

A CONVERSATION WITH PAUL SULLIVAN

THE NEVER ENDING ASYMMETRICAL INTANGIBLE ASSET MACHINEh

DU 1er au 19 SEPTEMBRE 2023

Jeanne Barret: What is *Static Complex* ? What's the project's objectives?

Paul Sullivan: We ran an exhibitions programme from 1998 to 2003 but from the start we were thinking of other ways to work with artists, so gradually moved away from exhibitions. As a space run by an architect (myself), and an artist (Becky Shaw), we started to work across a wide range of projects from publications, debates, reading groups, whilst instigating and carrying out many projects that used Static - a large 600 sq m industrial space in the centre of Liverpool - ad a test site. This was the basis for many collaborations also. Many of the projects we carried were picked up in the national and international art circuits which in turn led to projects and exchanges.

In terms of objectives, there are none, it's still an evolving project.

Jeanne Barret: In the overall project of *Static Complex*, there is the idea of moving the entire gallery. How?

You talk about construction and internal fittings, decomposition of the structure without touching the building in itself. So, what makes the gallery? The supplies and adjustments added to the building? The status of the gallery?

Paul Sullivan:The plan to deconstruct the entire gallery (apart from the roof and walls and existing main doors which are agreed to belong to the landlord), started a while ago. We have designed the space to be easily taken apart (relatively easily!). It will be a logistical challenge, but all the community at *Static Complex* will be given a couple of years notice. It also doesn't mean that we leave, we may create a new empty space and make something new, like a market for instance. We may also set up a similar space in Liverpool so the community moves with us. The idea of shipping the contents somewhere, and making something new is exciting as an architect, but like many of our projects, it will also examine a number of issues, such as Brexit, movement of goods and people, what can it become in another country/context?

Jeanne Barret: For your Carte Blanche, in what way can we say that there was a move of the *Static Complex*? (partly)

Paul Sullivan: It's the entire store room but it's like a dry run for the bigger project. The Jeanne Barret space and team demands a *Fitzcarraldo* response to the invite.

Jeanne Barret: How did Brexit affect your trip and the equipment? How do you include this notion in your proposal for Jeanne Barret?

Paul Sullivan: The Brexit issue is embedded in the project, as it is now very difficult and expensive to send 'exhibitions' of goods not-for-sale from the UK to the EU. Our way of working through any issues that concern us is to challenge them through a live project, as it's the only way to get close and really understand the complexities and absurdities of any given situation.

Jeanne Barret: What is the planning for *The Never Ending Asymmetrical Intangible Asset Machine*? Why in 3 days?

Paul Sullivan: 3 days? Yes it could last 1 day - as we have invited the philosopher Stephen Wright to host a debate that will push the question: Should the installation stay or go? The question and invitation, stems from previous encounters and a close reading of his provocative book: *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, which speculates on what art world/museological practices are still relevant under Stephens criteria.

If you mean the planned 3 days of actions, starting with the debate with Stephen and concluding with a kimchi workshop - with a large scale music event sandwiched in between, it's also worth noting that the installation will start to alter in the space after the music event on the first night, as it has been designed to keep the venue as clear as possible for the music event, as it was always known this is a key event and part of the project - not least for the funding of the project, but after the amps are turned off, the question arises, if it was set up just for the music event, surely it must have a different logic once that has finished?

Jeanne Barret: What is the '*Machine*' in this proposal? What does it stand for?

Paul Sullivan: Unlike Le Corbusier's concept of a '*machine for living*' typology, which actually was never a machine or machine like, the installation has a range of analogue and digital components - such as TVs, DVDs, VHS players/recorders, tape machines, cameras, synths, amps, projectors, speakers etc and a wide range of interconnecting cables - so although currently not a machine, but machine like - with the right people interfacing with it, it could easily become a form of AV production and performatives machine. To this end I will leave an INSTRUCTION MANUAL when I leave on the 5 September. Many of the components of the machine have been left (intentionally or accidentally), at *Static Complex* by

musicians, artists and the public, as well as people who have worked closely with us building Static physically and intellectually. To this end, there are memories and traces that are personal to me and part of my ideas for plugging into the machine, making new works, that may equally interest other AV mechanics.

Jeanne Barret: What place do the musicians/ the live sets occupy in *The Never Ending Asymmetrical Intangible Asset Machine*?

Paul Sullivan: We wanted the musicians to interact with the machine for a short period in the lead up to the event, in order to produce new material for the opening night, but in reality due to travel and logistical reasons, this hasn't worked out, apart from a new Marseille based musician Victor Calvi who has become the latest member of the KINDRED LUFT FRONT, and has worked with the machine for a brief period.

That said there will be other opportunities.

Jeanne Barret: Why '*The Never Ending*'? Will the machine continue to run / to exist afterwards?

Paul Sullivan: Yes, it will continue to run as a whole entity in other places or back in Liverpool. It may be broken up, asset stripped, so a fragmented machine, as it is dispersed.

Jeanne Barret: How do you include Kimchi in your gallery and in *The Never Ending Asymmetrical Intangible Asset Machine*?

Paul Sullivan: The kimchi business is part of the overall *Static Complex* project, a key component, something born out of being invited to the Gwangju Biennale in 2006. It is interlinked.

Jeanne Barret: How will Steven Wright's intervention impact the installation? How does this fit into your work?

Paul Sullivan: As mentioned above, Stephen's work has been a long term matter of discourse and occasional exchange and collaboration, since meeting him at Static when we co-produced the Liverpool Biennial International Symposium in 2006. The invitation to Stephen, is, like the kimchi, a key component of the overall architecture of the project. The introduction of a critical response to the work is for us a repetitive motif, but this time, the intensity is cranked up a notch as the result of the debate may result in the immediate take down of the work. But the idea of bringing people together for a 'convention', is of course a way to unpick the moves, maybe contextualise, dispute and disrupt, but also to instigate new connections and dialogues as Static's adventures in the art world rumbles on.

Jeanne Barret: How is your return to Liverpool envisaged?

Paul Sullivan: Over the next week, we will research the issues concerning the return or possible non-return of the goods and the financial and legal issues this may incur. One of the threads of the project and indeed Stephen's debate, is to ask, what is the real worth of the work. Answers to that question will partly inform the next stages of the asymmetrical machine.

Jeanne Barret: Do you have any *Static Complex* projects after Jeanne Barret?

Paul Sullivan: Yes, to open a Noodle Bar at the *Static Complex*.

Jeanne Barret: Do you plan on continuing "The never ending machine after the show"?

Paul Sullivan: Yes, in some form or another. The next month will be crucial for the future of *The Never Ending Asymmetrical Intangible Asset Machine*.

Jeanne Barret: What is your point of view on art's economy?

Paul Sullivan: Waoh! Let me think.....,

Jeanne Barret: According to you, what can be considered an artwork?

Paul Sullivan: Anything is art if it is described as art, or framed as art, even things that haven't been framed yet, dormant, waiting for the moment of capture. Things that people perceive as art. Things that machines perceive or deduce to be art. Things and concepts produced. Perhaps the more interesting question is What can be considered as the Value of Art?