

## **Portrait of a Dead Chicken as Artist: On the Risky Business of Financing Ideas**

**Jan Ritsema**

I remember it well, the shock  
 It happened in the early nineties  
 People said they were in residency  
 I was so jealous  
 I felt so small compared to them  
 Since, how did they always manage that  
 I had never applied for a travel grant  
 Until I found out that it was all a scam  
 Air. ArtistInResidence  
 I was shocked to discover that they weren't paid anything  
 Just a few facilities  
 Which the endower boasted about  
 But wasn't more than the use of staff and space which was superfluous anyway  
 The worst of it was that you were meant to be happy with this dead chicken  
 In any case, you were one of the chosen few  
 They had chosen you for the beautiful role of dead chicken  
 Could it be a bit cheaper  
 You shouldn't set up something like that in the business world  
 They call it exploitation there  
 Prostitution: the need to let oneself be exploited out of necessity  
 So far the abuse by dealers in art

And then there's the growing business of expatriation  
 The result of the perfect interplay between national authorities  
 Money has to flow. Law number 1 of economic growth  
 It's best when money flows between countries  
 Artists, the military and students pave the way for international exchanges and influences or if  
 you wish contamination  
 They like to get paid to go abroad  
 Packaged with good intentions  
 To learn from others  
 To appease inter-national contacts  
 Fine people getting together  
 As if you actually need to go there for that, in that other country  
 As if you can't just realise  
 That the other and you aren't different, but the same  
 But then again it isn't at all about that beautiful goal  
 It's about getting the money to flow  
 The home country pays the travel expenses  
 And the host country pays for the stay  
 Both countries have travel scholarships for their migrating artists  
 I'll pay the travel expenses and then you feed them  
 And, you pay the travel expenses and then I'll feed them  
 It's the same with the granting of landing rights again and again between national airlines or  
 with the granting of reciprocal tax facilities in tax treaties between countries  
 Both countries have residencies in buildings which are generally monumental  
 Quite perverse, in fact

The act of expatriation (staying in residence abroad)  
 Takes place in monuments which are explicitly presented as typical heritage  
 In order to really realise that you need to imagine that  
 The Netherlands, for instance, would oblige all tourists to wear clogs  
 In the meantime it's a blooming business

#### Art and artist residency houses

In Europe there are around eighty cultural residencies in historical monuments, castles,  
 cloisters, old industrial and military buildings, and similar ones  
 The most prestigious of these, and which richly celebrate a patronage,  
 Not only feed the artists but pay them wages too

It's especially important to cross the border  
 It's important to awake interest in one another  
 And thus for one another's products  
 Don't be so sour, such a sour puss  
 It's a good thing that the possibility is being offered you  
 Of getting paid to work elsewhere  
 And that money is being made available for art is nice too  
 But there's a bundle of money on that wagon that doesn't end up in art  
 But in the residence and its organisation  
 And worse still  
 And this is where the shoe hurts  
 It's the residence and its art board which have the power  
 They're the ones who define who gets in and who doesn't, and for how long  
 The power is taken out of the hands of art and the artists  
 And that costs art a lot of money  
 After a long period of artistic oppression in art schools  
 The artist can keep up the oppression in the elitist facilities he's been offered,  
 The oppression which he's in the meantime probably grown addicted to  
 It's time for a revolution  
 Money needs to be spent on art  
 And less on administration and prestigious facilities  
 By definition, art should cross boundaries  
 Should be transgressive  
 When the authorities want to create conditions for it  
 But what authority would really want to facilitate the gnawing of its own principles  
 Let's imagine that the authorities want to create conditions for it  
 Then it first needs to support and create those facilities  
 Which help foster change and development  
 That means, the useless  
 That means, that for which there doesn't yet exist a conceptual apparatus  
 That means, the little known  
 Art should especially be subsidised with risk funds  
 That means, money that dares to take risks  
 As is usual in the world of new products and services  
 That means that ideas and not declarations of ideas are to be subsidised

PAF (PerformingArtsForum) is such an idea  
 Someone wrote about it:

The impossible impossible performance

He staged a building, some kind of historical site  
he invited his colleagues and friends to stage the site  
and to direct themselves  
and to direct it themselves  
so they did  
a coming and going of friends and colleagues and friends and colleagues of friends  
discussing their work  
discussing proposals of work  
working  
working together  
a platform  
of exchange  
of merging  
of the smoothest way to produce and gain knowledge  
of experiencing and training  
of invention  
a performance  
a strange performance  
a permanence

He desperately wanted this  
this reconfiguration  
We need it, he screamed  
We have to rethink the positions

the undoing of a performance  
he used to call it  
this un-split of audience and stage

but this is no performance, they screamed,  
(when he started to ask for subsidies for it as a performance)  
this is a new initiative, very interesting, but not a performance

but I am a director, he said  
I am staging this  
it is my work  
this undoing of the stage  
this undoing of the audience space

the unification, he said  
and he started to shout: el pueblo unido.....

this, he said, is a political performance  
a change of perspective  
a historical split undone

but still they didn't want to pay for it  
the endowers  
they were convinced that this wasn't a performance  
they knew this wasn't even art either (although they could know that art always should be the  
exception and not the rule)  
they only subsidized the rule  
what they could recognize as a performance

his building, they said, was a project  
an initiative, yes,  
but no performance  
praiseworthy, yes  
but not eligible for subsidies

not as some kind of art in general,  
let alone as a performance  
never mind how many actors were involved  
how accessible it was for anybody  
how this facility called theatre had been revisited  
how this rusty institute called theatre had been displaced  
reconfigured  
a serious proposition to revive it  
emancipate it  
de-hierarchise it  
but nothing helped

a performance, they said, needs the split between audience and stage  
a split between those who know (their text) and those who don't  
a split between the have's and the have-not's  
a performance, they knew, needed the clear distinction  
between the included and the excluded  
the prepared and the not prepared  
the bored and the curious  
the teachers and the pupils  
a performance, they knew, needed  
hierarchy  
distinction  
inequality

they excluded him  
his performance died  
for him it died  
for them it never existed

this performance

the impossible impossible performance

the absence of a performance

(for them)

not for the theatre director and performer himself

for him it was a performance

a more than live performance

a larger-than-life performance

this area of exchange and merging

compressed

condensed

a forum for producing knowledge and ongoing discursive practice

a tool equal to all participants in the event

a tool machine even

a tool producing tools

a place for temporary autonomy

a theatre at work

but not for them

they left him out

missing again and again

this chance of making a difference that really could make a difference

this chance to change

addicted as they are to what they could recognize

to what they think they belong too

and to what belongs to them

to what is known to them

their past

rejecting what eventually might have been possible

what is unknown to them

a possible future

that of the probable

of the impossible possible•

PAF a relatively cheap

A relatively light organization, in terms of overhead

But unfortunately, not fitting in the formats and frames of the subsidising administration

PAF is a platform for and by artists

A self-organization of self-motorizing artists

Who work on art that thinks

A free zone

Accessible without application

A residency, yes

In a historical monument, yes

But without a structure, almost  
More an intelligent process itself  
Art making alike  
PAF is an artwork

More information on PAF on the hyperling "<http://www.pa-f.net>" [www.pa-f.net](http://www.pa-f.net) The  
'impossible impossible performance' was exhibited in September/October 2006 in Graz  
(Austria) during the Festival Steirische Herbst at the exhibition RE-DELEGATING –  
Archiving performances on the edge of the void.