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# The Nature of NODE.London

In February a feisty discussion about NODE.London's month long season of media arts projects unfurled on the CRUMB (curatorial resource for upstart media bliss) mailing list. Debate circled around issues concerning the development, structure and labour force behind NODE.London and whether or not the festival should be described as 'curated' or 'non-curated'. It ends with friendly words and the resolution to discuss observations of NODE.London further, once the actual events get underway.

The full chain of discussion is archived for public viewing on the CRUMB mailing list archive:

Some choice cuts:

Mon, 13 Feb 2006 23:28:13 +0000

Marc Garrett:

'So, what's going on? Shouldn't there be an influx of discussions by the main media art lists about it, especially this list? What is it about NODE.London that certain media curators are scared of? I would like to know, as well as many of the people who have worked extremely hard to get this project underway, they would also like to know why the main cultural instigators on here are ignoring and blanking out something as significant as this? I would love to be wrong...'

Tue, 14 Feb 2006 09:36:25 +0000

Simon Biggs:

'What is interesting here is that Node is a grass roots self organising network of individuals, groups and networks. In a sense Node, and its genesis, is the main "event" here, and the projects that will make it up are the material of that event. As a self organising non-curated phenomenon it is probable it will reveal more about the nature of certain practices, involving certain media and modes, in certain places than a curated show would have. Whether that suggests the Node model will have currency beyond this one event is another question.'

Tue, 14 Feb 2006 10:13:12 +0000

Geoff Cox:

'...this is not really 'grass-roots activity' as such - but an attempt to engineer this, as far as I understand it. In relation to curating, this might simply be seen as an attempt at control through a distributed model and one in which power is expressed in more subtle forms as is the case with much of the labour invested in it. If the events generate discussion around these themes (and the politics of openness and 'free' labour), then it will get really interesting...'

Tue, 14 Feb 2006 10:46:14 +0000

Saul Albert:

'Having been involved in NODE.London at an early stage, and now having a little bit of distance after dropping of the map for a few months, I think I would like to use that perspective to address what I see as some misconceptions that could easily be propagated/mythologised - to NODE.London's detriment. Needless to say, this is my opinion about NODE.London, there are many like it, but this one is mine...'

I don't think NODE.London is exclusively 'grass roots', 'self-organised', or non-curated. It's very much a hybrid of those things and established mainstream cultural institutions and processes. It was Arts Council funded from the first, and can be seen as a strategic development after the funding of what ACE saw as five key media arts agencies in the late 90's early 00ies: (Mute, SPC, Digital Guild (formerly Artec), Audiorom and Media Arts Projects) - which (from ACE's point of view) culminated in the DMZ (<http://web.archive.org/web/20040213210123/http://www.dmzlondon.net/index.html>) in late 2003. Many were dissatisfied with DMZ (though it was successful in ACE attendance terms and had some good critical discourse surrounding it), many thought it was stuck in far East London, where it attracted usual suspects, but didn't really spread out to embrace London in all it's glory. NODE.London took on this fund and the remit was basically to get loads more new people involved - small agencies, individuals, funders and sponsors, institutions, curators... \*everyone\*.

Having said that, the first push of the project was to insist that the process would not be mono-curatorial, but would develop as an open ended discussion with a large group of 'voluntary organisers', who would have final say on as much as possible. However, given the basic inflexibilities of fiscal responsibilities and the strings (safety lines?) attached by ACE, this bottom line of the project was never entirely devolved to the VO group in a contractual sense, although in practice, it has worked towards that quite successfully.'

'...I think the process and practices of NODE.London have been extremely curatorial - a process of accumulating and contextualising immaterial culture in a very rigorous and discursive way. I think the difference you're pointing at was simply that there wasn't a figurehead curator with control over curatorial minions. Rather, there was a pseudo consensual process (pseudo because it certainly wasn't adhered to strictly in any meetings I attended, thank God) that allowed curator/practitioner factions to debate each other into submission.'

Tue, 14 Feb 2006 13:18:44 +0000

Luci Eyers:

'At an organisational level the project is uncurated and non-selective and based on an open system where people can opt-in and get involved. Obviously this didn't start from a position of complete neutrality, it started with a group and spiraled outwards and then when there was enough momentum and focus there was a conscious decision to try to look beyond the obvious network and extend it in different directions and plug some gaps. NODE.London's system developed in a way which was intentionally flexible enough to try to incorporate this messy hybrid of activity which sought to include and mobilise existing, emergent, grass roots, DIY, HE, and institutional projects so that whilst it will never be comprehensive it would attempt to map the span of media arts activity across London in a meaningful way; and enable interconnections to emerge. Some of this activity is little known beyond its insider audiences and participants and it was important for the NODE.London framework to be able to include transient, and community based projects alongside the more readily visible venues and organisations who consistently work on media arts programming.'