

An artist in industry...

The first reference that springs to mind is Artist Placement Group (APG), which put a number of artists into British industries and government departments in the late 1960s and 1970s. APG, imagined and organised by artists John Latham and Barbara Stevini, aimed to initiate placements with open briefs rather than pre-determined roles or outcomes. 'By enabling artists to engage actively in non-art environments, the APG shifted the function of art towards 'decision-making'.'

This project is not, of course, the first such initiative, but has become legendary amongst the British art community in recent years through exhibitions, discussions, Tate's acquisition of the project archive, and the work of Flat Time House, Latham's studio home in Peckham, London, which since his death has operated as an art space, bringing his work to the attention of a younger group of artists. Many programmes, initiatives and projects (both artist-led and organised by the state) in the West alone have put artists to use in industries of different kinds.

Think of Russian Constructivism's engagement with industry, the important body of photography developed to document poverty in the USA during the Great Depression through the Information Division of the Farm Security Administration, part of the 1935 New Deal agreement, or of the Bauhaus' development of holistic programmes that fed twentieth century architecture, fashion and design in ways so numerous they are un-chartable. In my own region of Teesside, a place known for its heavy industry, a number of industries initiated their own artist residency programmes in the post-war years. This could become a text entangled in a discussion about the division of art and life that occurred somewhere in the mid nineteenth century, the ramifications of this and attempts from many sides to re-connect the floating berg of modern and contemporary art with the icy landmass of 'the rest'. But that might wait.

A more recent example of such intervention is New York City's Public Artists in Residence (PAIR), launched in 2015. PAIR 'embeds artists in city government to propose and implement creative solutions to pressing civic challenges.' Impressive. Artist Tania Bruguera is currently placed with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). Bruguera is the initiator of Arte Útil, which understands art as a tool for social change. PAIR offers her a moment of direct political intervention into the running of the city that builds on her 25 years of activism and intervention. It brings the learning from long-term projects such as Immigrant Movement International, a think tank / school /

community space / advocacy platform led and used by immigrants in Queens New York, to the centres of power and decision-making.

This work and the whole PAIR framework take a cue from the truly radical feminist artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Before our moment of neoliberal state-sanctioned artistic intervention in which those in power see the fashionable potential of creativity, Ukeles set up her own post as the first official artist-in-residence (unpaid) with the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY). She has been in position since 1977.

Unlike Bruguera or Mierle Laderman, Edwin is in residence with a business rather than a civic or political institution. However indie and innovative, Domino Records is a corporate space. So what role does an artist play within this context? How does an artist whose work is not overtly political and cannot be seen as activism, define a set of approaches, processes and actions that bring change? How can he make a space for practice that does not simply add value to the corporation he is partnering with?

One of his aims is to invite others to be part of the process. He wants to engage peers and friends to make work for existing platforms including music videos and album covers, and new spaces such as channels online. This distributed use of art is not new, (think Mail Art of the 1960s through to online commissioning of today) but it is interesting and this generosity is an important part of the post. As well as offering employment and opportunities for artists to apply skills to new processes, Edwin is in a position to influence and improve the criticality and quality of some of the products being put out by Domino. This is good for consumers, it's good for the signed musicians, it's good for the industry, but it is particularly good for Domino Records.

Another, perhaps unforeseen outcome is the shared learning that develops through a project like this. Burdis is employed as an artist. His role is, in part, to teach the organisation's staff what an artist does and can do. He, in turn, is learning how Domino works; how a place makes priorities and takes decisions, works coherently, spends money and communicates. He is experiencing, perhaps for the first time, a strange world of hierarchies, management and business growth. What useful things for an artist to understand.

Should more businesses and organisations be employing artists and practitioners? I am interested in this residency as a model. I am interested in the use of art in everyday scenarios and environments. I do not see it as a separate or rarefied space. I am not someone who believes in the mystical genius of artists. I have worked with enough artists, and people in general, to understand that creativity comes in many forms. I believe in art as a way of

doing things, not as a set of objects. But. Reflection, analysis, problem solving, making, enabling engagement and initiating action are some of the capabilities of artists. How can these skills be employed to useful and positive effect? How can artists challenge existing modes and models? Can Edwin and Domino's collaboration become a blueprint for other placements?

These are things that Edwin needs to consider and tackle in the coming year.

Sister Corita was an artist, educator and advocate for social justice who is known for her Pop screen prints and her reputation as a teacher. By 1971, when she had successfully sought dispensation from her role as a nun, Kent received a commission from the Boston Gas Company. Her design was to become the largest copyrighted artwork in the world. Her Immaculate Heart College Art Department Rules form a useful code for beginning any project. I suggest these as an offering to Edwin in this new territory.

Let's remember the APG maxim that the context is half the work. We shall see what occurs.

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