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sym

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noun, plural symposiums, symposia [sim-**poh**-zee-uh]

1. a meeting or conference for the discussion of some subject, especially a meeting at which several speakers talk on or discuss a topic before an audience.
2. a collection of opinions expressed or articles contributed by several persons on a given subject or topic.
3. an account of a discussion meeting or of the conversation at it.
4. (in ancient Greece and Rome) a convivial meeting, usually following a dinner, for drinking and intellectual conversation.
5. (*initial capital letter, italics*) a philosophical dialogue (4th century b.c.) by Plato, dealing with ideal love and the vision of absolute beauty.

What is a symposium?
What can a symposium do?

In which collective mental territory is the event situated?
Do you perform an identity?
Do you mark a term or a territory?
What and who do you display or mark as part of the event?
Who is invited?
How do you navigate exclusions?

Who is an expert?
What is an expert?
What kind of knowledge?
What is the difference between experience and knowledge?
When do you label something as collective?
Who is taking part in whose project?
Who initiates?
Who has (what) power?
Who benefits?
Who can leave the situation and who cannot?
Is self-organisation the answer?
Can your event fail? (And, if it cannot, is that a problem?)
How do you deal with inputs from people who are not paid or listed as speakers? What's in it for them? What's in it for you?

Does the way you speak reveal your position?
What is the difference between an interview, a dialogue, a conversation?
What is the role of listening? What is the role of speaking?
When is a good time to insert a song into a set of problematics?

Which senses do you play with?
Is there something to look at?

What is the desire behind calling this event into being?
Whose desire?
Are you the organiser?
Are you invited?
What is its institutional context?

What is inside?
What is outside?
What is front?
What is back?
Are the babysitters part of the symposium?
Are passers-by invited?
Does the symposium continue at the bar or the restaurant?
When does it begin?
When does it end?
Who is your audience?

How do you invite?
How do you present your project and your intentions?
What if your project touches on someone else's life?
What is at stake, for you, for them?
What do you give back?
How are you invested?
What kind of collectivity are you creating?
Who does the cooking?
Who does the dishes?
How do we learn to take care of each other?

Is there a place to rest your eyes?
What if there is only sound?
Do you want to direct or disperse people's attention?
What is the function of text – image or content?
How do you animate a situation?
How do you activate your listeners? And for what purpose?

Does the event's institutional context resonate with its formal or political desires?

Who is inside?
Who is outside?
How do you account for people's different rhythms?
How do you allow for different speeds and degrees of engagement?
Can being overwhelmed be joyful?
What is the value of boredom?
What is too much?
What is too little?
What joy is there in having or losing orientation?
Do you aim to entertain?

Is your event (part of) an art project?
How is your event an art project?
Why does it matter?
How does the form of the event code or delimit the content?
Do you conform with the conventions of conversation?
Can you play with established formats?
How do you enable different levels of exchange and different constellations?
How do you build a shared vocabulary?

Can we follow a hunch?
Can a symposium proceed by gravitating towards something?
Is there space for the poetic?
Is there space for the unexpected?

Does the institutional context conflict with its desires?
What are the material conditions?
Who is paid and what for?
Who is not paid and why?
What are the responsibilities of the institution?

What is the morality of knowledge?
What kind of knowledge?
In what field will the project produce value?
What is the knowledge used for?
What is a classical presentation good for?
What calls for subversion?
What are the rules?
Which rules are explicit? Which rules are implicit?

How do you address an audience that is not physically present?
How do you materialise what is not present?
How do you allow for things to happen around the edges?
Do you communicate through objects?
Do you communicate through your settings?
How do you deal with space?
How do you set up the room?
What kinds of speaking and sharing are invited by your setting?
What other settings invite what other kinds of interactions (the park, the bar, a day-trip)?
Can one setting (ever) work for everyone?

The working week "Questioning Symposium - Echoes of Practices" took place at tranzit Cluj, Romania, in April with Freja Bäckman, Ingrid Cogne, Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh, Gerardo Montes de Oca, Elske Rosenfeld, Attila Tordai-S. It is part of the project Six Formats, which analyses various formats commonly used in relation to art as a form of knowledge production. It creates situations of dialogue in, on, and between each of the formats in a particular constellation of a partner institution and a group of participants invited as co-researchers. It is hosted by the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, and funded by the FWF-Peek program.

This poster/flyer is a form of processing the experience of the working week, undertaken by Freja Bäckman and Elske Rosenfeld.

What is the historical time you are in?
Does your symposium respond to an urgency or a crisis?
Does it serve a political agenda?
Are you aware of your agenda?
Are others aware of your agenda?

Which rules are predetermined and which are decided together?
Are the rules adjusted to the game or vice versa?
What is the right length for an input?
What is the relation between inputs and exchange and discussion?
How much time do you spend at the symposium?
How much time do you spend on preparation?
How long did you travel to get here?

How do you position yourself physically?
How are individual inputs collectively processed?
What is your attitude when speaking?
What tone of voice do you use?
How do you introduce yourself?
How do you introduce a speaker?

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