

Research article

Circling the Circulatory

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Introduction: The Circulatory as Making and Being

This article puts forward a new conception of exhibitionary forms within artistic and curatorial practices entitled the *circulatory*.¹ Although usefully contextualised by recent tendencies and approaches precipitated by the current pandemic, this conception might have a broader genesis and application not limited to that topical horizon. This article proposes a different reading of extant exhibitionary forms, ones that have, potentially, been misread or left underdeveloped, circumscribed as they are by conventional parameters.

The article sets out a rationale for the circulatory and seeks to position it conceptually with reference to a series of curatorial concepts developed in the last decade and with reference to some examples in practice. The intention is to circle *the circulatory* as a concept and practice (without *encircling* it as it were), establishing a pattern of emphases across the spectrum of the exhibitionary form – from the formation of ideas for exhibition, over to the form of exhibition itself with, potentially, all waypoints implicated in the potentiality of the circularity in a temporal sense.

What I wish to underline is that the circulatory in my thinking is simultaneously a theoretical position and a way of practicing. In working towards this with my loose circling of the circulatory, I take a special interest in, and seek to foreground, artistic and curatorial trajectories that address the *making public* of an enquiry or an idea, not only in the conclusive phases of that project enquiry, but from the very embryonic stage of creation, and through all dimensions of that enquiry as they unfold. Central to my exposition of the circulatory is the principle of curatorial deliberacy in the shaping of the enquiry so that strategies of making public are incorporated and embedded as intrinsic features of that enquiry, in addition to – perhaps over and above – its implementation, production and ‘final’ distribution. In charting the concept itself through the course of the essay, I hope to convey something of the connection of thought from one field to another and back again, revealing in the process, something of the added discursive value that is brought to bear from that mode of intertextual working.

A somewhat fluid and ineffable concept, the circulatory might stem from several discursive locations, from philosophy, from cultural studies, from curatorial discourse, although not, perhaps, from any one exclusively. At its base, the circulatory is grounded on a familiar Heideggerian concept, from *Being and Time* (1927), namely, that we come to know the world theoretically only after we have reached a form of understanding of it through being *in it*, handling it, being part of it as individual and collective agent. So, this making sense of the world can emerge in our own ideas, practices and tools. We become part of culture, not just through static cognisance of a set of already-formed representations, but from being part of their making, and importantly for the circulatory, through the remaking and reliving and resharing of iterations of given representations and common circumstances.

1) This term came about in conversation with Jason E. Bowman Programme Manager of the MFA Fine Art at HDK-Valand/University of Gothenburg in September 2020 as part of our preparations for a workshop to be delivered to our students. The term has been implemented in our course and used in teaching moments to elaborate upon the potential of exhibitionary forms and their relationship to the circulation of knowledge and insight across all stages of an artistic project.

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In an effort to grasp the concept at this early point in the essay, brief reference to one of the examples shared in more detail below might be useful. For Glasgow International 2016, with *The Next 'Invasive' is 'Native'*, Cooking Sections created, I suggest, a circulatory project *par excellence*. Working on the history of Italian culture in the city, and its perception on first appearance as somehow invasive and alien, they devised and distributed new ice creams, flavoured with plants classified as invasive. As I will repeat below, Cooking Sections bound into *form* the content of their research and critique, and then alighted upon dissemination strategies highly conducive to the powerful combination of form and content. They distributed their inventions through the very ice cream parlours that were so associated with the cultural invasion in the first place, augmenting and challenging the 'native' networks of the biennale into the bargain by way of intertwined, critical analogy. The incredible organic coherence of this project, of the research, critique, chosen form, select dissemination, and distributed (invasive) meanings, add up to a powerful example of the circulatory, and of the circulatory *in action* in the world.

Artist and writer, Nancy de Freitas can assist with this circling of a concept when she explains (De Freitas, 2002) that it is not really the job of the artwork alone as a finished thing to present and convey circumscribed ideas and meanings, no matter how formally eloquent the artwork might be. De Freitas argues for the importance of the redistribution of meaning through multiple recipients, in order to find discursive forms to activate and reactivate meaning, *within* that artwork, and *adjacent* to that artwork. In addition, De Freitas promotes this active engagement with the call of the artwork and its discursive associations, as a *modus operandi* to, ultimately, reconfigure theoretical positions.

An expanded take on these ideas can be found in 'Travelling Concepts in the Humanities', by cultural theorist Mieke Bal (2002). For Bal, concepts that travel in interdisciplinary fashion, that travel from the visual field and back, somehow mutate, they are deprived of something, and they gain something by being enriched by other constructions. Moreover, they carry with them in their travels the potential for further travels. This ongoing (potentially limitless) movement converts concepts into living phenomena with meaningful presence in different contexts and different conditions.

In addition to this idea of travelling concepts, important to the circulatory, and complementary, is the active bringing into being, of *making anew* in the world. Here we have the force of material thinking, as defined concisely by writer and artist Paul Carter. Carter focuses our attention on the process of translation operating from ideas into artworks or made manifestations, and how the connection with the material itself generates an intellectual activation. Valid as this is for the maker, it is also valid for the active *recipient* of that which the maker has made. The condition of the circulatory allows for iterations of making to follow in the progression of travelling concepts. It is not just interpretation in the face of the *made* within the circulatory that counts, it is also the *remaking* of the made. Important here in my thinking is what Carter identifies as the singular potentiality of material thinking, where the "matter-in-between collaborators" supplies a "discursive situation" for their collaborative work (Carter 2007, p. 19).

Of course, it should be noted that the aforementioned concepts were developed in the early 2000s, coincident with, for example, Grant Kester's 'Conversation Pieces', a book that gave a more prominent position to dialogical and social practice within the art world constellation. The collaborative work intimated by Carter, and catalysed by manifestations of Bal's travelling, can be effected through the making of the dialogical and the social, as well as through further iteration of responsive artefacts that might continue the dialogue across time and across disciplines.

With these conceptual points of reference in mind by way of introduction, the circulatory is proposed as a coextensive part of the making of the artistic/curatorial idea, and a component part that has durationality. In this sense, the circulatory is not an addendum to an artwork, or to an artist's material thinking, but unfolds across time *within* it.

Ultimately, the circulatory might be seen as a concept and practice that can have a life *in action*, not limited to the worlds of cultural production. Might there be a place for the circulatory in a mindful and active playing-out of these artistic and curatorial enquiries, not only in the presentation of them to a public across the lifeline of a creative enquiry, but by living through and with these enquiries, and the methods inherent, circulating significance and value through society, and into a diversity of environment: an ethics of the circulatory?

This article registers that, broadly speaking, and despite the multiplicity of distribution options available and made conspicuous during this extraordinary period, the persistent pre-eminent, pre-existing exhibitionary form, for scholars, writers, art historians, curators, artists is, still, the exhibition form as a form of conclusive display. For the author, the circulatory is not antithetical to the normative exhibitionary form, but it is presented in what follows as a form and non-form with a vital presence for all stages of the creative enquiry, as the *leit motiv* and lifeblood of that very enquiry, as well as an influential presence in the exhibitionary moments, whatever form they may take.

Exhibitionary Forms Within a Curatorial Canon

The predilection for the exhibition *event* as the preeminent parameter for the exhibitionary form underscores the significance, for many at least, of a specific set of terms and tools connected with the time and space of 'The Show'. Within conventional parameters, then, the show is the capping off of sequential events: a time for production, followed by a time for installation, followed by a (short) time for visible fruition; the space of the studio, followed by the space of the gallery; from the tools of making to the tools of display. (For those practices bound up with the sequential spaces of ownership, intermediary ownership, and re-ownership, the sequence is often repeated.)

And this is all valid, no doubt, when matched with an artistic practice that would accord with this process and with institutions interested in sustaining this dynamic: materialisation of an artwork for the systematic display within the space-time framework of the exhibition-as-conclusion. But what happens when the practices involved are of a different nature and motivated by a different imperative related to or born from the very nature of the specific inquiry? Why do such practices need to fit the exhibition paradigm when, after all, the exhibitionary form might be configured to meet those practices? How much of the process and substance of those practices is lost by virtue of adaptation and adherence to the conventional exhibitionary form? The circulatory is a useful component in this discourse.

It is worth recalling, perhaps, that this discourse is relatively new; an aspect easy to overlook given that in recent times we have witnessed an expansion of the curatorial field. In his 2011 text for the *Manifesta Journal*, 'A Canon of Exhibitions', Bruce Altshuler, Professor of Museum Studies at New York University writes:

the serious study of exhibitions is something new, or at least relatively new. Two factors have driven recent research and publication on exhibitions: the changing landscape of art history, with its expanding interests in social and institutional histories, and, perhaps more importantly, the curatorial boom of the late 1980s and 1990s. (Altshuler 2011, p. 5).

Altshuler explores the idea of a canon of exhibitions and, indeed, of the curators who create them. Exhibitions, he explains, can be canonical for reasons of their art historical importance or for reasons of curatorial innovation. The coherence of this distinction is questioned by looking at the history of exhibitions as an essential part of art history and by considering the way in which exhibitions play into broader accounts of culture and politics.

In the same issue, writer and curator, Simon Sheikh addresses related concerns. In 'On the Standard of Standards, or, Curating and Canonization', he connects the exhibitionary form, literally the exhibition, to the strategic making and preserving of histories of exhibitions and points out that this was a development related to both art historians' and curators' industry self-interests. As Sheikh makes clear, this (albeit necessary) writing of a curatorial canon, intimately linked as it was/is to the near-reification of certain specific exhibitionary forms and events, risks ossifying exhibitionary forms in that very writing, as the concomitant professionalisation of the curatorial industry, sees students "try to enter the canon of curators, or at least into a respectful dialogue with it, since the standardization of professionalization requires the setting of standards". (Sheikh 2011, p. 15). The circulatory is from one perspective, one might say, a constructive *disrespectful* dialogue with the exhibitionary paradigms that have served the construction of the curatorial canon!

Sheikh draws our attention to the boom in curatorial studies programmes on offer since the late 1980s and early 1990s, but more intensively since the early 2000s, and attributes a central role for this self-reflexive schooling in establishing and re-establishing canonical foundations for curatorial practices. As these programmes proliferated, one constant, arguably, was the standardised exhibitionary form and event as culmination of studious attention; the highpoint of curatorial endeavour and the right of passage from school to industry.

In a sense, then, the first foundations of this academic industry incorporated a standardised knowledge of the exhibitionary object of study in order to systematise the training of curators to get to that fixed, consummatory *event*. This strong focus on the exhibition as *the* curatorial format rather than *a* curatorial format was part of the tactic of establishing a certain common, professional discourse, together with attendant glossary, and conventional parameters of exhibition-as-endpoint.

Sheikh explains, importantly, how the professionalisation and subsequent formalisation of the curatorial field presupposed a sense of its own history. It is thus unsurprising that it is not art history itself, so much, that contributed the bulk of publications on the history of exhibitions over recent years; rather, these publications emerged from the environs of curatorial studies now-established. Given the succour that the art academy has given to the furtherance of curatorial studies, alongside its own persistent predilection for The Show, it is perhaps understandable that it took some time for alternative approaches to the canonical to emerge to challenge the parameters and temporalities of normative exhibitionary forms and the normative curatorial means of apprehending and presenting those forms.

The circulatory retrieves the potential of exhibitionary forms and releases the potentiality of curatorial means, opening out all stages of 'art's' production and reception in a constructive fracture of authors, audiences, and meaning-makers. There is, of course, considerable momentum in place around this potentiality, and the circulatory might find a life within some of these ongoing discourses. In recent years, challenges to conventional exhibitionary forms have been set down by, for example, the relational, the digital, and the decolonial.

A particularly relevant and influential strand of more recent work pertinent to exhibitionary

forms *beyond* a curatorial canon, and, thus, the circulatory in its conceptual genesis, comes from the philosopher and theorist, Gerald Raunig; namely, his distinction between “constituent” and “instituent” practices. Tellingly, these ideas have been valued by Irit Rogoff in her work on curatorial theory, and in particular on the educational turn in curating. In her chapter in the important book, *Curating and the Educational Turn*, Wilson and O’Neill (eds.) (2010), Rogoff identifies the constituent as “operating at the level of representation, in the name of all those who make up the field of representation, proceeding to produce a series of protocols for both governance and representation”, and the instituent as proactively “within the field of representation, as part of something, which has been constituted, to include the claims one might have” within that field (Rogoff in Wilson and O’Neill 2010, p. 44).

Normative forms of exhibitionary *constitution* continue to be tested of late, and the circulatory might be seen as an effective operative agency in *instituting* discursive elements and opening out potential in respect of exhibitionary forms that are institutive of a *becoming-public*.

Exhibitionary Forms Within a Becoming-Public

In her text, *Rehearsing Evidence*, part of her co-edited publication *Curatorial Things*, Beatrice von Bismarck refers to “becoming public as a constitutive part of a curatorial situation” (von Bismarck 2019, p. 313).

Usefully for this article, von Bismarck advocates for a certain level of ambiguity and openness to be embedded in curatorial practices. In elaboration of this position, she compares the act of curatorial presentation with the act of forensic presentation. Von Bismarck’s comparison shows “the difference between a forensic investigation that aims to produce evidence (with a focus on “architecture” as structure) and a curatorial presentation that aims to generate evidence” (von Bismarck 2019, p. 313).

Von Bismarck’s take unsettles the evidential authority of normative exhibitionary forms and introduces precarity of meaning and of sequential ownership of knowledge in a curatorial equation, through time. The evidence displayed in different contexts, at different times, via multiple exhibitions, recreates a variety of meanings around the objects selected by the curator. Though in both cases (jurisdictional and artistic) we are faced with an act of display, the rationales behind each instance differ markedly: in one we have the normative display *par excellence* of conclusive elements of a curated narrative, and in the other von Bismarck sees an opening out onto new and diverse dynamics, a becoming of meaning that is able to ‘corrupt’ the evidence along the way by resisting it and denying it that conclusive status.

Circularity aligns with much of von Bismarck’s thinking, especially, I posit, the dimension of the agency of the public in what I support as the fracture and ‘disrespectful’ engagement with normative exhibitionary forms. For von Bismarck, even within gallery situations, “curating as a cultural practice” is “based on assemblage, of which publicness is a constitutive part” (von Bismarck 2019, p. 313). Von Bismarck is receptive to the agency of *publicness* in curatorial time and enthusiastic about the idea of the public dimension of curating as a dynamo for the generation of meaning.

And the diverse means by which curators produce meaning, von Bismarck sees as core to the practice of the curator (and by extension to the creative protagonists involved in the production of exhibitionary forms). A curatorial emphasis on the circulatory involves a careful choreographing of the nodes of splintering potential where a becoming-public in time begets, through the agency of an engaged public and the design of the components of the enquiry, additional, transitional and

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provisional exhibitionary forms, forms that cycle back into the generative drama of the curatorial for the production of subsequent meaning and opportunity.

For the delineation of the circulatory, this is an important shift: to include within the curatorial dynamics not only the exhibition-making, even if increasingly innovative and decolonial in its presentation, but also the waypoints, as previously described, between inception, production and display; those temporal situations engendered by the phases of the curatorial project. Whereas von Bismark's analysis centred more on the exhibition as a constellation made of different parts, the circulatory does not seek to delimit curatorial assemblages and moments of publicness to the constellation as an exhibit-act. The circulatory registers the exhibition as one node of constructivist meaning-making, but celebrates even its potential disappearance, or deprivileging, as a subsequent process of circulation, energised and disrupted by episodes of becoming-public *en route*.

Here we see close affinity to the work of Florian Malzacher, specifically his thinking on the dramaturgy of experience in theatre. Citing the now-perhaps stereotyped character of the über-curator, Malzacher expresses the point of durational value in the circulatory with reference to an idea of a theatrical festival:

One can walk through a festival like through a landscape. Some things are accidental, others are obvious. To linger or to go on, to grasp things intuitively or turn them over intellectually. The phantom of the super-curator, the über-curator, boldly creating his own piece out of other people's artworks, is not to be feared in the performative domain anyway. On the contrary, there is rather a lack of courage for imparting meaning at all – and not least because of modesty, but out of fear from the task. (Malzacher 2010, p.14).

Curatorial design, choreographed meetings of publics, chance encounters, accidental splintering of meaning, all add in to the durational circulatory, a walk through the exhibitionary form at all stages of its life, and its after life. Malzacher's collaboration with the artist Jonas Staal is discussed briefly below as a concrete example of such curatorial dramaturgy.

The curatorial spirit that would dramatise contingency in the way that Malzacher describes, is not too distant from the position of Nora Sternfeld and Luisa Ziaja on post-representational curating. In their essay, 'What Comes After the Show? On Post-representational Curating' (Sternfeld and Ziaja, 2012), Sternfeld and Ziaja point out that representational practice has been contested since the early 20th-century, a contestation on all artistic fronts that has expanded into a diversity of forms (text, sound, video, happening, environment, performance, encounter, etc.). One example mentioned by Strenfeld and Ziaja to substantiate their claim for a post-representational curatorial practice is the exhibition, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969). The central components of this specific curatorial episode are artists' practices that are chiefly process-oriented as well as being more conceptual than material based.

To dematerialise the art object, and to foreground processual aspects might lead to a different reception of art within society, perhaps rendering it in some sense more publicly available. The durational is an important part of their curatorial thinking as a result. Starting by deconstructing the pillar of the exhibition and moving to a more processual definition of the exhibitionary form, such as we promote for the circulatory, Sternfeld and Ziaja saw in *Live in Your head*, the beginnings of a progressive trajectory within the curatorial.

Continuing that thinking into the circulatory, and before coming to some explanatory examples, it is worth acknowledging that the exhibitionary form is not connected by default to or dependent

upon a venue, and also, of course, that the essential components of the exhibitionary form are not by default objects. The circulatory is concerned with the act of making concepts visible, concerned with the act of revealing through the arts. Exhibitionary forms become inherent practices of making things visible for subsequent iteration as part of a dramaturgical arc; the circulatory is performed. And within the ambit of this choreographed arc of the circularity, the exhibitionary form is a creative act belonging to myriad actors: artists, activists, sociologists, curators, archaeologists, young, old, natives, migrants, etc. strengthened by a common civic mission to publish and distribute materials, concepts, propositions, in various forms, inside and outside that gallery as host-of-endpoints.

Circulatory Practices Emerge

To give the circulatory a rehearsal through practice, three examples have been selected. This section is by no means an exhaustive overview of the circulatory and its potential, but the select examples allow an exploration of dimensions of the circulatory as outlined above, specifically in respect to the circulatory as: durational knowledge sharing; distribution of creative insights to a public by disrupting the normative exhibitionary form of a biennial format; and artistic impact beyond the life of the 'exhibitionary' event (indeed beyond the life of the disrupted event).

The examples all involve multiple points of collaboration and collaborators, a modus that if not essential, then certainly conducive to the circulatory manifesting in the artistic project. I have engaged with all three as visitor, curator, or participant, animating in different ways my own agency as a node in the circulatory network, responding to the time frame for engagement invited by the works as they unfold and develop beyond what conspicuous public moment may have been incorporated into the programme.

The first example comes from Indonesia, from the practice of the collective *ruangrupa*, which I witnessed as a visitor in 2015. The focus here is on the *Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem* project, running across a number of years, a rich example of the circulatory as a process of knowledge distribution based on local epistemologies rather than a cultural representation through conventional exhibitionary forms.

Second is *The 'Next "Invasive" is "Native"'* by London-based duo *Cooking Sections*. This project took place in Glasgow in 2016 as part of the biennial art festival, *Glasgow International*; I curated the specific iteration that took place at the *Centre for Contemporary Arts: Glasgow*. This project helps us see the circulatory as a deliberate practice of going beyond the normative exhibitionary form sustained by the biennale: the circulatory here being meaning-entwined with the strategy of disruption, born from the disruption of the biennale exhibitionary format, and also the conventions of a festival.

The third example, *'Training for the Future'* (2019), by artist *Jonas Staal* and curator *Florian Malzacher*, was also presented during a festival event, the *Ruhr Triennale*, and I took part as a participant. In this case, *Staal* and *Malzacher*, played within the framework of the biennale, utilising its infrastructure, its funding, its support structure, and so on, and also willingly connected to the given theme; but they transgressed the boundaries of the customary exhibitionary form. They provided a dynamic training session for participants, preparing them for the future, and teaching them about it into the bargain.

Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem/Gudskul: Ruangrupa, 2015-2018/Ongoing

Ruangrupa is a Jakarta-based collective established in 2000. Jakarta is a multicultural city, a place where millions of people dwell, from different classes, ethnic groups, and religions. Jakarta is a colossal assemblage of human beings, in residence and in transit, from the city, from other cities, and from surrounding villages and rural areas.

One basic practice of urban survival within such a diverse and potentially challenging urban set up, is represented by the *nongkrong*. As independent artist and researcher Sonja Dahl explains in her article, 'Nongkrong and Non-Productive Time in Yogyakarta's Contemporary Arts' (Dahl, 2016), at first glance *nongkrong* just means 'hanging out', but this literal translation does not do justice to the deep and complex societal and intellectual value of this activity. This slow and fluid form of dialogical exchange has been a way to learn from people's differences in urban settings within Indonesia, explore in depth the meaning of life, and challenge their view of the world in a collective way. Compared with modes of western dialogical sharing and conversations, the *nongkrong* can appear extremely unproductive, not focused, unstructured and therefore useless according to an accelerated capitalist logic. The reality is that this mode of interaction is highly conducive to collaborative work: people find their time to express themselves, they do not feel the pressure of reaching a conclusion or a final outcome and are therefore not motivated by competition but by a sense of solidarity. To serve the needs of effective *nongkrong*, the collective has an active location, not in the form of a studio, but rather a meeting platform for discursive encounters, the *tongkrongan*. Their ongoing enquiries are shaped in the form of art projects being at times art lab, workshops, exhibitions, festivals, books, magazines as well as radio podcasts.



Open house, Gudskul/Jin Panji

Ruangrupa tried to incorporate this principle within their *modus operandi*: a first step towards the circulatory, towards emulating the durational and cooperative exchange and iterated meaning-making of *nongkrong*. Rather than deploy a pre-tested, recognisable production *modus* or exhibitionary form, they have opted for a non-mainstream way of discourse production embedded within Indonesian society. As a central function of the concept of the circulatory, ruangrupa's methodology is a way of making a more organic and more accessible creative and intellectual experience for people involved in their initiatives. Important also to the *ethics* of the circulatory, is the manner in which a collective such as ruangrupa dehierarchises knowledge sources and knowledge types. They diligently engage practitioners from various disciplines (social sciences, politics, technology, media, etc.) as vigilant observers of and respondents to Indonesian contemporary issues. Registering and respecting the histories and dynamics of Indonesian society at large, ruangrupa is composed of a variety of people coming from different backgrounds, with different knowledge 'portfolios'. This can also be acknowledged as a pillar of the circulatory, as a proactive way for the collective to activate and then circulate a democratisation of cultures and a parity of esteem for different knowledge methods and outcomes, such as *nongkrong*. Art is to be considered as of equal value and relevance as any other disciplines, knowledge, ideas, methods, concepts, and tools that might have a life and function, and worth, among diverse people, disciplines and sectors.

Important to the *operation* of the circulatory, ruangrupa do not prescribe a defined final outcome; formats are adapted to the nature of each issue, never prescribed and never with a preconfigured end point. This way of operating gives insight into how the active collective *in itself* is a form of circulatory within their overall practice – their *form* generates their collective content. Co-developed from 2015-18 by ruangrupa together with various artists' collectives in Jakarta, Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem (GSE) can assist in support of our claims towards a circling of the circulatory. GSE took the form of a cross-disciplinary platform, named after the warehouse where it was located, Gudang Sarinah, in South Jakarta. The platform aimed to be a support structure for creative practitioners, local communities and several institutions. The idea was to cross-pollinate, share knowledge, and devise a suitable and sustainable way to distribute/circulate emerging knowledge and insight. Everything produced by the platform was open to the public through a variety of formats including film screenings, music concerts and discussions.

Avoiding a monolithic, neocolonial understanding of presenting given findings through cabinets and displays, and other validatory modes, ruangrupa and participants activated the sites with resources and materials from the site itself. The circulation of activities and provisional outcomes from GSE developed into Gudskul, a contemporary art collective and ecosystem. This new ecosystem was recreated together with Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara, two other collectives from Jakarta.

Gudskul ('good school') was based on the *lumbung* economy model (the model chosen by ruangrupa for their current curation of documenta 15). *Lumbung* is an Indonesian term that can be translated as 'rice barn'. The *lumbung* is a collective pot or accumulation system used within the agricultural tradition of Indonesia. The community used to produce crops and stored them together in a common pot. Then the final total of the crops would be distributed to the various members of the community not equally but proportionally, depending on their needs. Ruangrupa did the same with the rest of the collective part of the Gudskul. They created a collective resource pot, including knowledge, skills and funding, and they operated it under the functional logic of the commons.



Gudskul drone image, Gudskul/Jin Panji

Gudskul is a learning space to focus on questions around collectivity, equality, solidarity, friendship and togetherness not only related to artistic practice but to ways of living. This new platform gives longevity to the experience of Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem and institutes a self-reflective practice for *ruangrupa* as a collective among collectives. In this way, Gudskul ensures continuity of knowledge production and idea sharing, and it also serves to amplify ambitions and shared thinking around the issue of collective life to become.

The Next 'Invasive' is 'Native': Cooking Sections, 2016

In 2016 and as part of Glasgow International (GI), a biennial festival for contemporary art in Glasgow, the duo Cooking Sections embarked on an innovative and provocative project: *The Next 'Invasive' is 'Native'*.

Cooking Sections was established in 2013 by Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe. Their practice uses food as a vehicle to monitor the transformation of the environment as well as to bring awareness about these changes within various communities around the globe. The duo uses a variety of formats such as installation, performance, video, publication, depending upon the nature of the message they are intending to disseminate.

To accomplish *Next 'Invasive' is 'Native'*, they had an army of comrades starting from the Centre for Contemporary Arts: Glasgow (CCA), the curatorial collective VERBureau and several Glaswegian ice-cream cafés (Jaconelli's, Crolla's, University Café, and The Project Café). The final objective was to produce new ice-cream flavours based on the properties of invasive plants, and this objective functioned in a multi-layered way to deliver what I would regard as a fully-operative circulatory scheme.

The point of departure was semantic: the meaning and use of the word *invasive*. The word refers to natural species that do not belong to a certain environment and spread rapidly, sometimes causing damage to those natural, indigenous species that *do* belong to that space and are defined as native. The damage can be minimal or severe: sometimes invasive species are considered responsible not only for the local environment, but also for the health of the people who inhabit it, and their economy. Invasive species are defined as alien, dangerous, and divisive.

Cooking Sections built the project and its layers of meaning around the connotations inherent in these terms – alien, pest, invader, danger – and encompassed a sociopolitical intent within the circulatory of the project and its resonance: through the layering of meaning shared with the public at each stage of the endeavour, the theme of immigration was introduced and addressed in powerful ways.



Devaluing Property Real Estate Agency, The 'Next Invasive Is Native',
The Empire Remains Shop, Cooking Sections 2016.

For the locale of the city of Glasgow, the stories of learning to live with the invaders from Italy in the 1950s, many of whom established ice-cream parlours, were vivid and live. The project drew analogical and metaphorical meaning from the plants, and addressed negative terms used with regard to the perception of the Italian newcomers of the 1950s. When these ice-cream cafes first opened they were reported in the local press as spaces encouraging bad habits and even promiscuity; unwelcome behaviours arising from an invasive species, the spreading of an alien culture.

Cooking Sections created five brand-new ice-cream flavours with the help of five ice-cream cafes in the city. In this way they would give a sweet taste to a rather bitter narrative, they would themselves invade the biennale and the city with their project and attendant histories and create a means of circulation within the world: an invasive creative act to allow new insight to circulate

and new perspectives to trump old prejudices. The project opened up questions of authenticity and what it is to *be native* and found effective and affective ways of addressing xenophobia within the Scottish context – all as a result of a positive example of cultural hybridisation and conviviality brought by non-natives.

Importantly, as a characteristic of the impactful circulatory at its best, Cooking Sections found ways to share the insight and significance of their project with *more than* the presentational forms of the biennale. The performative, engaged, and post-representational dynamic led Cooking Sections to connect with the artworld ‘in town’ and the general public, through the channels of the hospitality sector, not merely the established venues and satellites of GI. Most powerful was the congruence of *form* and engaged *critique*. Cooking Sections bound into *form* the content of their research, and bound both into a conducive and inventive channel for visibility, outreach and dissemination. Eschewing modes of representational or presentational artwork, the significance of their methods, means, and meanings is heightened, and we can see the circulatory in full effect.

Training for the Future: Jonas Staal and Florian Malzacher, 2019

In 2019 artist Jonas Staal and curator Florian Malzacher set up a ‘Training Camp’ for artists and activists as part of the Ruhr Triennale. Staal is a visual artist whose work not only deals with the relation between art, propaganda, and democracy. Malzacher is an independent performing arts curator, dramaturge and writer interested in the relation between performance and the curatorial. What they have in common is an interest in assemblism as a way to challenge and redescribe the form of the assembly as a performative act. The training camp at Ruhr had an assembly of trainers composed of futurologists, hackers, extraterritorial activists, cooperative game designers and interplanetary organisations.

Interestingly, the training ran intentionally for invited participants only, with no audience, spectators or viewers. Considering that this choice was not forced by socio-political conditions or budget restrictions this is an intriguing scenario already: an artist and a curator get invited to be part of a triennale, a public festival of art for thousands of people, and they decide voluntarily to run a closed-door event. By this method they emphasised the principle of ‘training the trainer’, placing a premium on the participants being enabled to take the insights away, and pass them on: a bold reassertion of the power of such festivals to offer targeted education, and a reminder that that education, should be imparted and taken on beyond the moment of tuition.

What is perhaps even more important, is the way in which Staal and Malzacher tried to play with the topic of the triennale. The thematic framework for the 2019 Ruhr Triennale edition was ‘In-Between Time’ connected with European self-criticism. The invitation to Staal and Malzacher, and their invitation to us, was to question the current notion of democracy and develop new models for the future. In so doing, the *present* was revealed through the skills and attributes posited as necessary for us to contend with the future the present is directing us to!

This interlacing logic is core to the circulatory as practice. The final objective of ‘Training for the Future’ and its form went *hand-in-hand*: both the artist and curator involved in the project wanted to tackle the current dystopian tendency as a response to our global crisis in politics, economy and ecology. Instead of representing it into an installation for the triennale they pre-enacted alternative scenarios in order to reclaim the means of production for the future.



Training for the Future, 2019, Artist: Jonas Staal,
Photo: Ruben Hamelink, Produced by Ruhrtriennale.

Circling the Circulatory

Though the dramaturgical component and the performative focus of the project were very strong, this example is not representative of the circulatory simply because of its performative nature but for its *ad hoc* nature: embedding its own form of existence and *circulation* at the core of the project and not as an addition to it.

So the form of the project consists in its distribution as well and, at the same time, responds to the final objective of the project itself. The nature of the project is, therefore, not linear (from the studio to the gallery, from start to finish, from production to display), but in some sense circular and ever-evolving, within the Ruhr iteration itself, and beyond that iteration across the distribution of similar sessions that have now taken place. Despite the pandemic, it continues today, with training sessions appearing in various countries since the Ruhr occasion, evidencing its own predicted resilience.

Summary

By way of circling the circulatory, I have sought to contextualise the term in performative accounts of the curatorial, and foreground aspects of the concept with reference to select examples of recent works where the circulatory dimensions of the practice appear central.

And where the circulatory is strongest in these practices and projects, and others like them, it is as a result of a specific, dehierarchised alignment at the heart of the circulatory, where content, form and modes of circulation/distribution are equal components of the enterprise; coexisting, co-inspiring and overlapping nonsequential vectors of a creative dynamic.

As seen with the examples offered from ruangrupa, Cooking Sections, Staal and Malzacher, site-responsiveness is also embedded at the heart of the circulatory. The circulatory departs from the site/context, develops from it, responds to it, challenges it, returns to it, and changes it.

Mutual, beneficial correspondence between the *what* and the *how* is likewise central to the circulatory: the mode of address is tantamount to insight into the topic being addressed, and each informs the other.

Perhaps in a moment like this, when ruangrupa curates documenta 15, Cooking Sections are shortlisted for the Turner Prize, and Staal's work is ever more effective in cross-circulation of art, politics and democratic possibilities, the soil is fertile for these practices and for the circulatory dynamic that gives them force and societal impact.

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