



# Herbst Academy 2010

## Masters, tricksters, bricoleurs – Virtuosity as a strategy for art and survival

Three workshops for students, artists, theorists and others

Virtuosity in art has long fallen into disrepute: there is a deep distrust of an art that wants us above all to admire its skill. An art of a master who wishes to be recognised as such. But anyone who searches for truth – be it in pure reason or in pure faith – scorns virtuosity as something that distracts from the essence. An art of a trickster who does not want to be recognised as such.

Yet the virtuosity of the master and the trickster are inseparable: as a master, Paganini, the prototype of the virtuoso, was always a trickster too, playing with the audience as masterfully as he played his instrument. And the dexterous thief, the magician, the confidence trickster – they too are masters of their art. Virtuosity is a vestige that we cannot grasp, that appears inexplicable, which, while created by means of craft, assumes the aura of the extraordinary.

Today, in an age with which we come to terms as if constantly juggling disparate demands, virtuosity is no longer an exception but rather – as Paolo Virno demonstrates – a necessity for one and all. Immaterial labour demands more and more virtuosity, and the parallels with art production are unmistakable: it is about forms of production that are productive but that do not necessarily create a product.

Hence, virtuosity in this sense does not necessarily manifest itself as mastery but rather in a fundamental and persistent flexibility that unites work, private life, and politics. Virtuosity is rendered democratic and thus becomes the art of collaboration, interaction, creative combination of discourses and contexts, bricolage and improvisation, informality and temporariness.

Spurned in its original form in art, virtuosity has thus spread elsewhere. How is it now returning to art, thus purified, changed, corrupted and economically exploited?

# Workshop 1

## Demon Air Nike Stan Smith Exorcism

Virtuosity as a method of working

**27/09 - 02/10/2010**

By  
Mårten Spångberg (S)  
With  
Sven-Olov Wallenstein (S) et. al.

In this workshop virtuosity is turned against itself. We don't want to be cured, don't want to be freed from our compulsive behaviour. We want the demons to work for us, corrupt our bodies and undermine reason. Virtuosity has become a contemporary ritual and should be understood as a mode of production that carries the potentiality of generating life as such a productive factor.

Virtuoso operates in the desert, outside and potentially against the state. It is a war machine producing itinerant territories grounded in irreducible singularities. The virtuoso is pure exteriority, it acts without consciousness, knows nothing about negotiation.

The workshop will turn to the romantic notion of virtuosity and how it operates on the outskirts of discourse thus prompting a trajectory towards sovereignty. The group will engage in collective self-expression void of subjectivity, and instead of promoting the personal, will invest in the possibility of becoming something.

The process will involve theoretical undertakings but focus will be on a practical creative project that implies the ungrounding of a masterpiece in the crossing between movement and sound, merging somatic and phonic intensities.

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Co-presented by NXTSTP, with the support of the Cultural Programme of the European Union



# Workshop 2

## Academy of tricksters

04/10 - 09/10/2010

By and with  
geheimagentur (D)

Tricks are a special form of knowledge not concerned with the way the world is but rather with how it may be overturned. Trick knowledge is local, situational, clandestine, virtuoso, omnipresent. Trick knowledge creeps into other discourses and sticks there. Tricks also produce hybrids between art and politics, creating transitions between activism and artistic practice.

For centuries, disdain of tricks was common to rationalism and religion. Today, we affirm the critical potential of the trick. But today we are all obliged to be tricksters. So how do critical analysis and trick expertise relate today?

The workshop will fill the chairs of the trickster academy with participants in its daily search for tricks and tricksters. We will discuss the canon of trick literature from Michel de Certeau to Michael Warner and Jim Steinmeyer and translate our findings into action. At the "Casino of Tricks", where this workshop is taking place, all manner of tricks are traded, collected and shared: magic, economic, political, mundane and extraordinary.

On Fr 08/10 & Sa 09/10, the workshop takes part in the conference "Masters, tricksters, bricoleurs".





# Workshop 3

## Between Post-Fordism and political action

Virtuosity in the 21st century

**10/10 - 15/10/2010**

By  
Kai van Eikels (D)  
With  
Jan Holger Mauss (D) &  
Tino Sehgal (D/GB)

After having been almost absent from modern aesthetics for one hundred years, the term “virtuosity” makes a powerful new entrance in the debates on performance art at the beginning of the 21st century. As the line between artistic performance and political intervention is increasingly being crossed from both sides, Hannah Arendt’s claim that political action has an inherent virtuosic quality gains new actuality. On the other hand, organization theory adopts the idea of a “collective virtuosity” from artistic practice such as improvisational jazz, theatre, or dance, in order to develop new concepts of work-flow in enterprises. The post-Fordist economy thus absorbs the artistic and political virtues of playing, working and living together, as the Italian philosopher Paolo Virno has pointed out. “Servile virtuosity”, the excellence of well-functioning obedient workers, has become a leading value in our contemporary performance-driven socio-economy.

How can art react to these new challenges? Are there strategies to turn servile into non-servile virtuosity, to reclaim the political potential of virtuosity in artistic performance? In the workshop we will pursue these questions by discussing crucial texts on virtuosity and art / politics / economy. And we will use a critical assessment of virtuosity to gain a new understanding of performative freedom and performative equality.

For more detailed information and biographies  
please visit [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at)

# APPLICATION HERBST ACADEMY 2010

Name, Surname .....

Address .....

Phone .....

Email .....

Date of Birth .....

Occupation .....

- Workshop I Demon Air Nike Stan Smith Exorcism**  
(27/09 - 02/10/2010) 120,00 Euro
- Workshop II Academy of tricksters**  
(04/10 - 09/10/2010) 120,00 Euro
- Workshop III Between Post-Fordism and political action**  
(10/10 - 15/10/2010) 120,00 Euro

Please enclose a substantive C.V. and a short description of your expectations of the workshop as well as any material you consider helpful in regards of the workshop's intention. For further information please visit [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at).

Participants in a workshop must pay a contribution towards expenses of €120. Accommodation is not included. However, steirischer herbst helps finding reasonable (including private) lodgings. Travels costs have to be covered by the participants. Admission to all performances, exhibitions, lectures, etc. during a workshop is free of charge for workshop participants.

*Each workshop has 5 grants that can be applied for (including lodging & participation fee). Please submit an application for these grants with a brief statement of reasons.*

The workshops are limited to approx. 15 persons and the organisers will select the participants. Registrants may participate in more than one of the events. The spoken language will be English. Deadline for applications is 30/07/2010.

**Please send your application to:**

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8010 Graz / Austria

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