

KULTIVATOR

Location: Dyestad, island Öland, Sweden

Operative since: 2005

Practice organised: legally as a company, in fact work as an independent group

<http://kultivator.org>

Kultivator is an experimental cooperation of organic farming and visual art practice, situated in rural village Dyestad, on the island Öland on the southeast coast of Sweden. It was founded in 2005 by artists Mathieu Vrijman, Malin Lindmark Vrijman and Marlene Lindmark and farmers Henric Stigeborn and Maria Lindmark, and is now an open group, with members varying from project to project. Kultivator initiate and execute projects, exhibitions and workshops that explore possible alternative narratives within art and farming, with the members and/or invited guests and the public. At site on Öland, Kultivator has a residency, exhibition space and a dairy farm with 30 cows + chicken, ducks, sheep and horses. Since the start in 2005, approximately 80 artists, researchers and farmers has visited and worked on the premises.

Kultivator

What desires, values and elements of support/discouragement made your practice evolve over time?

We had the desire to create a place for the interaction between art and agriculture and to make up alternative solutions for a future society by combining the two.

We were discouraged in that to some extent because of a lack of engagement from the local authorities, a non-support. A positive element of evolution for us was a big public interest, and a big interest from art spaces and artists in Sweden and also internationally. Together, these things made us evolve into more of a travelling group than we initially meant to.

What, in your case, are the advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses of working collectively?

Much of the core of our idea is collective: the collaboration between very different disciplines, and the urge always to share both work and experience with many. So the strength of collaboration sits both in the idea and in practice. Since we do not usually operate with big sums of money, the resources of many hands are a necessity to make large projects happen. A weakness can be that sometimes during work processes time is “lost” in coordination and discussion, or in misunderstandings. A challenge is also to bring the ideology of Kultivator and its history to new workers and thinkers in order to allow them to be more free to make their own decisions.

How do you deal with money and wages between the components of your group?

How do you deal with tensions and power relations within your group?

When we have funding for a project, we divide the fees and/or salary between those actually making the work at that time. We don't have much power-related tension, and the tensions that might exist are more about direction and artistic choice.

Those are solved by continuous talking and discussing, and we have always managed to solve disagreements. We work very well on compromise!

How do you access meaningful commissioned work and how do you finance and carve-out time for self-initiated projects? What strategies and tactics are you making use of?

We have been lucky to be able to choose between commissions offered to us. The time

interviews

to carve out our self-proposed projects has to be found in between paid works. We do not have another strategy other than to formulate what we want, apply for funding and then hope to receive support. Very often our projects are woven together so that the previous one supports the next, which could be called a strategy, but is probably more conceptual. We also try to work with bigger institutions like art museums, colleges and so on, and make them partners of larger projects in order to lose some of the administration.

How do you organise your time between work and non-work? What systems do you use to keep track of where you invest your time?

Unfortunately, no system. And no line between work and non-work time.

How does your current working and living environment (geographic location, spatial arrangement) reflect (or otherwise) the ethos, methods and dynamics of your practice?

The whole building up of physical spaces and of professional network reflects our ethos very much, since our place is a vital part of our work.

Please draw a diagram of all the elements and structures that support your design practice? Can you also include elements that “threaten” your practice?

Hm, I may not be really able to do that... But I can list something like this:

Support and threats (in order of size)

- unpaid work of members of the group -> risk of less quality because of too much work
- unpaid work of students -> risk of less quality because of less experience
- arts funds, art grants supporting our own projects -> too much administration and financial risk
- paid commissions from institutions
- food, fuel and the space of the farm -> needs to be returned
- work of family
- work of visiting artists