the work is finished. The process is already the work, which means that the development (the production) is part of the work. And, finally, a process-related art project makes the presence of time in the work evident.



Simon Starling  
Flaga 1972-2000  
2002

Special attention is given to the different forms of documentation. On the one hand, several kinds of media such as video and sound are possibilities with which to document process-related projects. On the other hand, they also need time as a basis to actually function. A media form like video is useless if the time factor is absent, in contrast to photography, where already an instant can communicate key information. <sup>5</sup>

By mapping the interconnected physical and cultural trajectories of an object, Starling and Tirtiaux address issues of politics and nationality, and investigate the failed progressive ideals of the 20th century. *Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2)* by Starling has a similar circularity as *Flaga 1972 - 2000*. He dismantled a shed and turned it into a boat; loaded with the remains of the shed, the boat was paddled down the *Rhine* to the *Museum für Gegenwartskunst* in Basel, dismantled and reassembled into a shed. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Karin Gludovatz & Martin Peschken, *Momente im Prozess - Zeitlichkeit künstlerischer Produktion*, 2004, Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH

<sup>6</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon\\_Starling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Starling) | 14.2.2011

This project makes the presence of time evident in the work. Especially in the work *Flaga 1972 - 2000*, it is impressiv to see how time is still visible in the last stage of the project. It seems like the past and the present are there at the same time, assuming that the visitor knows the concept of the work.

These artists focus on the process, not on the result. These works also provide a kind of buttress against the pressures of modernity. As an essential part of these projects, the (time related-) progression shows how the idea of process relates to mass production, global capitalism and differences in nationality. But even if the idea of process already implies a certain kind of content, it seems that we can look at process as a form, comparable to an empty canvas. In this sense the artists uses the idea of process as a form to formulate their artistic intentions. Is it possible to call process a form which can be used to transform a critical-artistic point of view into a tangible work?



Simon Starling  
Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2)  
2005

Damian Jurt | Geneva | 1.6.2011

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Complementary Appendice: The Bureau of Piracy | *Please join the party* | 2008: Computer technologies bring about an abundance of information, a new land of endless possibilities far away from any abstract solutions concerning copyright issues. Everyday practices by people in these networks are both wiping out and opening up the old rules and rights on copying, turning the known back into the unknown. In the summer of 2008, the *Piratbyrån* crew undertook a bus trip from Sweden to *Manifesta 7* in Bolzano - Bozen, Italy. The journey was a workshop with the aim of formulating a new collaborative statement based on the group's experiences of the recent Scandinavian conflicts over copyright issues. When the bus arrived there was a final party featuring Jem Noble. The bus was then left behind as part of the exhibition, along with the documentation of *Piratbyrån's* work. The party was open to all. *Piratbyrån (The Bureau of Piracy)* might be best known internationally for starting up The Pirate Bay, which is now the world's largest bit torrent tracker and the subject of a controversial court case. *Piratbyrån* is a group of theorists, artists, consultants, activists and pranksters concerned with the impact of the abundance of digital information on the creation of cultural meaning, cultural production and economies of urban life.