

On & For Production

Trying out a practical context for the production of artists' films.

Pilot Edition - 25th and 26th of April 2014



STATEMENT

In April 2014, the pilot edition of *On & For Production* took place at the headquarters of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) in Brussels. The initiative, launched by Auguste Orts – in collaboration with LUX, Contour and Art Brussels¹ – intended to facilitate the production of artists' moving image by bringing together artists, producers, curators, institutions and collectors.

The two-day event included:

- **four work sessions:** one for each selected film project in development
- **a public workshop:** to disclose the experience of the work sessions and discuss art films production.
- **a roundtable** at Art Brussels titled *Acquiring film and video: How/What do we own?*

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On & For Production is an initiative geared by the belief that the development, production and distribution of artists' films are **collaborative, performative and hybrid**.

"Collaborative" because artist films bring together different partners; "performative" because the production strategies that are put into place are not based on a pattern but rather permanently redefined according to the specific needs of each project; and "hybrid" because the films exist across the regimes of art and cinema. In fact, "hybridity" is not as much to be found in the features of the film itself as in its development, production and dissemination processes for they take place across different economies, publics, critical apparatuses and value systems.

On & For Production builds on Auguste Orts' regular involvement in discussions addressing the specificities of hybrid and self-managed film production, as well as on our participation in international film markets and pitching forums that are sensitive to artistic productions, such as [Art:Film](#) (at Rotterdam IFF, NL), [FID Lab](#) (at FID Marseille, FR) or [CPH:Forum](#) (at CPH:DOX, DK).

Learning from those experiences, *On & For Production* materialises our concern for finding a suitable context wherein artists could present projects in development in order to get conceptual and strategic feedback and to find co-producers. *On & For Production* functions on the principle that the concept of "producer" can be extended to residency spaces, art institutions, cinema producers and funds, curators and private collectors that are actively supporting the development of a film project.

The idea was to **transplant** the *modus operandi* of the cinema industry into an art context. In this "transplantation" some of the premises of the cinema situation had to be adapted in view of the specificities of the art system and those of artistic methodologies. Artists' films have proven to be suitable for cinema contexts and publics but have different needs when it comes to the way in which they are developed and financed. *On & For Production* does not position itself as an alternative to film markets as they occur in the cinema industry but rather as a complementary scenario.

In parallel, we see *On & For Production* as an occasion for organisations and artists who have a consolidated expertise in artistic film production, to **share, discuss and disseminate** different modes of operating. Thereby we would like to contribute to further define and consolidate a field of production practice distinct from other forms of moving image production.

¹ And with the support of VAF, BAM, Argos and Media Desk Vlaanderen.

With the support of VAF, BAM and Argos, *On & For Production* started as a **pilot** undertaken as a process of “learning in doing”. Its critical assessment was included as part of the event and will become very valuable to decide on future developments of the initiative.

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The core of *On & For production* were a series of work sessions. Each work-session lasted almost two hours and was dedicated to a film project in development. The project was presented by the artists and the producer and discussed with a reduced group of professionals that had been especially invited to attend that specific session on the basis of their potential complicity and engagement with the project. Many of these invitations were made jointly with Art Brussels through their VIP and Curators Programmes. There were four work sessions:

Project: *Crippled Symmetries* by Beatrice Gibson

Participants: Beatrice Gibson (artist), Benjamin Cook (LUX, London), Mike Sperlinger (producer), Mihnea Mircan (Extra City, Antwerp), Krist Gruijthuijsen (Grazer Kunstverein), Jean-Conrad & Isabelle Lemaître (private collectors), Kate Gray (Collective, Edinburgh), Dirk De Wit (BAM, Ghent) + Anna Manubens (Auguste Orts, observer). Note: Will Bradley (Kunsthall Oslo) was unable to attend.

Project: *Skin/Blush* by An van. Dienderen

Participants: An van. Dienderen (artist), Steven Op de Beeck (Contour, Mechelen), Nicola Setari (Contour, curator), Frank Maes (Emergent, Veurne), Rolf Quaghebeur (Argos, Brussels), Helena Kritis (Beursschouwburg, Brussels), Noor Mertens (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam), Frédéric De Goldschmidt (private collector) + Natalie Gielen (Contour, observer). Note: Cis Bierincks (Belluard Festival Bollwerk, CH) was unable to attend.

Project: *Fierté Nationale* by Sven Augustijnen

Participants: Sven Augustijnen (artist), Marie Logie (Auguste Orts), Jan Mot (gallerist), Bernard Blistène (Centre Pompidou, Paris), Isabel Carlos (Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon), Philippe Van Cauteren (SMAK, Ghent), Andrea Lissoni (Tate Modern, London), Emilie Bujes (independent curator) + Ann Goossens (Auguste Orts, observer)

Project: *Labour Power Plant* by Romana Schmalisch & Robert Schlischt

Participants: Romana Schmalisch (artist), Robert Schlischt (artist), Mathilde Villeneuve (Les Laboratoires d’Aubervilliers), Olivier Marboeuf (Spectre/Khiasma, Paris), Zoe Gray (independent curator), Pascale Cassagnau (CNAP, Paris), Christophe Slagmuylder (KFDA, Brussels), Valerie Verhack (M Museum, Leuven), Sophie Goltz (NBK Berlin), Francesco Manacorda (Tate Liverpool), Sander Vanhellemont (VAF, Brussels) + Maria Palacios Cruz (observer)

The work session format stems from the combination of the *pitch* and the *one-on-one meetings* situations, as they exist in international cinema markets. The former is a public (and often staged) presentation of a project in front of an audience of producers. The latter consists of a series of timed one-on-one meetings (30 min) between the filmmaker and various potential producers.

The work sessions departed from the staged situation of the pitch, avoided the repetition that the one-on-one meetings require, and allow potential co-producers to meet each other.

In addition the professionals (potential producers, commissioners...) that are invited for each work session are identified in close collaboration with the artist and producer. They are carefully selected based on previous collaborations and/or shared discursive issues. Thereby the invited participants know about the project in advance (concept, calendar and budget); they are aware of the artists’ expectations and have considered forms of engaging with him/her beforehand. This previous work, together with the duration of the work session allow for a rich and detailed conversation on the concept and practicalities of the projects.

From the side of the artists, the work sessions bring together in a privileged situation, professionals that they would have otherwise had to contact and meet separately over a longer period of time.

The pilot edition of *On & For Production* coincided with an international art event, Art Brussels Fair – as an alternative to the usual cinema festival. This choice testifies to the intention of addressing curators, institution directors and collectors (which are rarely seen in cinema contexts) while also inviting cinema professionals.

The fact that the invitees were informed beforehand about the project, and were interested in the subject, as well as their diverse backgrounds and interests fostered a climate for an intense discussion all around the table. - **Romana Schmalisch**

It was the opportunity to meet a large number of actors with whom we are likely to work in a more or less near future, forging relationships around specific project, but that can also be conducive to future collaborations on other projects. It is often too rare to have the opportunity to gather around the same table of plural voices, different actors from the field of art and cinema. They all have complementary ways to disseminate the project. - **Mathilde Villeneuve**

I have participated for many years and continue to participate in many pitches in Europe and elsewhere. There exists today a rather established form of this globalized system, inherited from the Anglo-Saxon business culture. It seems necessary to me to adapt these methods a bit if you position yourself more on the side of creative projects than commercial. - **Olivier Marboeuf**

It as an incredible thing to have 6 specifically invited participants spent two hours of their time listening and feeding back to me. It was a privilege. This kind of a situation is not only rare but simply hard to achieve, in terms of time and commitment.

The shared community ethos or common understanding enabled by the structure of closely chosen lists of invitees, allowed for genuine productive exchange from the outset as opposed to the head on collisions of different worlds (art and film) that normally occur in pitching contexts. – **Beatrice Gibson**

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In order to select the four participating projects, Auguste Orts invited three other producers that would in turn choose an artist that they were already working with. This was a way to map different modes of undertaking production. [LUX](#), [Contour Biennial](#), [Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers](#), [Spectre Productions](#) and [Auguste Orts](#) are different but complementary organisations that stand for different ways of supporting film across art and cinema.

This diversity was interesting in order diversify and expand the understanding of production and to strengthen a sense of professional and distinct field of film production that is crucial to both, its agents but also to the public institutions that are likely to support their activity.

Their participation in the public workshop, along with the artists, enabled a deep, focused and hands-on discussion with fellow professionals and students.

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The day after the Work sessions, the Public Workshop was carried out as a moment of public debrief in which the experience of *On & For Production* was presented to the public in order to collectively build a critical awareness. The attendants included professionals and students and saw in *On & For Production* an initiative that responds to a sector need and that should be taken forward in order to consolidate a field and to make it understandable and available to institutions and professionals from both cinema and art.

The workshop was chaired by **María Palacios Cruz** and included the participation of the four artists (**Sven Augustijnen** (BE), **Beatrice Gibson** (GB), **Robert Schlicht / Romana Schmalisch** (DE) and **An Van. Dienderen** (BE)) and their producers (**Marie Logie**, director at Auguste Orts; **Ben Cook** director at LUX; **Mike Sperlinger** curator, writer and producer; **Mathilde Villeneuve**, co-director at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers; **Olivier Marboeuf** director at Khiasma and Spectre Productions; **Steven Op de Beeck** director at Contour Biennial).

As part of the critical assessment, a detailed report on the concept, development and outcome from *On & For Production* was commissioned to María Palacios Cruz and is available online.