



Tensegrity – and other Contradictory Complicities

Symposium Programme

Whether it is to be Utopia or Oblivion will be a touch-and-go relay race right up to the final moment. . . . Humanity is in 'final exam' as to whether or not it qualifies for continuance in Universe.

From: Buckminster Fuller

I'd switch off the light, get back in bed, and lie there, the book still open, re-imagining all that I had read, the various ways the plot might unravel, the novel opening into endless possibilities in the dark'

From: 'Reading in the Dark' 1996 by Seamus Deane

In 1948 the young student Kenneth Snelson attended the summer school at Black Mountain College. Influenced by Richard Buckminster Fuller's visions he created the first sculptures based on a very simple, but seemingly magical principle: Tensegrity (portmanteau of tension and integrity). Giving the impression of a cluster of struts floating in the air, tensegrity structures are composed by a set of compression components suspended within a continuous tension network. This results in a structure where 'compression elements become small islands in a sea of tension' (Buckminster Fuller 1961)

While Snelson examined this principle in his sculptures, Buckminster Fuller and David Georges Emmerich explored its applications to architecture and engineering. Thirty years later, Donald E. Ingber, professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School discovered tensegrity structures in biology (carbon atoms, water molecules, proteins, viruses and other living creatures). Tensegrity proved to be a universal principle corresponding to a particular field of forces in a stable equilibrium under a precise distribution of elements. Recently it has been proposed that not only the human skeleton but also the central nervous system function as tensegrity structures, where some elements are continuously pulling and others are discontinuously pushing.



1 Buckminster Fuller at Black Mountain College 1948

2 Sculpture by Kenneth Snelson based on Tensegrity

3 Students at Black Mountain College with Tensegrity dome

4 Tensegrity in human fascia

Since the advent of the Internet, with its explosive cross pollination of knowledge, ideas and discoveries, tensegrity has become a key principle across many disciplines. Research is being conducted in Biotensegrity to examine the architecture of cells and viruses to invent revolutionary treatment. New ways of geometric, responsive structures are being developed in design and engineering and anatomical research has led to new ways of understanding the

structure of the human body. Very few researchers, though, have elaborated on social, political or theoretical approaches to tensegrity.

This symposium takes tensegrity as a starting point to examine whether 'tensional integrity' is something other than just a spatial structure of struts and strings. Where do we recognise forms of push and pull strategies, tension-pressure relationships and stability-flexibility structures within our fields of research and interests? In the face of the current political climate with social shifts, systemic ruptures and collective upheaval, notions around fragility, tension and dynamic relations become more and more important. With regard to philosophical approaches, tensegrity can be understood as moments of 'discontinuities installed within the continuity of time'. (Ignasi Solà-Morales 1996). While Solà-Morales refers in his essay 'Difference' to built elements of the city within the continuity of time, how can we apply this notion of 'contradictory complicity' to other disciplines such as language, performance, history, politics and sociology?

Can tensegrity serve as a mental model to investigate these issues? To what extent is it valuable as point of departure to re-evaluate force fields within contemporary arts? Could this idea also be applied poetically, as an artistic approach, allowing new forms of artistic practice? Tensegrity is seemingly precarious, but proves to be a stable force in nature. Facing the challenges of the current era, it may become clear that issues around tension, resilience and integrity are at the core of the ultimate task to save our 'spaceship earth'. If art is supposed to address these questions, could tensegrity become one of the new guiding principles?

This symposium brings together artists, curators, writers, critics and other voices to explore how tensegrity could be defined in relation to their practices, whether through their working methods, concepts fabricated around tension/pressure or challenging space-time relations. The concept might be quite new to the field of art theory, but stems from an established practice we can draw from, thus allowing us to continually test our ideas in the making.

Format:

Two-day symposium with short sessions followed by discussion, conclusion in a round-table.
Sessions include: talks, performances, and screenings

Date: Friday and Saturday 18 and 19 November 2016

Location: Tenderpixel, 10 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE www.tenderpixel.com

Information and Contact:

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Programme:

Friday 18 Nov 2016

12.30-12.45: Welcome
12.45-13.30: Monica Ursina Jäger, artist (Swiss/UK), Damian Christinger curator (Swiss)
13.45-14.15: John Palmesino (Territorial Agency), artist (Swiss /UK)
14.30-15.00: Sarah Zürcher art historian and curator (Swiss)
15.15-15.45: Emily Rosamond, artist and writer (CAN/UK)

Drinks and Snacks

17.15-18.15: Giselle Genillard, SOS Internationale, Trauma Relief (UK)
18.30-19.00: Justin Hibbs artist (UK)
19.15-19.30: Students Bournemouth (UK) summary, recap
19.45- 20.30: Aidan Treays, Dance, Movement and structural Integrity (UK)

Saturday 19 Nov 2016

11.00-11.30: Nicole Bachmann, artist (Swiss/UK)
11.45-12.15: Karen Mirza (Museum of Non-Participation), artist (UK)
12.30-13.00: public works London, architects, designers, activists (UK)

Drinks and Snacks

14.00-14.30: Ruth Beale, artist (UK)
14.45-15.15: Nicola Ruffo, Kunstverein Zürich, curator (Swiss), and Matylda Krzykowski, designer (UK)
15.30-16.00: Luc Mattenberger artist (Swiss/UK)

16.30-17.00: Roman Vasseur, artist (UK)
17.15- 17.45: Fine Art Students Bournemouth (UK) summary, recap
18.00-18.30: Roundtable with participants and audience, Conclusions

Publication:

A publication accompanies the event. It contains the programme and a collection of research material and ideas.

Hosts:

Damian Christinger, writer and curator from Zurich, studied Asian Art History and Intercultural Studies. He was the co-founder, of Christinger De Mayo, a project gallery trying to build bridges between European and Latin American Art, which closed its doors December 2015. He now works as an independent curator and publicist. His main focus is on the construction of “the other” in intercultural relations and art history. His last museum show at the Museum Rietberg featured 21 Swiss artists, who questioned the relationship between the collection of antique non-European art and its local public. His current projects include such different topics as the history of curry, the Swiss Merchant Navy and the Moomins. He worked as a curator for the TBA21 project The Current and is lecturing at the University of the Arts Zurich.

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Monica Ursina Jäger is a Swiss artist and lecturer living in London and Zurich. Her multidisciplinary practice engages with spatial experiences both within the natural and constructed environment. Recent works address the uncertainties of geopolitics related to natural resources and man-made production. Interdisciplinary projects include urban planning, green infrastructures and narrative environments in public parks. Jäger studied in Singapore and London and gained her MA at Goldsmiths College. She has exhibited widely nationally and internationally, e.g., Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum Thun, Helmhaus Zurich, Galeria Pilar Sao Paulo, Sammlung Essl Klosterneuburg/Wien, Haus Konstruktiv Zurich, Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Kunstverein Pforzheim. Winner of the Swiss Art Award 2007. Monica Ursina Jäger is a lecturer at the Institute of Natural Resource Sciences IUNR at University of Applied Sciences Zurich ZHAW.

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Tenderpixel

Borbála Soós, Stella Sideli

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Participants:

Nicole Bachmann is an artist based in London. She works in performance, installation, audio and writing. In her current artistic research, she's investigating the voice as a tool and method of knowledge production. Through layering, intonation, repetition, fragmentation and musicality, the voice pushes her text beyond “pure” signification of words and surplus meanings are created, an alternative way of producing knowledge. Her works are sites for examining the connections and similarities between the construction of language and the making of things. Thinking about language as material, the rhythm of making, cadenza of speech and construction of language and things. Her recent shows and performances at Eastside Projects, Birmingham, Tallinn Art Hall, Estonia, Whitechapel Gallery, London, MOTINTERNATIONAL project London, Turner Contemporary, Margate UK and Rowing, London. She's also the co-founder of *Performance as Publishing*, a collaborative project with Ruth Beale.

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Ruth Beale's works are informed by varying cultural expressions and the reordering of political and social ideas. In 2011 she presented the event series 'Public Knowledge' at Cubitt Gallery, the first in the new programme curated by Fiona Parry, and was part of 'The Department of Overlooked Histories' at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge. Her work takes on collaboration in themed discussions such as her ongoing 'Miss B's Salons', and didactic performance such as 'Art for Virtue's Sake' ICA, London, a lecture on the historical relationship between education and 'culture as a social project' and 'The Aesthetics of Power' Form Content, London (2010), a play about fetishisation of fascist architecture. Ruth Beale was born in the UK. She lives and works in London.

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Students Bournemouth, Arts University Bournemouth, Course: Fine Art (names tbc)

Giselle Genillard founder and director of “SOS INTERNATIONALE”, is a Licensed Midwife, a member of the European Association of Body Psychotherapy (EABP), a Somatic Experiencing (SE) Practitioner, a member of the International Association of Structural Integrators (IASI), a Touch-in-Parenting Instructor and founding Secretary of the Board of EASE, the European Association for Somatic Experiencing. She combines her training as a somatic therapist with the art of midwifery, the core principles of Somatic Experiencing (SE)®, and her widespread cross-

cultural experiences. She works internationally, is multilingual, and was a member of trauma outreach teams in South-East India post-tsunami, New Orleans post-Katrina and post-colonial South Africa post-independence. Giselle brought Peter Levine's ("Waking the Tiger") SE trainings to England and France where she teaches workshops related to traumatic stress. Giselle specializes in working with PTSD in early childhood disorders, adolescents, combat and high-stress situations, and international disasters.

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Justin Hibbs studied at Central St. Martins, London (1991-94) and currently lives and works in London. He has exhibited his work both nationally and internationally, and has also curated a series of artist-led exhibitions. Across his practice, Justin Hibbs (b. 1971, Poole, UK) picks apart the mechanics of spatial perception and representation, drawing upon social, political and aesthetic agendas encoded within architectural structures. In particular, much of his work is a renegotiation of the visual language and ideological legacies of modernism, seeking to establish and question relationships between real and idealised notions of space. This is enacted through a uniquely multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates painting, drawing, sculpture and architectural interventions.

He has exhibited at Carroll/Fletcher Gallery, London, Jerwood Space, Kunsthaus Grenchen, Switzerland and Kunstverein Stuttgart, Germany.

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Matylda Krzykowski is a designer and curator. She focuses on collaborative and performative projects.

Krzykowski's work is introspective, as it explores and experiments with the inner mechanisms of design.

As such, her projects dissect the design process to its different stages – from methodologies and education to network and politics. With a strong perspective of design as a discipline of communication, her work explores interdisciplinary links, which may differ from Choreography to Reportage and to TV game shows, to name a few.

Krzykowski is founding member and co-director of Depot Basel place for contemporary design, Switzerland, and is a former participant of the Jan van Eyck Academy.

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Luc Mattenberger (*1980) is a Swiss artist who lives and works in Geneva and Berlin. He completed his Academic degree (Hons.) and a postgraduate at the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD) in 2007. He works essentially in the field of sculpture and installation. His works explore the multiples convices between man and machine, with a particular interest for the engine as vector and symbol of power. During his career, the artist has been rewarded with several prizes, (e.g. Prix de la Fondation UBS, Swiss art award, etc.) and residency programs in Roma, Prague, Paris, Berlin and Marfa. Mattenberger is co-founder and co-editor of the literary review Coma.

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Karen Mirza

The Museum of Non Participation is one aspect of Karen Mirza and Brad Butler's wider artistic practice, an investigation of the terms and conditions of images, objects, collaboration, dialogue and the social.

The Museum of Non Participation confronts (non) participation and the socio-political in art works. 'Non Participation' is not a negation, it is a threshold—a political plastic that expands and contracts, that is both unstable and malleable. This is an international neoliberal life condition, frequently (un) consciously exercised in the excess of one's own society, often gained at the expense of another's nameless plight elsewhere. Whilst locally it can be witnessed, for example, in the moment urgent social issues are both recognized and simultaneously ignored or rejected. It is also a structure including, in the UK, the filtering of government and corporate policies and agendas through the arts and arts funding.

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John Palmesino is an architect and urbanist, born in Switzerland. He has established, together with Ann-Sofi Rönnskog, Territorial Agency, which has designed the integrated vision for the future of the Markermeer, in the Netherlands. He is in charge of the Master course at the Research Architecture Centre, Goldsmiths, University of London, where he is also conducting his researches for his PhD. He is the initiator and curator of the research project Neutrality, a multidisciplinary investigation in the territorial implications of UN policies and self-organisation processes of transformation and control of the contemporary human landscapes. He has been Head of research at ETH Zurich, Studio Basel / Contemporary City Institute, between 2003, and 2007, a research platform for the investigation of the transformation patterns of the city of the 21st Century founded by the Pritzker Prize winner architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. Recent publications include Switzerland—An Urban Portrait (Birkhäuser, 2007). His researches at ETH Studio Basel focus on Paris, Napoli, San Francisco, St Petersburg, Hong Kong, and the Canary

Islands. Open and Closed: Transformations in the 21st Century City is the working title of his forthcoming publication. He also has co-founded *multiplicity*, a research network on contemporary territorial transformations. The Milan-based organisation deals with contemporary urbanism, representation of inhabited landscape transformation, visual arts and general culture. Multiplicity is a research network of architects, urbanists, social scientists, photographers, filmmakers and visual artists.

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public works is a critical design practice set up in 2004 that occupies the terrain in-between architecture, art, performance and activism. Together with their interdisciplinary network, they re-work the city's opportunities towards citizen driven development and nurturing their rights over the city. public works' projects are interested in what constitutes civic in the city and how to re-design structures that restrict it. The work gives space to and facilitates civic practices which promote direct involvement and collective action in order to transform and re-appropriate contemporary public life. They create long sustained relationships that build commonality, trust and enable co-authorship. This method allows, engagement and knowledge production, be it informal and intimate or political and academic. - it is through the production and sharing of knowledge that they can redefine the city through its inhabitants.

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Emily Rosamond is a Canadian artist, writer and educator. She is a Lecturer in Fine Art Theory at the Arts University Bournemouth. Previously, she was a Lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Kent and an Associate Lecturer at Goldsmiths. She completed her PhD in Art in 2016 at Goldsmiths, where she held a Commonwealth Scholarship. Her doctoral work focused on character as a prominent speculative, representational logic of personhood in an era of predictive analytics.

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Nicola Ruffo works as a curator in the fields of contemporary art, film and architecture. Amongst other things, he has co-curated the exhibitions *Learning from Warsaw* at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle (Poland) and *Go! You Sure? Yeah!* at Pool Project, in collaboration with the LUMA Foundation and Ringier collection (Switzerland). Recently he has co-published the architectural book *Up Up*, which portrays the urban development of Johannesburg (South Africa). He runs, together with Nele Dechmann, the Kunstverein Zurich – an art club, which practices since 2010 a nomadic work and exhibition style.

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Aidan Treays is a Certified Rolfer®, based in London. He started his life long passion for the body and movement as a dancer. Training at Elmhurst Ballet School, this led to a career, rich with different styles of dance. He worked as a flamenco dancer, musical theatre performer and as a movement artist in devised Circus and physical theatre. He then took the natural step from performer to choreographer. His choreographic work has been seen in the West end, on Broadway, and in major motion pictures. The path to Rolfing drew closer with his experience as Head of Movement at Drama Studio London. He has observed, in the course of his career, what holds a body back and what makes the body sing.

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Roman Vasseur is an artist who's artworks appropriate cinematic and political narratives to produce installations and actions that engage the forceful materiality of these fictions. Whether it is transporting a crate of earth from Transylvania to Los Angeles, planning the ritual execution of an international mural artist or disinterring a town's original master-plan as a noirish, material fiction, past work has constructed scenarios around which the 'social' materialises as an unstable, mythological figure — a figure that cannot be looked upon directly but remains forceful nonetheless. Vasseur is currently completing a PhD in the Department of Art of Goldsmith's College entitled *I am the Sun and Cannot be Gazed upon Fixedly*. He is a Senior Lecturer at Kingston University, London as well as lecturing elsewhere in the UK and abroad including Tate Britain and Otis College of Art and Design, LA. He has exhibited at Cubitt Gallery, London and the ICA.

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Sarah Zürcher is an independent curator and art critic. Since 2008 she has organised exhibitions and festivals around the globe - London, Cairo, Delhi, São Paulo, Algiers, Paris, Marseille, Tallinn, Basel, Nairs, Lausanne and Baden. In 2014 and in 2015, she worked as Director of Museum Langmatt (CH) and from 2009 to the end of 2013 as Director of the Art School esba TALM in Tours (F). From 2002 to the end of 2007, she directed Fri-Art, the Fribourg contemporary art centre. She has worked in particular at the Kunsthalle in Bern, Mamco and the Cabinet des estampes (Print Room) in Geneva. For the cities of Baden and Zurich, she has worked on a number of projects in

public space including the "Infolge Kunstprojekt". She has regularly published articles and essays on contemporary art since the 1990's. Among others, she has also edited catalogues, notably for the 9th Biennial of the image in movement in 2001.

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