

Adelheid Mers, April 2018

On March 2nd, 2018, the Joyce Foundation hosted *The Artist as Problem Solver*, as a conversation among artists and their supporters, whose work includes or revolves around community activations, often conducted long-term, and at considerable scale. The convening took place in Indianapolis and was organized by Tracie Hall. Throughout, I heard two, intertwined narratives. One revolved around what Tony Bennett calls *the exhibitionary complex*ⁱ, a historically evolved constellation of knowledge and power, the other worked out a *cultural ecology*. The first framework was specifically being addressed along three lines of argument, as:

- an economic system through which production and distribution of the arts are managed, **with restricted access and lack of equity**.
- a cultural system that is philosophically anchored in the assumption of an intrinsic value of art. **This grounding was strongly supported**.
- a system of expertise that manages access to both economy and culture, conveyed through the accredited education of artists, historians and administrators. **This frame for expertise was regarded skeptically**.

The alternate discourse deployed the model of a *cultural ecology*. The need to frame a new narrative initially arises from the fact that the *exhibitionary complex* does not equitably serve all. The *cultural ecology* model is evolving along the following markers:

- The concept of cultural ecology allows for the - mutual - consideration of all participants in a given environment. Because it understands all participants as interconnected, it is intrinsically inclusive.
- Specifically among those currently marginalized, participation and contribution grow from deep attention to social, economic and cultural needs and to existing capacities across an entire ecology.
- Criticality arises from contextualization. There is an ethical mandate to listen comprehensively. Expertise is acquired responsively, in context. Because of that expertise cuts across sectors and disciplines.

As the exhibitionary complex revolves around the development of technologies of visibility, the arising ecology model is rooted in implicit models of acoustic space and audibility, which is recognizable in the discourses that promote it.

A closer reading of the convening is represented in the Fractal 3-Line Matrix. Closely listening for thematic strands and uses of metaphor, three main topics presented themselves: A discussion of 'practice', references to 'being', and an exploration of 'uses of art'.

ⁱ "For the emergence of the art museum was closely related to that of a wider range of institutions - history and natural science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national and, later, international exhibitions, arcades and department stores - which served as linked sites for the development and circulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision. Furthermore, [...] these comprised an intersecting set of institutional and disciplinary relations which might be productively analysed as particular articulations of power and knowledge, [...]" Bennett, Tony; *The Exhibitionary Complex*, in: *new formations* NUMBER 4 SPRING 1 988 (http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/newformations/04_73.pdf) and "Reconsidering the Exhibitionary Complex", in Latimer, Quinn; *Documenta Reader*. Prestel 2017, and: Baudrillard, Jean; *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. St. Louis, Mo., Telos Press Ltd., 1981 (<http://www.mit.edu/~allanmc/baudrillard.theartauction%20.pdf>)

Fractal 3-Line Matrix:

INDIANAPOLIS - JOYCE

