

Even if it may be reminiscent of certain hippie experimentations or current neo-hipster attitudes, we take the risk of wondering, what does the idea of (artistic) community mean today? And if it makes sense to explore this notion again, in what way might its self-consciousness be shown? First, we have to be aware that social media determines a new rhetoric and so characterizes social relationships. This, in return, has a significant impact on the way we represent ourselves and our relationships in a specific context. This new rhetoric has definitively colonized the terminology used to describe communities. The term “community” itself has been exhausted of its previous political meaning, and has become another surplus value of art, most often an equivalent to the word “scene”, or a neutral term for gathering as “digital communities”. It is not about stepping back from the digital sphere as a protective move, but it is about considering the changes to representations and meanings of social relations which arise from this new rhetoric of social media. Another consequence: the traditional distinctions between scenes and communities delineated by certain spaces, discourses, and attitudes seem now to be more confused, more blurred. In general, groups, communities and networks appear to be functioning within visible and invisible boundaries whose visibility depends upon the position of the viewer, whether he/she is an insider or an outsider. Then the question is to know what really makes an insider, in an environment of indistinct informations, where it is easier to look like one. Anne Imhof in one of her recent collective choreographies “The School Of The Seven Bells”, first presented in the art school where she was studying, refers to the clandestine ballet of the pickpockets in the eponymous film by Bresson—only visible to insiders. In the same way, she creates and choreographs two different forms of language, for the viewers and the dancers, which is often antagonistic. The internal language acts as a counter-consciousness to the visible social system.

Scenes and communities are always evolving into new configurations driven by personal factors— such as rivalries, conflicts, friendships— and power struggles, and all the rituals of exclusions and inclusions that come along with it. The way communities function seems largely based on subjective decisions and affinities, driven by a certain awareness of common principles, tastes and attitudes. On the contrary, social networks shape scenes through information exchanges of all sorts, gossip, texts, debates and images within a new digital logic of grouping. The success of Instagram among artists, for example, is due to the fact that it gives an instant image of the state of

the relationships and social relations without distinctions between the private, the intimate, the professional, the exhibition and the artwork. It has proven to be the most popular visual representation of scenes today, while the communities forming behind the screen are almost clandestine. The question becomes also how to analyse the current art system by working on different communities, outside the art world. For example, the community-based projects of Stephen Willats, in which the community is seen as a locally shared experience, clearly propose other models of artistic practices. Willats urges the artist to think of a social model of his own art practice and to examine the institutional framework. Consequently, community-based projects always have to deal with a critique of the institutions.

The show is structured around three parts:

- the exhibition *Berlin Local*, a community based project of Stephen Willats which took place at the gallery MD72 in Berlin, in October 2014 within the neighbourhood of the gallery,
- a selection of books and documents dealing graphically, stylistically and conceptionally with the idea of community,
- some editions and works reflecting the question of community through collaborative production.

Catherine Chevalier, Benjamin Hirte