

## 'Lives and works well everywhere'

Nicolas Thély

University of Paris, France

### 'Low resolution' context

In a context of digitalised data, with the streaming of an intense and excessive amount of images and sounds - which sensitivity is at work? This - still new sensitivity - appearing in the younger generation in a world where data is shared, apparently free, downloadable and copyable, possibly lacks an awareness that this world is in fact accessible by paying an entrance and exit right.

One generally uses the expression 'low resolution' to describe the quality of images coming from the technique of data compression which suppresses some data in order to lighten the file size and thereby ease its circulation on the network or its storage on CD, DVD, or ipod. JPEG, MPEG and MP3 are algorithmic acronyms, not crude words for digital device users. To attempt to redefine, in more aesthetic words, this particular sensitivity (soft sensitivity) belonging to the web network, one cannot strictly speaking use the technical definition 'low resolution'. This expression means data circulation (texts, images, sounds), in terms of its production, distribution, reception and 'low definition', defines a single way of perceiving the world. This provokes a question of perception of making data enabled by using more or less sophisticated materials, more or less home-made audiovisual and data processing goods.

In this low definition context, what is the place of art? What is the artists' function? What kind of forms should they produce? Artists in operating in this context include; Serge Comte, Clôde Couplier, Camille Laurelli, Fanette Muxart, Laura Kuusk, Fabrice Croux, Stéphane Sauzedde, Raphaël Charpentier, Guillaume Brissaud, Valentin Lechat, Jérémy Cortial, Séverine Gorlier. They exhibit in art centres and galleries, but they also perform during concerts and in public spaces. They are producing 'weak forms' on precarious 'supports'. They might produce a lot, or indeed, nothing at all. They have a taste for the 'almost nothing' and give this great

consideration and time. These artists tend to use the standardized web formats like blogs and My Space pages. Their sites are likely to be amateurs' publications. They also tend to multiply or grow their identity, which is also masked and slightly hidden behind groups such as Grruü, Renegade, The Kung Fu CowBoys, Super Polar, Antro, DJ Casquette, Trop tard, Capitaine sentiment. These artists play on stage and shoot video clips. The band Grruü, includes Chad, Elliott Marceau and Cyndelle Brasseur. Another group includes Fanette Muxart, Clôde Coulpier and Fabrice Croux. The group Capitaine sentiment consists of Fabrice Croux: each group has a different mood - sadness, happiness ....

All these groups are gathered under the label Dick Head Man Records (DHMR). Dick is real: his look or image draws from an Icelandic carton of milk. Dick Head Man Records is a label initiated by Clôde Coulpier. On the label website, you can find all the bands with video clips and photo albums of their performances. Their live concerts are held in private, but also as exhibitions that include by-products of art pieces including fan drawings, flyers and customized radio sets. Clôde Coulpier says that the label is a false yet real; it does exist as an entity - it is real, but also it is false because it doesn't enter into any commercial projects,

During the summer 2005, Clôde Coulpier occupied his parent's house in the Nièvre, near Nevers (at Clamecy). The guest room became an art residency space, entitled Résidence Minimum Exemplaire (RME). Ten other similar spaces are available; Ici art résidence, The Prizon, The Cool résidence, Ghost résidence, Popo Institute, La perruque, Résidence 49, Biosphère, Résidence normale, Résidence silence, Résidence Oxygène. These residencies are no more and no less than the houses and flats of artists' relatives. In these domestic spaces, artists live and work alone, with friends, or with several members of the family. The production is shown through an exhibition as photos on their blogs.

### **How to get out of the professional artistic time?**

Characteristics of this type of work include the permanency of domestic habits, the importance of the Internet, having several identities, using work/occupation and the use of standard materials and 'weak forms'. This could be summed up as one formula: 'lives and works well everywhere'. One could re-qualify this sentence in more aesthetic terms as 'receptiveness and *desoeuvrement*'.

Naming these practices as 'fictional', one has to understand that these artists' residencies have no real legal frame, nor associative status and are alien to art institutions. These residencies, investing in home places, do not necessarily have a result, rather artists' are free to reveal or not reveal their creations using the Internet or in other exhibition places. Clôde Couplier says:

'... we realized that we can produce an energy in the work, without having to answer for it. That watching TV is still working. We realized that our production is abounding, an unexpected energy, entirely detached from any context or evaluation process. We self recognized ourselves.'

At the end of a first working session in Clamecy residency, they sent their production to friends, relatives, and also to the Tate. All their works mentioned that they had been realized within the framework of Résidence Minimum Exemple.

'Internet is a medium which enables us to make effective what is fictional', explains Clôde Couplier. Internet is a key element in their artistic commitment. By investing standardized formats, social networks (My Space, Hi5, YouTube) as well as art centres and the musical scene, these young artists proclaim the power to create their own conditions for their appearances. They refuse unspoken orders. Unlike amateurs, they don't even try to emulate artists: they act as if they were musicians, and play art being artists. They don't seek fame and don't want their practices perceived as art. They rid themselves of the usual bondages of the art world, of the obligation to produce results. These kinds of practices have two main consequences:

1. Relying on self-publication on the web, they validate themselves, they become self-sufficient in relation to the classic and symbolic operations of the contemporary art world.
2. Because they are not attached to the issue of conserving their practices they can be considered part of a 'culture of low definition'. Furthermore their art might have several lives. Clôde Couplier says: 'What happens in that kind of places, is actually the setting up of some conception of work; one doesn't do a lot, yet one does it fine.' These 'low definition practices' don't care much about their institutional visibility nor their position in the art world ecosystem - this is not their business. They participate in undefined projects which they will not capitalize. Thus it seems they implicitly express criticism of the normative system and its vacuity.

## As a conclusion

These artists are not in opposition to institutions, nor do they aim to build a new system. They don't seek to model rules drawn from their works. Their own identifiable logic is to *create their own conditions for their appearances*. Why is this so? These 'low resolution' practices don't think that an artist has to become a content producer (for art galleries, art market, etc ...). Rather, they have a different motivation - that of their own sense of their wellbeing - this is the gravity centre of their works. Many pieces evoke the issue of mood, of effort and of happiness itself. These artists' ask themselves this question: 'where and how might their art dwell?' They don't look to negotiate nor to compromise. They *do* look for free situations, free time, free space: and this is why they can be considered 'available'. In philosophy, one could speak of *desoeuvrement* - that which is neither boredom, nor inactivity and this can be a power to create or not to create. These artists can be considered creative - even if they are not doing much or indeed have decided to do nothing at all.