

## **MARI LINNMAN ET ANNE-LAURE ZINI** *FOCUS ON THE SOURCE PROGRAMME*

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*SÉJOUR DE RECHERCHE ET DE CRÉATION EN ENTREPRISE / RESEARCH AND CREATION CORPORATE/COMPANY RESIDENCY*

This essay introduces a viewpoint about the way the SouRCEs are developing, with a more specific focus on the way artists actually work during a corporate/company residency. The praxes and working methods of thirteen artists, and as many companies, are dealt with here.

We have broached the subject with four themes, developed on the basis of interviews with artists and on our own experience:

- 1) Practical development of the SouRCEs
- 2) Company/corporate factors of interest to the artist
- 3) Work methods
- 4) Encounters made during the SouRCEs.

## 1) PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOURCES

### 1A) INITIAL CONTACTS

In early 2007, some 150 companies were listed in the Rennes region, either recommended by a contact or pinpointed for a specific area of activity which was of interest to one of the artists approached.

Each and every artist was shown this list and asked to make a choice, compatible with their approach and intended project. The company chosen was then contacted by the Art To Be team. Forty companies were accordingly singled out, and thirteen of them agreed to have an artist in residence.

### 1B) COMPANIES TAKING PART

The activities of the companies taking part involve very varied areas: food-processing, agricultural machinery, Research & Development in the new information and communication technologies [NICTs] (a public institute, an industrial group), temporary work, thermoforming, customer relations, communications, public transport, property promotion, public archival services. Their payrolls range from 3 to 5,000 employees.

The principle of company/corporate participation is based on a sponsorship donation of 15,000 €, which helps to cover the production costs of the work produced by the artist in residence, as well as fees and travel expenses. It is hard to give a precise assessment of company/corporate participation because it often goes hand-in-hand with making equipment and skills available to the artist. Two smaller companies, whose modest turnover means that they cannot offer sponsorship, contributed just skills along with material and technical wherewithal. In both instances, the SouRCEs were duly negotiated, based on the company's specific activities.

### 1C) REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING

The proposal to take part in the Rennes Biennale by way of the SouRCE programme was sent to the companies' management offices, and negotiations about forms of participation were also held with management. It was clearly suggested that, if there were to be a dialogue with the artist, management must give free rein to the artist's method and approach, and not adopt any kind of sponsor-like or commissioning stance. As far as the artists were concerned, they would have a chance to talk to, exchange and work with both employees

and management staff. One or two companies delegated residency monitoring to a specific employee, when this latter proved to be a driving force for the project: knowledgeable about the way the company works, and capable of understanding the artist's *modus operandi*. This person managed to help arrange meetings and encourage the development of the project in its early stages, and sometimes in the later stages of its production.

We collected various reasons mentioned by the companies, motivating their participation in the programme:

- Raising employees' awareness about an openmindedness to things outside the company, and to forms of expression new to them,
- Producing a situation of surprise and offbeatness in relation to the in-house routine,
- Bolstering the company's social life,
- Giving a more interesting image of the work carried out in the company with the wish to involve a larger number of qualified candidates during recruitment drives,
- Trying out a new product or a new area of application,
- Informing a new clientele,
- Creating new impetus through the collaboration of people from different sectors,
- Pinpointing avenues for reorganizing work areas.

### 1D) LENGTH OF SOURCES

Based on the initial guideline, the residency spanned a five-week period, staggered from November 2007 to April 2008. This guideline developed in very different ways from one situation to another. Several parameters underpinned the length and periodic nature of the residencies: the moment when the agreement with the company was made, availability of the artist and people in the company, and the artist's work method.

Certain companies approached left their answer in abeyance for several months, involving a delay in the overall advancement of the programme. Five artists were unable to begin their residencies at the desired time (November 2007). Lastly, two other artists (Alain Bublex and Laurent Duthion) were simply unable to take up their residency within the periods set down. We noted that the companies wishing to participate were quick to reply, while the more hesitant companies all ended up by declining to take part.

For two artists, the SouRCE guideline carried on during the exhibition. The technology involved in Samuel Bianchini's work was configured and optimized during the exhibition period by Orange Labs. The conception of an advertising campaign around Nicolas Floc'h's *Tour pélagique [Pelagic Tower]* would commence at the actual opening of the Biennale.

## 2) COMPANY/CORPORATE FACTORS OF INTEREST TO THE ARTIST

We identified four factors of company/corporate life which motivated the artists' choices, often in an inter-connected way.

### 2A) THE COMPANY'S GOAL

"My work has to do with territory, the constructed context, and at the outset I tried to be in contact with a company which was concerned about these particular issues [...] I wanted to direct myself towards matters which were to do with things constructed, architecture, and development on the scale of the dwelling."

**Kristina Solomoukha** (excerpt from the three-way conversation with Raphaele Jeune and Jean-Marc Trihan—Lamotte Immobilier Company, recorded on 21 April 2008.)

**The artist has a direct interest in the company's activities.**

**Samuel Bianchini:** Research & Development in the new information and communication technologies (NICTs)

**Collectif 1.0.3:** uses of computer technology (interfaces, virtual reality)

**Courants faibles:** temporary work

**Nicolas Floc'h:** advertising

**Mathieu Mercier:** thermoforming

**Kristina Solomoukha:** property promotion

### 2B) COMPANY PEOPLE: EMPLOYEES, MANAGERIAL STAFF

"The fact of getting them to posit and asking them to have a programme somewhere between choreography and the traditional burlesque of French cinema is a way of separating the corpus of the work place: a sort of cinematography brought together in the image. If I were to take photos of employees

working, there would be a communion between the individual and his/her work place. Here, he/she becomes an actor, leading role of the picture, hero or heroine, and the objects take up their place around the employee."

**Alain Bernardini** (excerpt from the three-way conversation with Jean-Pierre Burdin and Gilbert Jouan—Sulky-Burel Company, recorded on 4 May 2008)

**The artist focuses his attention on the people in the company and their relation to its activity.**

**Alain Bernardini** suggests that workers pose for a photograph or behave in front of the camera with an attitude that contrasts sharply with their working environment.

**Nadia Lichtig** questions employees about their daily work routines, their dreams and the songs they hum while they work.

**Marie Reinert** casts her eye on the body language of different trades and professions involved within the Departmental Archives.

**Claudia Triozzi's** work focuses on the acoustic and performance-related effects of the man/machine interaction, as well as on the complex boss/employee/artist relationship.

**Work on Stage** formulates hypotheses based on the observation of the social and spatial organization of a Customer Relations Centre set.

### 2C) THE COMPANY'S PRODUCTION METHODS

"Philippe Goin showed me what he produced. The most interesting thing is seeing what remains of the products: the failed ones, so that you see the limitations of thermoforming. [...] It involves a plaque that is heated but which can't be in any way complicated. The whole job consists of making the mould properly and wondering how the plastic can stick. [...] There's a mathematical formula that involves calculating the loss of matter in relation to the height. [...] Out of all my various projects, he told me what I could do, and we finally came up with my production for the show."

**Mathieu Mercier** (excerpt from the three-way conversation with Laurent Jeanpierre and Mari Linnman, recorded on 4 April 2008)

**The artist is interested in the company's production methods.**

**Damien Beguet**, using the idea of an afternoon snack, embraces all the stages of the industrial manufacture of a food product, from design to distribution.

**Kristina Solomoukha** focuses her attention on the issue of the development of a territory and the role of a property promotion company in the way that territory is altered.

**Samuel Bianchini**, **Collectif 1.0.3** and **Mathieu Mercier** all become aware of the technological and technical possibilities of their applications.

## 2D) COMPANY AESTHETICS

“So I prospected a certain number of companies in the region, and I discarded all the brands putting across any Breton tradition. I intentionally focused on companies which had a slightly more universal communication. And S.A.S. Christian Faure turned out to be one of the most interesting companies in this field, because it was developing nice and quite creative graphics, where I thought my project might fit in.”

**Damien Beguet** (from a conversation with Melaine Ferragu on 26 February 2008)

**The artist is interested in atmospheres, as well as things formal, visual and acoustic.**

**Boris Achour** makes video films in the empty premises of the Diana Ingredients company.

**Damien Beguet** copies the graphic line of the “Whaou!” brand.

**Nadia Lichtig** collects ambient sounds in the public transport system managed by Keolis réseau Star.

**Work on Stage** observes the spatial and acoustic aesthetics of the working sets of the Canal+ Group’s Customer Relations Centre.

## 3) WORK METHODS

We pinpointed two often complementary types of approach.

### 3A) GATHERING MATERIALS – TAKING SAMPLES

“I collected statements and reports from company employees. From those interviews, I then excerpted bits and pieces, enabling me to create a fiction [...] This is a textual task, followed by an acoustic one. [...] I’m interested, in a documentary way, in an environment, and I take things from it in order to come up with a subjective vision.”

**Nadia Lichtig** (excerpt from a dialogue with Jean-Pierre Burdin, recorded on 24 April 2008)

**The artists record data with image, video and sound, and conduct interviews with employees. They use these materials either directly or indirectly to produce their work.**

**Nadia Lichtig** collects ambient sounds, and interviews employees. Snippets from these gleanings are transcribed and turned by the artist into a poetic text and a sound work.

The **Work on Stage** collective conducts recorded interviews with employees, based on a set of questions. WoS locates and pinpoints situations, movements and flows, and gestures, and makes video and photographic images of empty premises, also taking sound samplings during working hours. Based on all this, it produces new Hypotheses which give rise to brief audiovisual Sequences, possible interpretations of these Hypotheses.

“I ask people to put on a performance. [...] It’s a fiction, a continuously filmed performance. I get them to reproduce ordinary but decontextualized gestures: they perform aimlessly, outside their work space. In addition, I get them to wear strange clothing, a smock, which expresses a certain neutrality and a timelessness, which matches the place.”

**Marie Reinert** (from an interview with Claire Daudin and Morgane Lagache, 9 April 2008).

**It also happens that the samplings act as preparatory elements for the work’s production.**

On an initial visit to the Diana Ingredients company, **Boris Achour** did some location scouting in preparation for making a film. Based on the idea of a company film, he organized various shoots in the empty premises, and combined them

with other sequences, to fit them into the sculptural arrangement.

**Alain Bernardini** takes photographs and filmed sequences. Artist and workers talk about the poses that strain tensions within the factory's environment.

**Marie Reinert** conducts recorded interviews with thirty or so people working in the Departmental Archives. She shows them her work and questions them about their activities. At the same time, she takes photos in the building. These elements help her to prepare the shooting of the film *Faire [Do]*.

**Claudia Triozzi** is filmed as she monitors small goings-on in the company. The operators keep an eye on the way the machines are working, by ear, their hearing being accustomed to detecting the slightest malfunction. She suggests that the workers create a new production of sounds with the machines diverted from their normal function. The operator becomes a performer, just like the artist, and both form a team.

**Kristina Solomoukha** conducts interviews with employees and discovers that property promotion is based on dreams: the purchase of a home often represents a lifetime of work and the culmination of a dream. Her work focuses on the tale of "the Three Little Pigs", a children's story which she sees from the angle of construction and turns into a narrative about architecture.

### 3B) CALLING ON COMPANY SKILLS

"We suggested seeing how the company functions and working with all the company parameters and tools, [...] they happened to be open to this and went along with it. It was a common territory [...] We'd given them criteria the way anyone would do who's recruiting employees, and they drew up a somewhat unusual questionnaire with questions like: Describe your trip to the moon."

**courants faibles** (from an interview with Anne-Laure Zini, 12 February 2008).

**Like a customer, the artist asks a company's services to make a work.**

**Courants faibles** asks the Gerinter Intérim company to recruit seven temps to take part in a writing workshop, the aim of which

is to produce notices for certain works in the *Valeurs croisées* show, to be included in the exhibition guide.

The Le Goues & Associés communications company carries out an advertising campaign around **Nicolas Floc'h's** *Tour pélagique [Pelagic Tower]* project.

"This is the first time I'm making a machine as such. [...] Here, the experiment seemed suitable because the wherewithal was there. We worked together on something. The waste and scrap made me want to make a machine that looks like a UFO. I'm not in the habit of inventing a three-dimensional object—a sculpture. It was made possible thanks to the company. I was able to join in on the production line and understand certain techniques. There's a success between what I wanted to do and my collaboration with the employees."

**Alain Bernardini** (excerpt from a three-way conversation with Jean-Pierre Burdin and Gilbert Jouan—Sulky-Burel company, recorded on 4 April 2008)

**The company makes certain skills available to the artist.**

**Alain Bernardini** works with the computer-assisted design [CAD] department at Sulky-Burel to design and make the sculpture titled *The Sulky/Bernardini Machine*.

**Damien Beguet** relies on teams from several departments in the S.A.S. Christian Faure company for the design and manufacture of the OUI ART pancake.

**Samuel Bianchini** creates an interactive installation using technological bricks developed by Orange Labs in conjunction with company engineers and ergonomists as well as engineers from the CiTu (Federation of Paris 1 and Paris 8 University laboratories).

**Collectif 1.0.3** uses the "pseudo-haptic" technology patented by the INRIA to team up with researchers from this laboratory and make a tactile reading unit consisting of a screen on which it is possible to consult the virtualized reproduction of a book by way of a wiimote joystick. The Bunraku team at the INRIA has adapted this technology as well as the properties of the Nintendo Wiimote joystick to the requirements of the work.

**Kristina Solomoukha** employs materials used by Lamotte Immobilier for her constructions and interprets a standard house plan constructed by the company.

With the suggestions of Philippe Goin of Thermoformes, **Mathieu Mercier** decides to work on a series of plastic objects with the shape of a window. Together, they design the plan and make the mould.

#### 4) MEETINGS CONDUCTED DURING THE SOURCES

Apart from the initial introductions which were often a little formal<sup>1</sup>, during their residencies the artists were in contact with a variable number of employees with whom they had different connections. To illustrate this observation, we have taken four artists as examples: Damien Beguet, Alain Bernardini, Marie Reinert and Kristina Solomoukha.

**Damien Beguet** had regular exchanges with eight members of the company's managerial staff, who advised him on the different stages of his project. For the manufacture of the pancakes, some fifteen people, warehousepersons and managers included, took part.

According to **Alain Bernardini**, 80 people worked on his project: there was a discussion about the installation method with two-thirds of them and one-third of those involved went so far as to come up with proposals. What is more, four people took part in the design and making of his sculpture: an engineer, two fitters and a painter. The company also made staff available to install the sculpture in the exhibition.

**Marie Reinert** had personal exchanges with thirty people. She became acquainted with their work, and showed them hers. To this end, she passed on to them various data about art history and contemporary art in general, so that they might better understand the challenges of her work. Twenty-two people took part in her film. She was helped by eight people, three photographers from the archives, and five other employees. Fourteen people took part in the work to do with the gestures made as actors and dancers in the film.

**Kristina Solomoukha** had exchanges with about ten people, whose work routines she discovered. Among them, four contributed technical knowledge to help produce her work. One person from the company was made available to assist her in the production phase. The company offered various wherewithal: materials and services (production, transport, and wind-resistance studies), as well as contacts for sub-contracting.

Through these four examples, we identified three levels in the meetings that we have tried to define. These are: exchange, participation and collaboration.

Exchange involves the idea of something reciprocal and means that one element is given while another is received in return. In the case of the SouRCEs, artist and employee show each other their work. After becoming aware of the context, the artist acts as a go-between for his/her own work and contributes a greater awareness about contemporary art.

Participation involves the employee helping the artist, and taking part in his/her work. Participation can likewise take the form of making equipment and/or staff available.

As for collaboration, this involves working out a project together. We understand collaboration not in its accepted legal sense<sup>2</sup>, but as an active intellectual involvement on the part of the employee alongside the artist in the production of his/her work, with the artist invariably remaining the work's author.

1. Presentations of the Biennale and the artist to the employees by the Art To Be team, and small posters introducing the artist and announcing the venue...

2. At legal level, collaboration implies a contribution by several people to a work, which is the shared property of these persons considered as co-authors.