

**A Short Course in Realism from the Perspective of the
Police (script 1.1.1.):**

4 performers dressed in black:

Police-officer: Frans Jacobi

Street-fighter: Sandro Masai

Sound guerilla: Lonely Boy Choir aka Boris Schiøler

The artist/researcher: Elsiné Hoss

Two texts:

Kai Vittrup: OPERATIONii

The research-comments.

A black space.

A mirror-shield.

A purple flag with a metal-chain.

A sound system with 2 microphones.

2 spotlights in opposite corners pointing towards each other, creating a diagonal 'light-corridor' through the space.

SCENE 1: OPTICAL GUIDANCE

When the audience is allowed into the space, it is completely dark, the only light coming in through the entrance door. When everyone is inside, the 2 spotlights are turned on, creating a diagonal 'light-corridor' through the space.

'Police-officer' starts walking back and forth in the diagonal light corridor. He has the mirror shield lifted in front of him. The light hits the mirror and is reflected as a moving spot, as he moves the mirror. In this way the spot of light is moving around in the audience. He reads the texts in short aggressive sentences. 'Street-fighter' is moving between fixed positions, standing still looking at the 'Police-officer'.

POLICE OFFICER:

OPTICAL GUIDANCE is an operational technique to be used in various situations and in different modes.

In all its simplicity the technique means that the chief of operations places police squads, vehicles or mechanical defenses in such a way that demonstrators or other traffic is led in a certain direction.

OPTICAL GUIDANCE is and has been used often in connection with demonstrations that are expected to evolve into street riots. For example because as a rule the most aggressive demonstrators will not keep to a sanctioned route, but aim for objects to vandalize – buildings, companies etc that they are hostile towards.ⁱⁱⁱ

In connection with riots or potentially violent demonstrations, police squads with shields must never be placed alone as OPTICAL GUIDANCE. These units are too vulnerable to stone-throwing or molotov cocktails. In such situations armed vehicles are the solution; the police units are inside the vehicles, ready to act, with for example rapid reaction technique.^{iv}

'Police officer' lowers his shield and they both stop. The light changes: the two spotlights go out, and a small lightbulb is turned on. Now, 'the artist-researcher' is sitting on a chair in this new weak light. She starts reading aloud.

THE ARTIST/RESEARCHER:

Ladies & Gentlemen. Welcome to this performance. My name is Frans Jacobi and my role here is 'the

artist/researcher'. I will now introduce you to the performers and to the structure and content of the performance. I will also make comments and point to references throughout the performance. I will even attempt a final conclusion when we reach that far in about half an hour.

The title of the performance - A Short Course in Realism from the Perspective of the Police - is taken from the German composer, Hans Eisler. He collaborated with Bertolt Brecht, the playwright and dramaturge who in many ways permeates the conceptualization of this performance. It is especially the function of my figure here, the meta-guide, and the fact that I am represented by another person, which is influenced by Brecht. Brecht often included a similar figure - the director, the writer or himself - in his plays. He was inspired by the classic Greek tragedies which had a choir commenting and explaining events onstage. For Brecht it was a way of spelling out his intentions to the audience.^v When I introduce the figure here, it is of course an attempt at clarifying the problem of 'art as research' for you: How can art occupy these two seemingly conflicting positions at the same time? I am not attempting a solution to this problem here: I would rather leave it up to you, my dear spectator, to decide: Is my figure here inside - a part of the artwork, or is it outside, as an all too present academic nuisance?

My role here is played by another person, Elsiné Hoss. She is an art student at the Art Academy here in Malmö. This idea, this *Verfremdung* is another Brechtian feature. He used the technique of alienation as a tool to reveal the hidden mechanisms of emotional manipulation that the bourgeois theatre was ruled by in his day. Here the alienation simply works as a deconstructive tool, adding a layer of self-reflection and referentiality to the performance at hand.

This figure and this research-layer is one side of the equation art versus research. As you can already see, there is plenty, maybe even far too much talk here on this side of things. If the equation is to work, the other side, the art, has to be just as strong. It has to be potent with emotional, personal or poetic expression. The artwork has to represent the content at hand in such a way that it transcends the rational analysis that scientific research normally produces.

In this case, when the chosen subject is street-fighting, violent riots and attempts at police-control, the artistic side has to be chaotic, wild and somewhat out of

control. The intention is to give you, dear spectators, a sense of how it feels to be inside such an event. To create that kind of scenario I have chosen 3 performers who each in their own way adds to the planned turmoil:

Sandro Masai is a Brazilian dancer who has a great capacity for improvisation and sudden outbursts. Here, he improvises his abstract version of 'Street-fighter'.

Lonely Boy Choir produces the sound for this performance. I have chosen him because of his ability to cross into wild chaos. In his music, with emphasis on sadness and longing, there is always an undercurrent of wild, raw expression that I find necessary for this project.

The third part, the voice of institutionalized violence, is performed by myself, Frans Jacobi. As always, I perform as part of the production – not only because this adds a certain nervous, amateur gleam to the proceedings, but also because my participation represents a personal investment in the content at hand. If not through intelligent analysis – over here – at least my physical presence – over there – ensures my engagement.

SCENE 2: SHOW OF FORCE

Again 'Police-officer' starts walking back and forth with the mirror shield. He reads the second text, this time the sound of his voice is distorted by echo, repeat and reverb. 'Street-fighter' is now dancing with a purple flag and a metal-chain. He is moving fast around the space as the 'Police-officer' is moving back and forth in the diagonal of light. The tension in the distorted sound of the voice and the aggression of the dancer builds up.

POLICE OFFICER:

SHOW OF FORCE is a technique that sends a very clear message. It demands a large amount of resources and it requires that these resources are used in a manner that the technique involves.^{vi}

SHOW OF FORCE is ultimate. There is nothing to negotiate. Everything will happen as commanded by the police. This is the substance of this technique. However, if the technique is to be implemented optimally, it can become necessary under certain circumstances to communicate this resolution to the public in general, and, of course, also to the specific groups which the operation is directed towards – i.e. certain kinds of troublemakers. Mistake is not an option. Everybody should know where the police stands, and what to expect from the police force. In other circumstances it can be relevant to demonstrate the SHOW OF FORCE-technique by presenting new equipment to the public: new vehicles, new kinds of weapons or equipment etc., so as to make it perfectly clear to everyone, also to possible troublemakers, that the police is ready. In both cases, the police is directing the psychological reactions of the combatants; moral is weakened and the urge for violence and destruction is reduced.^{vii}

After a while they stand still, and the light changes for 'the artist-researcher' to read out her second part.

THE ARTIST/RESEARCHER:

My dear audience – Excuse me for already interrupting again, but I do think we need a bit of explanation here: The text being read here is taken from an internal police manual, presenting various strategies on how to handle large crowds of rioting demonstrators. It shows how visual and spatial strategies are aimed at impressing, controlling and even scaring crowds to behave. There are several examples of direct aesthetic considerations in the manual. It is my argument that these aesthetic elements instead of serving their purpose, actually works

as a backdrop to and an active element in suspending the reality of the situation. Instead, the aesthetic presence of the police force - impenetrable walls of dark uniforms, blank mirroring shields and display of weapons, barricades of armored vehicles, clouds of teargas - acts as a scenography for a sealed-off territory of power games and violent performativity. Instead of avoiding conflict and negotiating peaceful solutions, the police force collaborates with the activists on the other side of the conflict in the creation of a symbolic scenario of violence and turmoil. An hyper-real arena where various political gestures can be performed. The real battle is not fought in the streets, but on another level of symbolic interpretation; what really matters is who controls the pictorial meaning of the event and its mediation. In this sense, the street-fighting in contemporary activist culture, as in contemporary police operation is 'only' theatre. But to break through this dull display of calculated tactics from both sides of the conflict, the street theatre - and this performance - needs a chaotic, orgasmic high. A moment of sheer, unmediated physicality. So here it comes - go for it boys!

SCENE 3: RAPID REACTION

Again 'Police-officer' starts walking back and forth with the mirror shield. He reads the third text, but now the sound of his voice is so distorted by reverb and cut-ups that only a few phrases are discernable. 'Street-fighter' is now using the audience as shield or erupting in aggressive moves. The sound and the abrupt moves of the dancer get chaotic and really loud.

POLICE OFFICER:

RAPID REACTION is an active continuation of SHOW OF FORCE. This operational technique is especially useful, when riots are occurring in city-areas with small narrow streets and squares, where a dynamic, offensive strategy is required. When the requirement is the arrest of rampaging demonstrators in as large numbers as possible.

In advancing towards stone-throwing crowds, vehicles are driven at high speed with all lights on, also roof-projectors and sirens, directly into the center of riots. Here the units proceed by foot, either behind or on both sides of the vehicle.

If a number of troublemakers are to be arrested, the push forward is made in several directions, co-ordinated so that the people concerned at the given moment are surrounded by armoured vehicles and armoured police units.

In situations where riots in certain parts of the city are to be expected, specially educated civil units of arrest can be involved in advance. The task of these units is to identify and eventually arrest particularly aggressive and dominant participants in violent protests.^{viii}

All of of sudden it turns silent, and 'the artist/researcher' starts her final round of reading out.

THE ARTIST/RESEARCHER:

Well, dear patient spectators. We are now close to the end of this performance. Even though I will disturb you with yet another set of elaborations on what we have experienced here. All the babble on street-fighting as theatre and its mediation from my last little passage is not much more than average post-modern mainstream. The only really daring lines of thought here lie hidden in the color-scheme and in the use of sound.

Black and purple. The use of black is obvious: Black is of course the color of endless fractions of oppositional youth culture – punk, metal, the black bloc etc.^{ix} It is also, as stated in the police manual, the darkness of the unison monochromatic police uniforms that creates an aura of indisputable power.

The far more interesting question is the use of the color purple. In the activist movements from where it is grabbed, it often signifies 'queerness', most often in a sexual sense. To understand it like that in this context, doesn't really make sense: That the violence with all its inherent machismo transforms into purple gayness is of course rather funny, but also too absurd. It is rather a more traditional art-historical interpretation of the color purple that is relevant. Throughout the history of painting – for example in the paintings of El Greco – the color purple has been used to signify metaphysical, spiritual content. In the literature on contemporary political activism, the idea of a metaphysical aspect of street-fighting occurs again and again. In his essay, 'My friends are the Universe (Globalization's Protest Expand the Political)', the American writer, Robert Herbst, writes about the globalization protests in Seattle, December 1999:

"Highly controversial in their actions, the faceless saboteur elves of the infamous black bloc offered their actions of property destruction as a bit of transcendence."^x

So here in the forceful but poetic movements of the purple flags of the street-fighter 'a bit of transcendence' is opened up.

The other dominant aesthetic element is the use of resonance. Echo, repetition, reverb. In their political manifesto, THE COMING INSURRECTION, the French group of political activists, 'The Invisible Committee', has some very interesting thoughts on resonance:

"Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by resonance. Something that is constituted here resonates with the shock wave emitted by something constituted over there. A body that resonates does so according to its own mode. An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire – a linear process which spreads from place to place after an initial spark. It rather takes the shape of a music, whose focal points, though dispersed in time and space, succeed in imposing the rhythm of their own vibrations, always taking on more density.

To the point that any return to normal is no longer desirable or even imaginable.

When we speak of Empire, we name the mechanisms of power which preventively and surgically stifle any revolutionary potential in a mutual situation. In this sense, Empire is not an enemy that confronts us head-on. It's a rythm that imposes itself, a way of dispensing and dispersing reality. Less an order of the world than its sad, heavy and militaristic liquidation."^{xi}

What we have done here is merely to take the aesthetic metaphor of resonance, so brilliantly used by 'The Invisible Committee' and tried to use it, not as a metaphor, but as an aesthetic tool. To perform it. Here the 'sad, heavy rythm of militaristic liquidation' is fused with purple resonance into mutual vibration.

My dear audience – thanks for your patience.

THE END

Notes:

ⁱ The title is taken from a composition of the German composer Hans Eisler

ⁱⁱ Kai Vittrup: OPERATION (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Police 2003)(translated by Frans Jacobi and Susanne Jacobi)

ⁱⁱⁱ Kai Vittrup: OPERATION (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Police 2003), p. 125

^{iv} Kai Vittrup: OPERATION (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Police 2003), p. 127

^v Chto Delat?, the Russian collective of artists, critics, philosophers and writers founded in St. Petersburg in 2003, has worked intensely with the theories and the artistic tools of Bertolt Brecht. Coming out of the Soviet-Union their work deals with both post-communism and the contemporary ideological state of Russian politics. Their use of Brecht is obviously a way of handling their position in the tradition of communist aesthetics, but by using it to discuss highly contemporary issues, they are, in a very exemplary manner, actualizing the Brechtian aesthetics. Chto Delat? has in fact produced a series of Lehrstücke – learning plays – where a group of invited participants meet for a short intense workshop, 36 hours or 48 hours, improvising the script collectively from a given theme. The play is then performed by the same participants in front of an audience, with several inserted discussions and other alienation effects employed. 3 examples can be seen at the web-site of Chto Delat?: “The Russian Woods”, at Tramway, Glasgow 25.03.2012, “The urgent need to struggle” at Institute of Contemporary Arts, London 10.09.2010, “Where has communism gone?” at SMART project space, Amsterdam February 2011 (www.chtodelat.org). They have also used the idea of a commenting choir intensely in their ‘Songspiels’ – a form derived from Soviet theatre tradition. For a lengthier discussion of the post-communistic aspects in the work of Chto Delat? see ‘What Remains? – Chto Delat?, Post-Communism and Art’ by my PhD-colleague Simon Sheikh.^{v+}^v My own adaptation of Brechtian techniques is not as strict as the way in which Chto Delat? uses the Lehrstücke. It is rather a varying use of different Brechtian tools combined with my own inventions of other distancing effects. But my general conception of artistic research is very much influenced by Brecht.

^{vi} The idea of Show of Force is concretized in the performance Climate/Kettle (AoR 5.2.), where it is shown how the Danish police used this technique in connection with the Climate Summit, COP15 in December 2010.

^{vii} Kai Vittrup: OPERATION (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Police 2003), p.97

^{viii} Kai Vittrup: OPERATION (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Police 2003), p.117-118

^{ix} The use of the color black by the lawyers of Danish police is further explored in the performance Black (Climate/Kettle Part 1). Also in Climate/Kettle the controversial Black Bloc and the use of them as emblematic troublemakers is discussed. See also note 11 and 12 here on the rationale of the Black Bloc.

^x Robert Herbst: ‘My friends are the Universe (Globalization’s Protest Expand the Political)’ in The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest, volume 1, issue 1 (Los Angeles 2002), p. 6

^{xi} The Invisible Committee: THE COMING INSURRECTION (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2009), p. 12-13