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RULES AND REGS RESIDENCY

The Nightingale Theatre, Brighton
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The End: An Artist Should Always Be...

Professional development is thought of as any knowledge or skill acquired for both one's career advancement and personal development. Ranging from a degree acquired over many years to a half-day workshop in an informal setting, the form that professional development can take is changeable. When it comes to the professional development of artists, the nature of the content can also be variable as metal working skills might be just as necessary to one artist as an understanding of existential philosophy might be to another. Does that mean that any facilitated learning opportunity qualifies as professional development for artists?

According to Harold Perkin (author of *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1800*), the professionalisation of art and artists has become an integral part of British culture. Via the expansion and integration of the many activities that surround art – making it, exhibiting it, curating, writing, teaching, documenting it, advertising it and selling it – we have generated an image of consummate professionalism for art. Everyone is properly trained and knows exactly what they are doing. As Gilbert and George's work *The Laws of the Sculptors* stated, artists should 'always be smartly dressed, well-groomed, relaxed, friendly, polite and in complete control'. To an extent this is true, and applying an ethos of efficiency to the art world has lent its high-production, high-stakes side the necessary credibility to become sustainable. Yet, the day-to-day reality of an artistic practice has often more in common with empirical "learning as you go along" and making do with what is available. That is often when professional development comes in: to fill in the gaps between the superficial veneer of professionalism and the actual demands of practice.

There is no shortage of professional development schemes specifically targeted to artists with most boroughs and counties offering training, mentoring, studio space and other



Theo Clinkard. Photo: Kristian Wilding. Courtesy: copyright 2012 Rules and Regs.

forms of support to local artists, not to mention the big patrons such as the Jerwood Foundation, the Live Art Development Agency and Bloomberg. Yet, few offer an opportunity that is as concise and intensive as the Rules & Regs residencies. Seth Kriebel, director of Rules & Regs, describes the month-long conceptual incubator as 'a short, hot, forced change of perspective'. The facilitated learning of the R&R takes place as a result of an active engagement with the rules that act as catalysts to initiate a shift in the practice for the participating artists.

Did the artists expect that and how did this self-reflective process happen for them? Could they begin to identify the impact of this experience on their practice? Perhaps the very last day of the R&R residency was still too soon to ask such questions. As Seth mentioned a few weeks ago, for some participants, the experience takes a while to be fully processed. Yet, the artists gamely agreed to answer my questions about the impact they expected this experience to have on their work.

They all thought the rules were a useful device to prompt work in a different way, but also to create a common ground between the participating artists. As this was the first Rules & Regs residency involving international artists, this peripheral function of the set of rules proved particularly important. On a more individual basis, for Jan Machacek, this was a first residency and a chance to really immerse himself in his work. He rose to the challenge and tried something new by engaging directly with the audience and with the live performance aspect of his work, which he wishes to explore further. In the context of Rules and Regs, Theo Clinkard saw the potential for his work to extend beyond the disciplinary boundaries of dance. The work he developed for R&R was devised with such theatrical and visual flair that it would not have been out of place in a gallery or at the Battersea Art Centre's One-to-One Festival. As the rules led her to extend her existing dance and choreography practice by welcoming responses from the audience and integrating them into new work, Megumi Kamimura has developed ideas for future work that might incorporate this experience. As for Michikazu Matsune, Rules & Regs was a chance to confirm that the way he currently works suits him best. Although the outcome of his particular experience was not one of immediate change, the moment when an artist comes to terms with a specific way of working can also constitute a professional turning point.

This immediate view of the outcomes of the R&R residency as a form of professional development is overwhelmingly positive and appears to feed into future developments for all the participating artists, yet it would be just as strategically fruitful to address the question of Rules & Regs' legacy for both the artists and the organisation in the longer term. This is not to suggest that only lasting development is valid, but it would be relevant for Rules & Regs to situate itself in a greater picture in order to target future development. Rules & Regs has been active for about 8 years and future plans to take the format internationally and to devise a dance-focused residency are in the works. The Rules & Regs programme itself has involved 73 artists, a network of significant proportions which could be involved in future development. Of course, legacies are often a matter of

resources – time, funds and skills – and there is no doubt that, although this is not currently a priority, it features somewhere on the list of the many plans for Rules & Regs. After all, who is better qualified to understand the importance of professional development than an artist who has already engaged with various interpretations of it? Perhaps a future edition of Rules & Regs could be devised by artists, for artists as a way to form a peer-support network.

In spite of what Gilbert & George might think, it's not necessary for an artist to 'always be smartly dressed, well-groomed, relaxed, friendly, polite and in complete control', but it is important for artists to have chances to expand their practice and to challenge themselves. Rules & Regs offers an opportunity for artists to acquire skills, knowledge and experience that feed into the demands of professionalism – networking, visibility, recognition – as well as support the practicalities of making art. In that sense, if one were to think of creating The Laws of the Rules & Regs Artists, they might read as follows: 'they should always be comfortably dressed, ready for anything, have a sense of humour, and be ready to relinquish complete control'... only to regain it at the end of the residency with an added confidence and a well-deserved sense of accomplishment.

Martine Rouleau

Writer detail:

I am a freelance curator, writer and lecturer based in London. My projects focus on collaborative processes with practitioners from various disciplines. I have worked with Tate Britain, Tate Modern, the ICA, the Brighton Photo Fringe and Electra Productions among others. I completed a PhD pertaining to collaborative processes involving artists, audiences and public art institutions at the London Consortium in 2009. I am a founding editor of the Static (<http://www.static.londonconsortium.com/>) website . I currently in the Art Education at the Arts Management and Policy MA programme of Birkbeck College. More about my work can be found at <http://www.martinerouleau.co.uk/>.

Venue detail:

The Nightingale Theatre
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www.rulesandregs.org/ng12.html

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