

Unassociated Writing Conference & Dance Party

Report Regarding the Day of Unassociation

On April 2nd, more than 200 writers, readers and producers of independent literature gathered in the space of unassociation during the day to read, listen, talk, bounce on the inflatable bouncy, drink and eat yummy toasts.

The organizers of the dance party had no idea how many people would arrive to experience the pleasures of unassociation. The event was not addressed by the regional media. In fact, Terminal City, the alternative weekly in Vancouver running opposite the older and more staid weekly, The George Straight, was going to run some preview manifestos/articles (to be posted here shortly) on the conference. But rather than run them, the overseers of Terminal City axed the entire book section and replaced it with a two-page spread about sex toys. This was an indication of the difficulty of classifying the work and play that would take place on April 2nd. I suspect this dearth of coverage had less to do with the day's activities as a counterpoint to the Association Writing Program and more to do with the fact that the overseers of media don't really know what to do with literary events that aren't directly related to bookstores and books. This conference, part party, part architectural experiment, part performance, part song and dance was difficult to classify.

Even without press coverage, more than 200 writers, readers and producers of independent literature gathered in the space of unassociation during the day to read, listen, talk, drink, bounce on the inflatable bouncy and eat yummy toasts.

The event began with about thirty people, and thereafter grew and shrunk with the natural rhythms of Vancouver.

Twice, more than a hundred people were at the event at the same time. A low-grade engine hum emitted from the fan from the inflatable bouncy. People jumped on the bouncy all day long; the structure emitted a heart-like throbbing beat punctuated with bursts of laughter. Far from dampening the activity of the room, the hum allowed for the space to be freely used without interfering with the readings. In the anti-netcafe patrons freely conversed under the hum. There was the constant commerce of small talk among the small presses, writers, and people who happened to walk by the Western Front and see the inflatable red shape Matthijs Bouw had affixed to the building.

Two readings stages were used all day long without pause, until, amazingly, at the climax of the day program, a magician named David Gifford, performing as Signor Giffoni, employed a series of rustic contraptions, traditional sleight-of-hand magic tricks, and beautifully structured patter, such as, "and now for an amazing and wonderful transformation!" His performance gradually collected everyone in one space and we watched magic, rabbits pulled from sacks, and eggs miraculously regenerated. At the end of his show, the bouncing heart-beat returned, the cacophony of multiple readings resumed, and the clatter of drinks being made and unmade returned.

Bouw spoke. P:ano played sweetly melodic songs alternating between a ukulele and a grand piano. The Strangers played rock-and-roll. So, all in all, a very good time was had and the event of mass unassociation concluded.

Architecture for North Pacific America
The New Research & Dance Party Tour

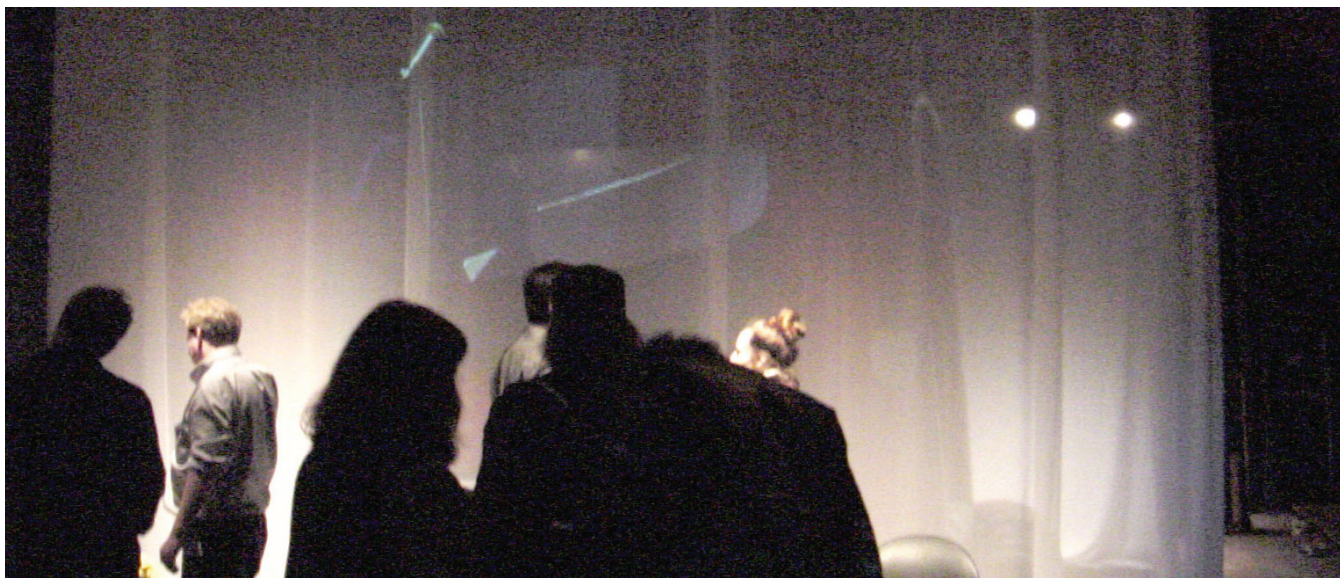
a theory from
Matthijs Bouw
One Architecture, Amsterdam

Presented Live and in Concert with
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April 2. Saturday. 9pm. P:ano The Strangers Unassociated Writers Conference Western Front, 303 E. 8th Ave. All Ages 15. Vancouver, BC	April 5. Tuesday. 7pm. Joey Casio The Strangers Mississippi Plaza 3052 N. Mississippi Ave. @ N. Fremont All Ages 15. Portland, OR
April 8. Friday. 7pm. IQU Al Larsen Red 76: Little Cities Dept. of Safety, 1011 12th St. All Ages 15. Anacortes, WA	April 10. Sunday. 5pm. Mt. Eerie Northwest Film Forum 1315 12th Ave. All Ages 15. Seattle, WA

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Art News
Free Associating in Vancouver
The Stranger, April 7, 2005

On Saturday there was a ghostly cube made of sheer white fabric at the center of Western Front's Lux Ballroom in Vancouver BC. It was difficult to discern its dimensions because a cafe setting obscured it and one panel was covered in rippling projected images of writers reading their work, with audio piped in over speakers. The authors were in an adjacent room, shy of audiences but not cameras, apparently. Over the spoken words was the sound of laughter coming from behind the makeshift projection screen, where people were jumping around in an inflatable Bouncy Castle. On the other side of the room was a small area where other writers, in the flesh, delivered their work to small, appreciative clusters of people.

All of the commotion--the cube, the poets and prose stylists, the acrobatic flips in the Bouncy Castle--was part of the Unassociated Writers Conference and Dance Party, organized by Matthew Stadler, editor of Clear Cut Press; Jonathan Middleton, the curator of Western Front; and Seattle author Matt Briggs. Although

initially conceived in response to the staid Associated Writers Conference happening across town, the loose-knit event wasn't a counter-event so much as an experiment in information sharing and a place in which writers and artists could commingle, display their books, read, listen, and drink champagne.

Matt Briggs delivered an introductory speech at noon, imploring the crowd to each write a letter on peach-scented stationery to a favorite writer from the Northwest--or as Briggs, Stadler, and Middleton preferred, "Northwest Pacific America"--and pin it to the location on a map where the work was first read. Mash notes, jottings,

and thanks to Charles D'Ambrosio, Rebecca Brown, Stadler, and Proust ("He's a Northwest writer, isn't he?") were pinned to the board like specimens of irony and tenderness.

At day's end, Stadler spoke of a brand-new website born from the conference, www.bullettrain.ca, that Middleton was putting together to post events happening in Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, "to encourage a mental bullet train." Then Matthijs Bouw, the cofounder and principal architect of One Architecture in Amsterdam, gave a short presentation in the cube (the castle was deflated and its husk was rolled off into a corner). He showed slides of various projects and explained his design for the conference, which made sense in context with his other brilliantly skewed and strangely practical projects. Particularly arresting was one slide of a rest-stop parking lot previously divided by signs for trucks and cars. Bouw redesigned it to say Hetero and Homo ("So homosexuals could fuck in the bushes and not get harassed or beaten up"). In the spirit of the conference Bouw suddenly said, "That's enough. Let the music begin," and abandoned the cube to make way for the band P:ano.

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Unassociated writers conference: the plan for the room

I think that the first step is to establish a comfy atmosphere. I thought hard and long about using cheap, messy materials, but I decided against it: the room should be much like a house.

That means, first of all, good coffee, drinks and snacks. I think a cafe setting is good.

It means, moreover, a soft space to literally hang out. This soft space should be conducive to unexpected interaction: I thought that renting an inflatable bounce might be a great center piece: it divides the space and it creates more levels, and it might even form an (albeit unstable) stage for performances. Jumping together might add to the fun.

If we cannot find/rent/steal a simple bounce, the ones in the form of a castle might also serve OK (I think especially if we combine it with Red76 buildings). Or otherwise, a giant bed, filled with all the soft materials we can find.

Around the soft object (which is itself approximately 3 feet high) we should have veiled curtains, the white ones with changing transparencies (depending on the light, it will be elegant. These are really good for intimacy, for video projections and as stage curtains when someone wants to give a talk).

Around the edges of the central soft object, we can place little tables with book and publishers. We have to find a way to make sure the people don't bounce off the soft object onto the books, but I am sure we can work something out.

What is nice about a setup from the center is that the existing chairs along the

