



Interview with Solène Guillier and Nathalie Boutin. “gb agency”.
Marti Manen

“gb agency” is a flexible gallery project, you have had an organization based on different teams taking care of different particularities at space called “&.”. Could you explain a little bit how it has been working?

Four years ago, we had the desire to question the role of a gallery from a different approach: we wanted to follow a few artists with a deep engagement and with our own rhythm. We created a collective platform in which three different entities were alternating their own projects. The space was called '&.', as a link between three different and independent activities as spirits; we shared there the exhibitions frequency and had more time to prospect, follow some projects and prepare exhibitions. We shared the common costs of the space and we were more capable to produce artists' new works and experimental processes. But the fact is communication was very hard about this specific process and this is why in 2005 we decided to have our autonomous space for gb agency program.

“Agency” as a word to define your work. Why?

We never considered the activity of gallerist as a signature where you print a name. We prefer the idea of an anonymous agency which develop projects and put people together.

The gallery is taking care of curatorial projects. In one way, we can say that you are defining a new idea of curator, an independent curator working with his/her own infrastructure. You can offer a team of production and an efficient curatorial point of view: I do think that it gives you some sort of flexibility and autonomy. Are these words a good definition of it, or are there more important elements?

We try to curate one institutional exhibition a year. Since gb agency opened we have done 'Mental Shift' at UKS in Oslo, Norway, 'Here and Now' at About Cafe (AARA) in Bangkok, Thailand, and 'From My Window, Artists and their Territories', at ENSBA in Paris.

This curatorial activity gives us some distances from the gallery but also keep us aware and connected to different artistic forms and proposals.

Our infrastructure is independent but we stimulate and answer to institutional invitation. So we have to understand its frames, its issues.

It is important for us to respect a context and to adapt our structure and our perspective each time. Sometimes we note such a *decalage* between what you can do by yourself, your freedom and how things can be complex when you are not alone...But we built a kind of respectful relationship based on trust and usually it works very well.

The gallery system is based in a solid market structure. Local fairs, International fairs, good contacts with private collectors and institutions, a good definition of what each gallery means, a concrete tempo, a long term relationship with artists, an absolute control of what's going on in the art world... In one way, your project offers different possibilities to the gallery itself, maybe a different rhythm, a project based structure... How this fixed system (the gallery one) understands "gb agency"?

By now, there is many new 'galleries', which attempt to function in the same way. Usually they are based in countries where the market is weaker like Kurimanzoto in Mexico, Raster in Poland, Podnar in Slovenia... but it's coming also, maybe, because with our generation more gallerists have an art historian background. And as the society is changing also: you could offered not to choose between market and meaning anymore. It is really important to sell, to diffuse, and develop the dynamic of production, but only if you understand what it means.

From your point of view, what is the future of the gallery? And what about the future of the exhibition?

For us, a gallery works properly if it has its intellectual coherency and its ethical attitude in term of his relationship with the artists and the proposals made to its audience. A contemporary art gallery has to question itself, its society and its perception. This is not easy. Focusing on contemporary art, its language and its form means also to change the lively structure. The gallery as a frame or as a container of new artistic visions needs to be always reinvented. Exhibition format is also moving on in time but this is a very long story...