



Uio • University of Oslo

Collaborative strategies in art

*A comparative analysis of Tim Rollins and K.O.S.
and Oda Projesi*

Frida Rusnak

Master Thesis in Curation, Critique and the Cultural Heritage of
Modernism
120 credits

Supervised by Professor Ina Blom

University of Oslo

Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas,
The Faculty of Humanities

Spring 2021

© Frida Rusnak

2021

Collaborative strategies in art: A comparative analysis of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda

Projesi

<http://www.duo.uio.no>

Universitetet i Oslo

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Ina Blom for supervising this thesis, for sharing her wealth of knowledge on this topic, and for constantly pushing me to improve my writing. I am grateful to Will Bradley and Kathrine Wilson at Kunsthall Oslo for introducing me to the work of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and the *Art and Knowledge Workshop*, and for giving me the opportunity to develop the project *Oslo Art and Knowledge Workshop* with the rest of the team. I also thank my other colleagues and collaborators at Kunsthall Oslo, and especially the youth board, for teaching me about collaboration by working together. I wish to thank my fellow students and my teachers at the Master Programme in Curation, Critique and the Cultural Heritage of Modernism for invaluable feedback. A special thanks to Ingvild, Victoria and Elnaz. And finally, thank you to my friends and family for the long discussions on art history, philosophy, and pedagogy, and for keeping me sane during lockdown.

Frida Rusnak

Oslo, June 2021

Abstract

This thesis examines artistic collaboration, through a comparison of the art collectives Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (New York, 1984–) and Oda Projesi (Istanbul, 2000–). For more than three decades, Rollins and K.O.S. have done collaborative workshops with young people, resulting in large scale paintings. Oda Projesi have explored public and private space in their neighbourhood projects. Despite different contexts, goals, and methods, both collectives work with participants outside the context of art institutions and allow participants influence on the artistic process. They both argue that the working method and result cannot be separated because the process *is* the work. I look at how these collectives deal with collaboration in their art, and what it means for their relationship with the art world.

Through comparative analysis, I examine three specific aspects of their collaborations: aesthetics, participation, and the notion of space. I also explore these concepts through ongoing debates within collaborative art, with ideas from pedagogy and philosophy. Projects that break down the boundaries between artists and non-artists and are conducted inside and outside art institutions present a challenge to the art world. By focusing on process and social exchange, these artists challenge the idea of art as a self-contained object and force us to consider the value of art in social terms.

I suggest that the different approaches to aesthetics, participation, and space in the work of Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi can be seen as non-activist forms of resistance to the art world establishment. Rather than direct confrontation, they can be interpreted as ‘hacks’ – tricks, shortcuts, or adjustments, that has allowed them to move around the structures they wish to change. Rollins and K.O.S. have created paintings with a collaborative aesthetic, while Oda Projesi have downplayed the role of aesthetics in their work. Oda Projesi have tended to distance themselves from typical ‘art spaces’ to do their work in kitchens and town squares. Rollins and K.O.S., on the other hand, needed to be in the spaces where value was created, and have brought new people to the art institutions and their work onto the gallery walls. Oda Projesi have produced new spaces, while Rollins and K.O.S. found ways to cross borders into established spaces and then claim this space as their own.

Collaborative strategies in art: A comparative analysis of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi

Content

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Objective of this thesis	1
1.2 Theoretical approach, structure, and scope	2
1.3 Social and collaborative art	4
1.4 Tim Rollins and K.O.S.	6
1.5 Oda Projesi	7
1.6 Chapter summary	9
2. An overview of current debates	11
2.1 Discussions on aesthetics and autonomy.	12
2.2 Education in collaborative art	16
2.3 Radical equality and artistic collaboration	18
2.4 Chapter summary	19
3. Comparative analysis	20
3.1 Aesthetic strategies: Cite Kafka (or refuse to talk about it)	21
3.2 Participatory strategies: The student as teacher (and artist as student)	28
3.3 Claiming space: Show up in a suit (or with a picnic basket)	35
3.4 Summary and concluding remarks	43
Bibliography	49
List of illustrations	53

1. Introduction

1.1 Objective of this thesis

In the early 1980s, Tim Rollins and K.O.S. started as an after-school art club in the marginalised neighbourhood of South Bronx, New York. The group became known for its large paintings, which were created through a collaborative process and based on literary classics. The group, which still includes some of its earliest members, continues to create and exhibit art across the globe.

The Turkish artist collective Oda Projesi was formed in 2000, working out of an apartment in the Galata neighbourhood of Istanbul, where its members developed their artistic project with the local community for five years. The three artists continue to work together, although the project has transformed into a more nomadic structure since 2005.

Both collectives have lasted to this day, and remain committed to and socially engaged work, using collaborative workshops as their method. The two groups continue to engage new participants and work with art world ‘outsiders’. Rollins and K.O.S. have worked with young people, aiming to make art accessible to those who do not have many entry points to the art world, and to bridge the gap between amateur and professional artists. Several of the early participants have grown up to become artists and educators themselves. Meanwhile, Oda Projesi have taken a geographical location as their starting point, often working with women and children in a particular neighbourhood. They examine the space between the private and public sphere, and consider the relationships created through their projects as their main artistic output. For both projects, the artists argue that the process *is* the work, and the working method cannot be separated from the end result.

The main objective of this thesis is to compare how Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi relate to the wider art world, through the ways in which they deal with collaboration between artists and non-artists in their work. I examine their practices through ongoing debates within collaborative art and pedagogy. Using comparative analysis I look at three aspects that are closely connected with collaboration: aesthetic strategies; participatory strategies; and spatial strategies. I suggest that the approaches to each put forward by the two collectives challenge the boundaries between art and non-art in different ways, and can be seen as a form of

resistance to the art world establishment. In other words, my central research question is: *How do Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi deal with collaboration in their art, and what does this mean for their relationship with the art world?*

1.2 Theoretical approach, structure, and scope

As a theoretical framework, I situate both collectives within the current debates on collaborative practice, and draw on ideas from the fields of pedagogy and philosophy. In this introductory chapter, I give a short introduction to social and collaborative art, to explain how Rollins and K.O.S. on the one hand and Oda Projesi on the other can be understood within this framework. Then, I present short biographies on each collective. In the chapter summary, I point out the key similarities and differences between the two collectives, which will later be subject to further analysis.

In Chapter 2, I give an overview of the current debates on the relationships between artists, their collaborators, and the wider art world, through the writings of contemporary art historians Claire Bishop and Grant H. Kester, and curator Maria Lind. I look at their different approaches to evaluating collaborative art through the concepts of aesthetics, ethics, autonomy, political resistance, space, and the role of the spectator. I also look at the role of education in artistic collaboration through the critical pedagogy of the Brazilian educational philosopher Paulo Freire, and the theories of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière. Rancière's ideas on radical equality and emancipation in art and education are especially relevant to the discussion of the relationships between artists and participants.

In Chapter 3, I divide the comparative analysis of the two collectives into three subsections on aesthetics, participation, and space. I have chosen to focus on these three specific aspects as I found them of particular interest during my research on collaboration, and because the two groups have chosen very different strategies in each case. In the discussion of aesthetics, I refer to Bishop, Kester, and Lind; in the section on participation I apply the ideas of Freire and Rancière; while in the third section I explore the production and appropriation of space through the work of the French historian and cultural theorist Michel de Certeau. In the final section, I draw lines between these three approaches, and explain how I interpret these strategies as forms of resistance.

Much research has already been done on both these projects, although no previous comparisons have been made between them. Rollins and K.O.S. have been the subject of numerous articles and reviews in newspapers, books, and journals since the 1980s. Video recordings of artist talks and other documentary materials have also been valuable to my research. Oda Projesi have not received the same amount of media attention, but the three artists have been the subject of scholarly research and discussion and given several interviews. Because of the many accessible sources, I have not conducted interviews with the artists myself. I have, however, been able to speak to K.O.S. member Angel Abreu, as part of a project with young curators at Kunsthall Oslo.¹ Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it has not been possible to travel to experience artworks first-hand. Secondary video material and interviews with the artists have therefore been important to understand the artists' goals and intentions, and to obtain thorough descriptions of their works and working methods.

There are many aspects of these art collectives that deserve more thorough analysis than is possible in this short thesis. In particular, the class and race dimensions of these projects should be mentioned. The original members of K.O.S. were Black and Hispanic, young, poor and working-class, while their leader was White and university-educated. This surely impacted group dynamics as well as their reception by an art scene that continues to be upper-middle-class and predominantly White.² Class relations are also relevant in the case of Oda Projesi, where the privileged background of the artists separates them from their working-class neighbours, and through their presence in Galata they can be said to have both contributed to and responded to the gentrification of the area.³ Although I do not go into these issues in too much detail, I briefly return to this subject in the discussions in Chapter 3. In addition, I do not delve into the historical context of social and collaborative art in this thesis, except for a brief introduction in the following section. However, it should be mentioned that the strategies applied by Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi are not unique, but part of a long history of how artists deal with access as well as social and political engagement.

¹ Oslo Art and Knowledge Workshop is a project aimed at making contemporary art more accessible to young people, created by Kunsthall Oslo in collaboration with youth organisations Agenda X and Forandringshuset Grønland and inspired by Rollins's Art and Knowledge Workshop.

² Tim Rollins comments on how the K.O.S. were expected to fit certain stereotypes in James Romaine, 'Making History', in *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History*, ed. Ian Berry (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 45-46.

³ Derya Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space* (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 2008), 208-209.

1.3 Social and collaborative art

Art historian and critic Claire Bishop has written extensively on art that investigates social issues through participatory methods. In her influential article ‘The Social Turn’ she lists some key characteristics, notably that these artworks are often social events, publications, workshops, and performances, rather than objects.⁴ These artists often work both inside and outside traditional art spaces and do not distinguish between the value of this work, as they tend to view social collaboration as an extension of their conceptual practice. They typically have weak links to the commercial art world, due to their emphasis on shared authorship and on art as a process rather than a product. These works challenge the relationship between an artwork and its audience, as the viewers are often repositioned as participants. Due to a lack of physical objects, and because of collective authorship, collaborative art projects can be challenging to present in exhibitions, and difficult for audiences and critics to view and review, Bishop claims.⁵ But this development can also be understood as a democratisation of art, where artists attempt to reach audiences in more direct and unexpected ways unavailable to traditional museums and galleries.⁶

To describe these projects, artists and critics employ a broad range of terms, many of which overlap. According to curator Nato Thompson, ‘socially engaged art’ is a useful umbrella term for art projects that have social or political goals, where the artists depend on the engagement of participants or the audience to be able to produce the artwork. He emphasises how these art projects deal with social and political issues, often with the intention to blur the boundaries between art and life.⁷ ‘Social practice’ is another broad but widely used term that describes work that combines aesthetics and politics, is durational and require corporal involvement.⁸ Claire Bishop uses the term ‘participatory art’, focusing on participation as an artistic method. Maria Lind writes about ‘collaborative art’, and makes a useful separation between ‘collaboration’, an umbrella term for diverse working methods, and ‘interaction’ or ‘participation’, where people take part in something that has already been created.⁹ I use the

⁴ Claire Bishop, ‘The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents’, *Artforum*, 02 (2006), 178-183.

⁵ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 1-9.

⁶ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific art and locational identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 110.

⁷ Nato Thompson, introduction to *Living as form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 16-33.

⁸ Shannon Jackson, *Social Works*, 11-12.

⁹ Maria Lind, ‘The Collaborative Turn’ in *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, Lind and ed. Brian Kuan Wood (New York: Sternberg Press, 2011), 185.

term ‘collaborative’ when discussing the art of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi. This term encompasses the range from participatory methods to the more collective decision-making processes that can be found in their work.

Collaboration and social engagement in art have a long history and a wide range of influences. Today’s practices draw on historical avant-garde happenings and performances – with their attempts at disruption, blurring of authorship, challenge to production, and crossing of boundaries between disciplines – as well as the community art and activist movements of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰ The understanding of art as a process rather than a product was also influenced by the development of performance art and conceptual art in the same period, with the dematerialisation of the art object.¹¹ ¹² Thompson emphasises how collaborative art today is also greatly influenced by other areas of society such as political resistance, social movements, and media strategies.¹³

When K.O.S. was founded, and up until the early 1990s, socially engaged art was still on the periphery of the art world. Then came what Bishop has called the ‘social turn’ in art production. Social and collaborative practices have since become a global phenomenon, with a prominent place in the art sector through art foundations, public institutions, and biennials.¹⁴ The scope and number of projects continued to increase dramatically throughout the 2000s.¹⁵ These art practices gained more dedicated interest from curators, art historians, and art institutions.¹⁶ The projects of the 1990s that became popular with galleries and museums often emphasised social exchange through short-lived, artist-initiated meetings, but were criticized for not considering the quality or results of these relationships. In reaction, the 2000s saw a shift that Thompson describes as ‘the strategic turn’, a new wave of projects such as Oda Projesi, characterised by long-term commitment and deeper collaborations.¹⁷ As social and participatory practices have gained influence in contemporary art, art theory, and debate

¹⁰ Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2013), xvi-xvii and 124-125.

¹¹ Lucy R. Lippard, Lippard, new preface, ‘Escape attempts’ in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 ...* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vii-xxii.

¹² Henry M. Sayre, ‘The Object of Performance: Aesthetics in the Seventies,’ in *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol 4, ed. Philip Auslander (London: Routledge, 2003), 188-205.

¹³ Thompson, *Living as Form*, 21.

¹⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2.

¹⁵ Blom, *On the Style Site*, 126.

¹⁶ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, xviii-xix.

¹⁷ Thompson, *Living as Form*, 31-32.

in the years since, collaborative methods have spilled over into other fields such as curating, mediation, and museum education.¹⁸

1.4 Tim Rollins and K.O.S.

In 1981, artist and teacher Tim Rollins (1955-2017) was invited to teach an art class at South Bronx Intermediate School 52. It was regarded as one of the worst school districts in the city, struggling with poverty, crime, and social problems. The kids in his ‘special education’ class were considered troublemakers with learning disabilities but Rollins, who did not approve of such labels, quickly recognised their talent and abilities and was impressed by their creativity.¹⁹ The class took part in their first group exhibition the same year, in the space run by Group Material, an artist collective where Rollins was a founding member. In 1984, Rollins started an after-school club, *The Art and Knowledge Workshop*, for his most motivated students. Later they got a separate studio space. This is where K.O.S. was formed, and the teenagers chose the name, an abbreviation for Kids of Survival.

During the early years of their collaboration, Rollins and K.O.S. developed the workshop method that the group still uses today, reading classical and contemporary literature and listening to music to inspire their creative process. The group read to each other from books by Franz Kafka, George Orwell, Mary Shelley, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Martin Luther King Jr, and others. According to Rollins, they tried to capture the essence of the books, not as illustrations, but rather a visual correspondence with the original authors.²⁰ Together they then selected and edited the drawings and agreed on the composition for a large painting, or in some cases sculpture. The group developed a signature style, where they cut out the pages from the books they read and glued them to the canvas in a carefully laid out grid, which became the background for their motifs. They often used an overhead projector to transfer their drawings and painted directly onto the pages (Illustration 1). What started as a pedagogical and social project soon drew the recognition of the New York art scene. The series *Amerika (After Kafka)* (1984-2012) marked a turning point in the group’s early career (Illustration 2). Their work was shown at the Whitney Biennial (1985 and 1991), Documenta

¹⁸ Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, eds., *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, 2010).

¹⁹ Tim Rollins, ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S. – A History’, lecture, Rollins College, 1 November 2013. Video, 1:02:36. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeLG_rBh0YQ

²⁰ Tim Rollins et. al., ‘Tim Rollins & K.O.S.: Prayers with Legs’, interview in *Tim Rollins & K.O.S.: An Index*, ed. Alessandro Rabottini (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2012), 8-11.

(1988) and the Venice Biennale (1988), and are now part of more than 120 collections, including that of the Tate and MoMA.²¹

Over the years, more than 60 people have been part of K.O.S.²² However, the group has only included a few female members. In an interview, Rollins described how the studio became a male-dominated space due to factors such as the gender roles in the neighbourhood, where boys had more freedom of movement.²³ From the beginning, he and members of the K.O.S. emphasised that artistic decisions were made collectively, and that working together as equals was crucial to the result. They argued that this was not only a product of democratic ideals, but an artistic necessity, because the constant stream of new input allowed them to develop and renew themselves.²⁴ At the same time, Rollins continued as the group leader until his death in 2017.

After Rollins's death, the remaining members have continued the collaboration under the name Studio K.O.S., and they still conduct workshops with new groups of children and young adults. Some of the early participants are now the driving forces behind the project, which they engage with alongside their individual careers. The current members are Angel Abreu (b. 1974), Jorge Abreu (b. 1979), Robert Branch (b. 1977) and Ricardo Savinon (b. 1971).²⁵ For almost 40 years, the project has kept its goals and methods. The artists have taken the concept out of the South Bronx neighbourhood and its original social context, and adapted the workshop method so it can be used with young people all over the world. In this thesis, it will be most relevant to focus on the early period of their collaboration, the 1980s and early 1990s, even though I draw some lines to their more recent collaborations.

1.5 Oda Projesi

The three artists Özge Açıkkol (b. 1976), Güneş Savaş (b. 1975), and Seçil Yersel (b. 1973) founded Oda Projesi in 2000, working out of a three-room flat in the historic urban Galata district of Istanbul. The artists met while studying fine arts at the Marmara University of Istanbul and had worked together in Galata since 1997 on projects dealing with art and public

²¹ 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.' CV, 2020. Accessed 23 May 2021. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/attachment/en/5b363dcb6aa72c840f8e552f/TextOneColumnWithFile/5b364a09a72437d8b5014>

²² A list of 61 current and previous members can be found in Berry, *A History*, 253-255.

²³ Rollins, 'Make Some More', interview in Berry, *A History*, 245.

²⁴ Studio K.O.S., 'Daser Experiment #5: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.' Video conversation. *Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences*, 22 March 2021, 1:01:40. <https://youtu.be/x7yLImoZ65c>

²⁵ 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S. is now Studio K.O.S.' Accessed 21 May 2021. <https://www.timrollinsandkos.com/>

space. Oda Projesi literally translates as ‘room project’, and the collective developed through the relationship between the artists and their neighbours as they gradually got to know each other. Although the apartment was first intended as the artists’ studio space, it soon developed into a meeting place and space for the collaborative production and presentation of art.

Galata was mostly populated by working-class migrants from the Eastern parts of Turkey at the time, and characterised by crowded quarters and lively street-life.²⁶ Oda Projesi as a project was inspired by how local people made use of space and continually intervened in the urban in-between spaces of the city. The three artists wanted to use these interventions as models for their art projects.²⁷ The apartment was on the ground floor, facing an Italian-style courtyard, and the doors were often open. Children especially, soon felt at home in the apartment.²⁸ Activities such as picnics, theatre workshops, and hosted conversations soon spilled out into the courtyard and surrounding streets, merging private and public spaces. In these spaces, artists, musicians, architects, neighbours, and their children could meet informally, and the rooms were multipurpose, equipped with art books and drawing materials to encourage collective activities.²⁹

Oda Projesi are careful not to leave any objects behind that can be interpreted as works of art.³⁰ The traces of their work are documentation, not meant to be exhibited, so when they participate in exhibitions they do not repeat projects but often re-explore earlier topics and methods. For example, they reconstructed the Galata apartment to actual scale for the Gwangju Biennale (2002), inside the exhibition space. In the space, they hosted activities and made the rooms available for visitors, to use as they wished, when there were no other activities taking place.³¹ Oda Projesi have also been part of the Venice Biennale (2003), Havana Biennale (2003), Istanbul Biennial (2003 and 2005) and Gwanju Biennale (2011), as well as several group exhibitions on socially engaged art and art in urban public spaces.³²

²⁶ Maria Lind, ‘Actualisation of Space: The Case of Oda Projesi’, *Transversal*, 10 (2004), 1.

²⁷ Özkan, ‘Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi ...’, 51-53.

²⁸ Derya Özkan, ‘Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi and the Production of Space in Istanbul’, *On Curating* (11, 2011), 51.

²⁹ Thompson, *Living as Form*, 199.

³⁰ Lind, ‘Actualisation of Space’, 3.

³¹ Lind, ‘Actualisation of Space’, note 11, 7.

³² Oda Projesi, ‘Oda Projesi CV’. Accessed 21 May 2021. <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com/p/oda-projesi-cv.html>

As the result of the continued gentrification of the area, the artists were evicted in 2005.³³ Not being place-bound opened new ways of working with public space. Since then, the collective has continued under the same name, functioning as a nomadic project. They have used different forms and media to continue creating spaces for conversations, such as postcards, a radio show, books, newspapers, and art projects in temporary spaces. Since 2013, the focus of the artists, who are all women, has been ‘motherhood and production’.³⁴ In 2020, Oda Projesi celebrated their 20th anniversary by promising, in a statement on their website, to continue asking questions about space and place for the residents of Istanbul.³⁵ In this thesis, the first five years of the collaboration will be the most relevant for examining the artists’ relationships with their neighbours and participants in the Galata projects.

1.6 Chapter summary

Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi both situate themselves within the realm of art, using collaboration as their artistic method. They both commit to the goals of their participants and let them influence the process. Both collectives are also part of a tradition of art collaborations that take a political stance: for Rollins and K.O.S., this is that art is truly for everyone; for Oda Projesi, it is that public space belongs to all, and must be defined and reimagined by the people who use it.

Beyond these similarities, the work, methods, and strategies of the two groups are vastly different. Rollins and K.O.S. have created art objects with a clear aesthetic style, while Oda Projesi have downplayed the role of aesthetics in their work. While Rollins and K.O.S. depended on the commercial art market, Oda Projesi have operated outside the market, and let the communities they work with decide the value of their work. Although Oda Projesi have taken part in exhibitions, they have more often worked in public or semi-public spaces, such as a shared flat or a community centre. They prefer long-term involvement in a specific neighbourhood. Rollins and K.O.S. have relied on pedagogic methods for their art workshops, with a relatively fixed framework, while Oda Projesi have conducted their projects in a less directed way. While Oda Projesi’s activities have often taken place outside the traditional exhibition spaces, Tim Rollins and K.O.S. have brought new people to the art institutions, and their work to the gallery walls. Collaborative art projects, such as these, present a challenge to

³³ Oda Projesi website. Accessed 21. May 2021. <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com/>

³⁴ Oda Projesi, ‘Oda Projesi Atölyesi’. Published 8 October 2020. <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com>

³⁵ Oda Projesi, ‘Oda Projesi 20 Years / 20 Yaşında’. Published 23 January 2020. <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com>

the established art world, by breaking down the boundaries between artists and non-artists. Through their focus on process and social exchange, and the challenge to the idea that art is a self-contained object, these types of projects force us to rethink the value of art in social terms.

Through their practices, Rollins and K.O.S. question what art is, its purpose, and who it belongs to. In the project report for my internship at Kunsthall Oslo I wrote a proposal for the exhibition project 'Oslo Art and Knowledge Workshop', inspired by Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and based in processual and collective curating.³⁶ In the report, I made the case that the Norwegian art scene needs new contact points between professional artists and young amateurs, and that the ideas of Rollins and K.O.S. are therefore highly relevant today. By comparing their work to that of Oda Projesi, a collective that raises many of the same questions, but which has emerged at another time and place with different goals and methods, I want to further explore the possibilities of artistic collaboration to tackle these issues. Expanding the reach of art, ensuring broader access, and engaging those who are not the 'usual suspects' of the art world are some of my underlying interests as I conduct this research. These are topics that curators and art institutions are increasingly expected to deal with. My own background in art education, mediation, and youth work has no doubt influenced my choice of subject and the perspective from which I write this thesis.

³⁶ 'Oslo Art and Knowledge Workshop at Kunsthall Oslo', project report for KUN4900, Master Programme in Curation, Critique and the Cultural Heritage of Modernism, Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo, Autumn 2020.

2. An overview of current debates

In this chapter, I will look at the ongoing debates in collaborative art, a field marked by dispute. I begin by addressing the different positions held by academics on aesthetics, authorship, politics, pedagogy, and equality. In the first section, Claire Bishop, Grant H. Kester and Maria Lind offer three different approaches on how to understand social and collaborative practices. In the second and third sections of the chapter I look at how the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and the emancipatory method and theory of radical equality devised by Jacques Rancière, can be applied to collaborations between artists and participants.

One of the reasons it is difficult to find fixed criteria to evaluate collaborative art projects is the specific contexts they deal with. Artists frequently cross into other fields when it suits their purposes. In the case of Oda Projesi, for example, their work involves anthropology, sociology, and urban planning, while the activities of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. could fall into the category of art education. While some projects openly use art to educate or empower disadvantaged groups, others self-consciously distance themselves from instrumentalization and the label of social work.³⁷ Some artists advocate political views explicitly while others use indirect forms of engagement. Although all collaborative art projects rely on participation, the nature of relationships varies. Due to the range of artistic strategies employed, there is an ongoing debate on how to evaluate these projects, and by what criteria.

On the one hand, artists and critics more concerned with community relations argue that there is often an uneven power dynamic between artist and participant, and that artists risk exploiting participants in order to pursue their own artistic vision. On the other hand, some critics, such as Bishop, argue that social goals can come at the expense of artistic and aesthetic qualities, often precisely because the artist is expected to share decision-making authority. In *Artificial Hells*, Bishop argues that the aesthetic dimension of collaborative artworks is not sufficiently appreciated and discussed.³⁸ Her position is associated with the Frankfurt School of philosophy and Theodor Adorno and his defence of aesthetic autonomy.³⁹ Historically, aesthetics has been understood as the visual or sensory aspects of an artwork, such as form, colour, or texture, attempting to find the universally beautiful. In contemporary art, it can be regarded in a broader sense, as the characteristics that allow us to judge an object

³⁷ Özkan, 'Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi ...'.

³⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 3.

³⁹ Jackson, *Social Works*, 49-50.

as art. An aesthetic experience then, can be described as the sensory, emotional, and intellectual encounter between an artwork and its audience.

Kester and Lind both argue that any meaningful evaluation of collaborative art projects must consider participatory methods and the ways in which the artist works with social relations. In his book *Conversation Pieces*, Kester advocates for ‘dialogical aesthetics’, a wider definition of aesthetics that includes ethics, to analyse the exchange that takes place between artists and participants within an aesthetic framework.⁴⁰ Through her curatorial practice, Lind has been a proponent of collaborative art and its place in art institutions. She has also curated several exhibitions with Oda Projesi. In her article ‘The Collaborative Turn’, she discusses the politics of artistic collaboration, rather than ethics, and makes a case for collaborative autonomy.⁴¹

2.1 Discussions on aesthetics and autonomy.

According to Claire Bishop, the ‘social turn’ in contemporary art has led to an ‘ethical turn’ in art criticism, whereby ‘aesthetic judgments have been overtaken by ethical criteria’.⁴² In collaborative art projects, much attention is given to the relationships between artists and participants and, in Bishop’s opinion, this has unfortunately led to artists being judged increasingly by their working methods rather than on their artistic results.⁴³ Here, she mentions Oda Projesi as one example. Bishop argues that the emphasis on the social function of art threatens the artist’s autonomy. Autonomy is here understood as self-governing, as opposed to being ruled by external forces such as communities or governments.⁴⁴ Bishop is critical of what she terms ‘the social discourse’ and its ethical approach to participation, as she believes ‘it is also crucial to discuss, analyse, and compare this work critically *as art*’.⁴⁵ On the other hand ‘the artistic discourse’ insist on the artist’s right to work in all contexts, including work that can seem exploitative, self-centred, or trivial, as the freedom of the artist is the most important. The more successful art lies somewhere in between these two positions, Bishop claims, mentioning Thomas Hirschhorn, Francis Alÿs and Santiago Sierra as examples of artists who manage this balance:

⁴⁰ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*.

⁴¹ Lind, ‘The Collaborative Turn’, 177-204.

⁴² Bishop, ‘The Social Turn’, 180.

⁴³ Bishop, ‘The Social Turn’, 180-181.

⁴⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 27.

⁴⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 13.

The best collaborative practices of the past ten years address this contradictory pull between autonomy and social intervention, and reflect on this antinomy both in the structure of the work and in the conditions of its reception. It is to this art – however uncomfortable, exploitative, or confusing it may first appear – that we must turn for an alternative to the well-intentioned homilies that today pass for critical discourse on social collaboration.⁴⁶

Kester challenges Bishop's assertion that there is a dichotomy between the aesthetic and the ethical. Kester views human interactions as sensory and thereby aesthetic in their nature. According to Kester, aesthetics is about how art communicates with the viewer, and ethics is always relevant in this encounter.⁴⁷ In art based on dialogue, the aesthetic experience occurs through social exchange, and dialogical aesthetics therefore requires 'a redefinition of aesthetic experience as durational rather than immediate'.⁴⁸ Rather than looking at traditional formal qualities of objects and situations, as art critics often do, this aesthetics enables a closer look at the specific characteristics of art that is based in relationships and conversations. Deriving his understanding of communicative interaction from the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, Kester believes that dialogue can lead to personal and social transformation.⁴⁹ This requires a "shift from a concept of art based on self-expression to one based on the ethics of communicative exchange".⁵⁰ In dialogue-based art projects, Kester argues, critics should look at how the artist treats potential conflicts of interest, and must 'remain attentive to the artist's capacity to treat those same differences critically and self-reflexively as part of the work itself'.⁵¹ Kester's emphasis on the durational and temporal resembles art historian Henry M. Sayre's thoughts of the object as performance. Sayre argues that the rise of performance art in the 1970s led to a shift in how to understand art as a process that can be applied across disciplines. An art object, such as a painting, can be understood as the documentation of the *action* of painting, rather than as a self-contained object.⁵²

According to Kester, autonomy can be exercised in many forms. Some artists assert autonomy through control of temporality (such as deciding when the project starts and ends) and denial of causality (for example by insisting that art is self-referential and does not create change).⁵³ But there are also other ways. As an example, Kester describes *Lava la Bandera* (2000) by

⁴⁶ Bishop, 'The Social Turn', 183.

⁴⁷ Grant H. Kester, 'Involvement, Autonomy and the Aesthetic', lecture, *Public Art Norway (KORO)*, Critical Issues in Public Art, 16 June 2016. Video, 1:32:51. <https://vimeo.com/171072010>

⁴⁸ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 12.

⁴⁹ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 109-114.

⁵⁰ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 106.

⁵¹ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 131.

⁵² Sayre, 'The Object of Performance', 188-205.

⁵³ Kester, 'Involvement, Autonomy and the Aesthetic', 00:45:00.

Colectivo Sociedad Civil in Peru. In a ritual performance opposing the Fujimori dictatorship, the artist group washed the Peruvian flag every Friday in a fountain in the main square of the capital. Resonating with public sentiment, the act spread quickly across the country. Soon, thousands of people washed and hung flags out to dry in the town squares. Despite political efforts to contain it, the protest continued until the regime stepped down. The aesthetic autonomy here, according to Kester, is expressed through the generous nature of the work, the simple performative gesture that can be repeated by anyone, anytime, anywhere. The strength of this collective protest, he argues, is that it used artistic strategies, which can be more powerful than activist strategies of rallies, slogans, or political demands: '[The group] ... does not come right out and demand change but alludes to it, and evokes a kind of *sensus communis*, a sense of connectiveness among people who previously felt alienated and disconnected, and maybe a little bit hopeless'.⁵⁴

Kester argues that dialogical art uses aesthetic intervention to produce knowledge and understanding, in ways that would not be possible through conventional means of social or political action. However, not everyone is convinced by the need to define these social acts as aesthetic. In the introduction to the book *Living as Form*, Nato Thompson proposes to free socially engaged art from aesthetic evaluations, to consider it on its own premises.⁵⁵ How to understand interventions as art has been debated for ages, Thompson maintains, but to understand how an art project approaches the social, he suggests to turn the question around: 'If this work is *not* art, then what are the methods we can use to understand its effects, affects and impact?'⁵⁶ In another article in the same book, art critic and cultural theorist Brian Holmes offers an answer. Holmes argues that society tends to transform and absorb all activist forms, including those of social and collaborative art, and therefore this work must be evaluated along a matrix of four separate dimensions. One is how it functions as collaborative art, committed to both the symbolic and lived experience. The other three dimensions are critical research, media communication and organisation skills.⁵⁷ The expanded definition of aesthetics is met with skepticism both from those who wish to separate ethics and aesthetics, such as Bishop, and by theorists who are more concerned with the political potential of art.

⁵⁴ Kester, 'Involvement, Autonomy and the Aesthetic', 1:29:00.

⁵⁵ Thompson, *Living as Form*, 33, 24.

⁵⁶ Thompson, *Living as Form*, 26

⁵⁷ Brian Holmes, 'Eventwork: The Fourfold Matrix of Contemporary Social Movements', in *Living as Form*, Thompson, 73.

Bishop's main concern is that the artist's autonomy is being sacrificed in collaborations, to fulfil non-art goals such as social inclusion. She argues that any critique that is based on ethical criteria plays into the hands of forces that wish to instrumentalize art, from the well-intentioned social worker to the ideologically motivated neoliberal state.⁵⁸ While Bishop's fear of instrumentalization is valid, Lind argues that artists also deal with pressure from market forces, as well as museums and other art institutions. These are far from being neutral spaces for art.⁵⁹ One of the reasons artists give for working collectively is what Lind describes as collective autonomy, or "self-determination in an ever more instrumentalized art world".⁶⁰ For many, collaboration in the 2000s is an alternative, and a challenge, to contemporary individualism and the myth of the artist as solitary genius, an idea the art market still upholds. Artists choose to delegate control as an artistic strategy. 'The urge to create space for maneuver ... through strategic separatism, is both a means of protection and an act of protest,' Lind argues.⁶¹ She believes that collaboration can be a counterweight to the structures of the market and public institutions and offer a space for artistic experimentation and innovation.

Lind is interested in how artists explore shared decision-making and authorship, and the possible functions of art, not as ethical considerations, as Bishop regards them, but as intentional political acts. Many of today's collaborations are horizontal, self-organised and work across fields, joined to react to a specific local situation. Lind identifies a type of 'neo-idealism' and political 'neo-radicalism' in today's collaborative art influenced by activism. She sees this as a reaction to the capitalist hegemony.⁶² Referring to Michel de Certeau, Lind argues that collaborations can be a form of resistance, also when they are not explicitly activist. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau argues that space is created through everyday use. He describes space as the way people gradually change a place through the way it is used, understood, and inhabited on a daily basis.⁶³ Creating new space is a form of resistance to established structures, applied by self-organised, collaborative initiatives.

According to Bishop, art must not only be made, but shown to others. Since everyone cannot participate in every art project, this art must be made available to a wider audience. In her

⁵⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 13-15.

⁵⁹ Maria Lind, 'Other Reality Principles, Other Fantasies' in *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, 153-163.

⁶⁰ Lind, 'The Collaborative Turn', 202.

⁶¹ Lind, 'The Collaborative Turn', 203-204.

⁶² Lind, 'The Collaborative Turn', 201-204.

⁶³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, transl. by Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

opinion, the more the artist delegates control to participants, the more difficult these works become to assess by viewers and critics. According to Bishop, much collaborative, activist, and educational art projects suffer from the same weakness – there is a large gap between the immediate participants and the secondary audience of spectators.⁶⁴ Lind argues that participants are the spectators, and she seems unwilling to prioritize a secondary art world audience over the local community.⁶⁵ Bishop regards a work of art as a self-contained entity that communicate something to the spectator, regardless of the artists' intentions. However, this requires boundaries between production and presentation that cannot always be found in collaborative works. It is not always easy to define when the work ends, and the reception begins. It seems that Bishop's emphasis on the visual, and on the aesthetics of presentation, limits her appreciation of the process and method as part of the artwork.

2.2 Education in collaborative art

From the late 1960s, influenced by the ideas of Paulo Freire, education came to be seen not as a means for the transfer of knowledge, but as a tool for empowerment, awareness and independent thinking.⁶⁶ Artists started working at the crossroads of art and learning, and the rise of critical pedagogy coincided with artists' growing interest in institutional critique.⁶⁷ In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire opposes the 'banking' concept of education, where teachers think they can deposit their knowledge in the minds of their students. Freire advocates instead a model of learning where students use their existing knowledge to solve problems. To break the hierarchy between teacher and student that obstructs learning, one must acknowledge the unique and valuable experiences each student possesses.⁶⁸ Tim Rollins was heavily influenced by Freire's critical writing, as well as American psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey and his theories on experience-based learning.⁶⁹ The idea that learning is not transmitted, but something the participant actively develops through engaging with creative group activities and discussions, was one of the cornerstones of Rollins's practice.

⁶⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 241.

⁶⁵ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space', 4.

⁶⁶ Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

⁶⁷ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 241-243.

⁶⁸ Freire, Chapter 2 in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

⁶⁹ Romaine, 'Making History', 44.

Pablo Helguera is the director of adult education programs at MoMA, and an artist, and he believes artists have much to learn from pedagogy, as it offers a much-needed framework to understand social processes.⁷⁰ Yet, like Bishop, Helguera is sceptical toward much of today's collaborative art that relies on educational strategies. Bishop is worried about education projects posing as art (what she calls 'pedagogical aesthetics'), while Helguera is more worried about artists who attempt to create educational projects that are poorly founded in pedagogy. Helguera strongly opposes what he calls 'abstract education', referring to artists who wish to work with education as a concept, without committing to the participants' wellbeing.⁷¹ He argues that many education projects created by professional educators are better executed than pedagogic art projects where the artist has little knowledge of, and little interest in, pedagogy as field of research. He contends that artists who take on the difficult task to engage in knowledge production with actual participants must pass the criteria of both art and education.⁷² For example, participants in workshops by Rollins and K.O.S. are not only making an artwork, they also have the valid expectation that they will learn something about art.

According to Bishop, there has been a marked increase in educational art projects since around 2000, due to new thoughts on mediation and learning.⁷³ Parallel to the 'social turn' there has been an 'educational turn' in art that has also affected curating and led to a notable change in the relationship between curating and educational activities.⁷⁴ Previously, seminars, discussions, and critical forums used to accompany exhibitions, to offer context for the art. More recently, education and collaboration have become the material of the exhibition itself. These projects are often critical, aim to be emancipatory, and are concerned with the production of research rather than the mediation of knowledge.⁷⁵ This interest in knowledge production can be seen in the work of Oda Projesi.

⁷⁰ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011).

⁷¹ Pablo Helguera, 'A Bad Education', interview by Helen Reed, *The Pedagogical Impulse*, The Living Archive. Acc. 06.05.2020. <https://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/a-bad-education-helen-reed-interviews-pablo-helguera/>

⁷² Helguera, 'A Bad Education'.

⁷³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 241.

⁷⁴ O'Neill and Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn*, 12.

⁷⁵ O'Neill and Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn*, 12-13.

2.3 Radical equality and artistic collaboration

Jacques Rancière advocates for a radical equality between people, which he argues can be useful when applied to group dynamics in artistic collaborations. In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière claims that equality of knowledge is the basis for a learning situation, not the result, and he wants to overcome the duality between passive and active subjects.⁷⁶ Because these terms usually describe actions, one tends to regard a viewer standing in front of a painting or seated in a theatre as passive. On the contrary, Rancière argues that critical reflection is more active than simply performing a routine task that does not demand much thought.⁷⁷ In a classroom situation, the teacher has traditionally been regarded as the active subject, but Rancière argues convincingly that learning is the more active process.⁷⁸

Although Rancière does not reference Freire specifically, his ideas can be seen as a continuation of Freire's critical pedagogy. Drawing on the experience of the French teacher Joseph Jacotot (1770-1830), Rancière argues that one can teach what one does not know through what he calls the emancipatory method.⁷⁹ To succeed, one must acknowledge that equality is the precondition for learning. In traditional education theory, the premise is that you will become knowledgeable through education, and the student and teacher will then be equals. Rancière removes this lag and argues that all people are intellectually equal. Our differences in knowledge derive from differences in motivation. The student holds the key to learning, while the teacher's role is to activate this knowledge.

Rancière's theory on the relationship between teacher and student has inspired people working with art mediation and can also be used to analyse the relationship between artist and participant in artistic collaborations. For Rancière, the value of art is connected to its potential to expand the senses of the spectator. By constantly confronting and expanding the way in which we experience the world, art opens up for 'dissensus', which means it broadens the distance between the status quo and the possibilities imaginable.⁸⁰ Radical equality dictates that the artist and spectator are equals. The emancipation of the spectator requires freeing the work from the intentions of the artist so that the spectator can rely on their own experiences in

⁷⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Den emansiperte tilskuer*, trans. Geir Uvsløkk (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2012).

⁷⁷ Rancière, Chapter 1, 'Den emansiperte tilskuer' in *Den emansiperte tilskuer*, 7-39.

⁷⁸ Rancière. *Den emansiperte tilskuer*.

⁷⁹ Rancière first explored this idea in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) and later in *The Emancipated Spectator*.

⁸⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Sanselighetens politikk*, trans. Anne Beate Maurstad (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012).

their reading of the work.⁸¹ Every spectator creates their own meaning and thereby recreates the work. While deriving from an idea of an individual, yet universal, aesthetic experience in theories developed by Kant and Schiller, Rancière proposes a radical trust in intellectual equality that breaks with the idea of the artist as having a superior kind of knowledge.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has attempted to provide a brief summary of the debates surrounding collaborative art. Bishop proposes a framework that separate aesthetics from ethics, and production from presentation. In the end, however, it is too rigid to be applicable to the broad and many-faceted category of collaborative art practices. Kester proposes an expanded definition of aesthetics that encompasses communicative exchange, thereby collapsing aesthetics and ethics. Lind argues that delegating control and choosing to collaborate can in fact be a strategy to increase one's autonomy.

In the following chapter I look at how these different ideas of aesthetics and autonomy can be applied to the work of Tim Rollins and K.O.S., on the one hand, and Oda Projesi, on the other. Freire and Rancière offers two ways to look at artistic collaborations through the lens of the student/teacher relationship. I examine how both collectives deal with equality in artist-participant relationships, and how their conceptions of learning and teaching relate to critical pedagogy and radical equality. Taking de Certeau's notion of how space is produced as my starting point, I also examine the link between collaboration and space in these two projects, and explore how collaboration can be a form of resistance.

⁸¹ Rancière, *Den emansiperte tilskuer*.

3. Comparative analysis

In this chapter I compare the aesthetic, participatory, and spatial strategies of Oda Projesi and Tim Rollins and K.O.S. and examine how both groups challenge the established structures of the art world. I primarily look at the relationship between artists and participants, but also address the role of spectators. When discussing ‘the art world’ in this context, I refer to a set of social structures that give art its value *as art*. Interpreted through the work of Rollins and K.O.S and Oda Projesi, these structures can be seen as a result of cultural elitism that defines who is an artist or art professional, but also through economical and spatial boundaries that separate art from non-art. Both collectives address this machinery of exclusion, and reveal what structures are at play, but do so in different ways. Instead of direct confrontation, Tim Rollins and K.O.S. have chosen to adapt to these norms while Oda Projesi rejects these structures as a way of challenging them.

These strategies of adaptation and rejection, finding short-cuts and alternative paths, can be seen as small but targeted attempts at hacking the system. A ‘life hack’ is a trick, a shortcut or an adjustment that increases efficiency and makes it easier to complete a goal, using whatever you have at hand. It is often shared and presented as a proposal for others to follow. I suggest that one can see Rollins and K.O.S.’s approach as a life hack on how to be an artist. The way Rollins, and later, the K.O.S. members, present their story as a ‘how to...’ narrative is aimed at inspiring others: if they could become artists, anyone can. Their explicit aim is to create space for more people to make and enjoy art. Oda Projesi claim they do not have an agenda for social change, and do not consider themselves activists.⁸² The intention of their project is rather to investigate social and spatial relations through art.⁸³ I look at how Oda Projesi’s solutions in dealing with aesthetics, participation and the notion of space can also be interpreted as ‘life hacks’ in terms of the machinery of contemporary art.

In the first section of this chapter, I look at the artists’ relationship with the art object and aesthetics, referring to ideas from the previous chapter expressed by Claire Bishop, Grant H. Kester, and Maria Lind. While Rollins and K.O.S. have studied art and literature to be able to speak about aesthetics in the language of the art world, Oda Projesi refuse to talk about aesthetics, and argue that this is not how they value their work. In the second section, I

⁸² Oda Projesi, ‘Art’s Indecent Proposal: Collaboration. An Attempt to Think Collectively’, interview by Derya Özkan, *On Curating* (11, 2011), 70.

⁸³ Seçil Yersel in Özkan, ‘Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi...’, 51.

examine participatory strategies using the theories of Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière. I use statements by the artists to show how they relate to the participants and consider the concepts of equality, knowledge, teaching and learning part of their work. Here, I also look at how they deal with authorship in collaborative work. The final section looks at spatial strategies, through Michel de Certeau's theory on how space is created and transformed. Maria Lind has applied these ideas to the work of Oda Projesi, and I therefore start by analysing Oda Projesi, so I can compare this framework to Rollins and K.O.S.

3.1 Aesthetic strategies: Cite Kafka (or refuse to talk about it)

The aesthetics of Tim Rollins and K.O.S.

The breakthrough for Rollins and K.O.S. came with *Amerika (After Kafka)* (1984-2012), a series of paintings based on Franz Kafka's book by the same name. *Amerika VIII (1986-87)* (Illustration 3) gained them a place in the MoMA collection. In this painting, music instruments, abstract shapes and lines are laid over a grid of book pages, in the signature style of Rollins and K.O.S. The work combines individual drawings in a cohesive, collective expression, through a carefully laid out composition in white, black, and gold. Use of horizontal and vertical lines create a counterweight to the disorder of twisted fantasy horns, layered on top of each other. In the centre of the image, a railroad or ladder disappears into the horizon, adding symmetry and depth to the otherwise flat surface. The book page-sized pattern underneath keeps the elements from floating around in space. Together, the horns form an obstacle, blocking the viewer's path ahead. The result is somewhere between harmony and chaos, a battle and a salute. One can almost hear the noise of an orchestra where all the instruments play at their own rhythm, competing for the audience's attention.

Kafka's *Amerika* (1927) is about young Karl, an immigrant who comes to America thinking that 'the streets are paved with gold', in the words of K.O.S. member Rick Savinon,⁸⁴ and must overcome many obstacles before finding a place to belong. In their reading and drawing sessions, the group struggled to find a way to capture the story, but finally settled on an orchestra, inspired by one of the final scenes of the book. For months they competed to draw the craziest instruments. Savinon uses the metaphor of music to describe their method: 'It's like a jazz band where I play the guitar, somebody else is playing the drums. And at times

⁸⁴ Rick Savinon in 'Made in New York', Abreu et.al., playlist, track no. 14, MoMA, 2021. 0:33. <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/291/4029>

other people kind of go off in their own rhythm, but then come back together in order to become one. And the paintings deliver that voice of the group.’⁸⁵

Roberta Smith, an art critic for *The New York Times*, wrote an enthusiastic review of the *Amerika* series in 1989:

The taut distinctive beauty of their collaged and painted surfaces and their flat decal-like emblems are in step with much 1980's painting. At the same time, the group's working method goes to the heart of the decade's concern with authorship and originality and its intermittent penchant for political activism. Their approach upsets the myth of the isolated artistic genius prevalent since the Renaissance.⁸⁶

Smith draws a line from Paolo Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano* (c. 1435-1460) to contemporary cartoon aesthetics and ends her acclaim: 'It is as if the history of the universe is being retold in an alien tongue.'⁸⁷ Clearly, Rollins and K.O.S. spoke the language of the professionals in the New York art scene, and managed to bring something completely new. They received the validation they needed to elevate their work from the classroom to the galleries and broke with people's expectations. In the words of Rollins: 'We were expected to make outsider-looking art. In order to be subversive, we had to make the most elegant work possible.'⁸⁸

This explains the shift from their early motifs of figurative depictions of violence and urban decay, in works such as *Frankenstein (After Mary Shelley)* (1983), (Illustration 3), *Dracula (After Bram Stoker)* (1983), and *The Inferno (After Dante Alighieri)* (1983-1984). Rollins says the group wanted to go beyond the representational imagery of their daily life:

It was a strategy we adopted. The work had to be beautiful because we were living in a whole lot of ugly. ... One critic said something like, 'I love the "Amerika" paintings, but the early works – the burning brick pieces, Frankenstein, Dracula, The Inferno – were better because that was really the kids.' But the opposite is true. 'That' was me, with my liberal, Yankee, paternalist, German Expressionist political agenda.⁸⁹

Their work went from figurative brutal through the abstract and allegorical, to a more minimalist-influenced, monochrome aesthetic in works such as *White Alice (after Lewis Carroll)* (1984-87), *The Whiteness of the Whale (after Herman Melville)* (1985-87), *Invisible*

⁸⁵ Savinon in 'Made in New York', no. 14, 1:45.

⁸⁶ Roberta Smith, "'Amerika' by Tim Rollins and K.O.S.", *New York Times*, 3 November 1989.

⁸⁷ Smith, "'Amerika' by Tim Rollins and K.O.S.'

⁸⁸ Rollins, 'Only What You Do For Christ Will Last', interview by James Romaine, *Image Journal*, issue 60 (2009). <https://imagejournal.org/article/christ-will-last-interview-tim-rollins/>

⁸⁹ Tim Rollins, 'Tim Rollins Talks to David Deitcher', interview by Deitcher, *Artforum*, 41, 8 (April 2003).

Man (After Ralph Ellison) (1999).⁹⁰ These works deal with representation through play with transparency and multiple layers of paint. This can also be found in the series *I See the Promised Land (after the Rev. Dr. M. L. King, Jr.)* (1998-2008) (Illustration 4).⁹¹ Some of the later works also have a brighter and more colourful palette, such as *The Frogs (After Aristophanes)* (1993) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream (after Shakespeare and Mendelssohn)* (series, 2000-2017) (Illustration 5). Among key influences Rollins mentioned the monochromatic painting of Ad Reinhardt and Robert Ryman and Lucy Lippard's writing on de-materialisation.⁹² He also referred to the conceptual artists Joseph Kosuth and Hanne Darboven as inspirations for the grid of book pages.⁹³

Rollins met with some sharp criticism for using classic, European, bourgeois literature, presumed to be irrelevant to the lives of young people in the Bronx, rather than working with local culture.⁹⁴ In an interview in 1990, he defended this choice: 'These books are classics for a reason. We've found them to be filled with issues that are a burning part of daily life in the South Bronx.'⁹⁵ What he did not mention is how, in working with the western canon, the K.O.S. were relating to an already established hierarchy of artistic expressions. The members of K.O.S. were inspired by a range of cultural influences, but the decision not to emphasise more urban influences, such as the hip hop culture that emerged from the streets of the Bronx in the 1980s, seems a deliberate choice.

Unlike much of collaborative art, it is possible to view the work by Rollins and K.O.S through a purely aesthetic lens. More layers are uncovered by approaching the literary and art historical sources they refer to, or through the biography of the artists, which are, a key to how they address exclusion, violence, beauty and transcendence. But analysing the collaborative nature of the work requires other tools. For this purpose, a dichotomy between the artistic and the social, put forward by Claire Bishop in the previous chapter, obstructs the understanding of the work as a collaborative process manifested through a collaborative aesthetics. Grant H. Kester's dialogical aesthetics, with its emphasis on temporality and duration, is more useful, as it offers the possibility of viewing workshops and the finished

⁹⁰ Some works may have identical names. These three works are shown in Berry, *A History*, 68, 70-71, 191.

⁹¹ Rollins, interview by Romaine.

⁹² Rollins, interview by Romaine.

⁹³ Rollins, interview by Deitcher.

⁹⁴ Kristine McKenna, 'Art From the Heart of Amerika: Straight out of the South Bronx, Tim Rollins brings his K.O.S. (Kids of Survival) and their art, 'Amerika I-XII'', *Los Angeles Times* (8 July 1990).

⁹⁵ Rollins in McKenna, 'Art From the Heart of Amerika'.

paintings not as a method and a result, or production and presentation, but as a continuous process. From this perspective, the work starts with the reading of texts together. This offers an understanding of the connection between K.O.S. members and the books they read. In the words of K.O.S. member Angel Abreu, when asked if they were desecrating books by tearing them apart: 'I would say, no, we're making new work. And we're collaborating with these authors.'⁹⁶ By connecting the themes in the books to their own lives, the artists attempted to continue the stories across time.

Still, the group needed to be understood in terms of their art objects. In 1989, Rollins gave an account of how they were held back by people's preconceptions, and why they did not wish to be seen as a 'project':

'When we first showed the "Amerika" paintings,' Rollins said, 'people who saw them would approach our dealer and say wow! Who's this new young artist!?' When they found out the work was by a schoolteacher and a bunch of kids from the Bronx their attitude changed completely. They'd become patronizing and condescending and would say "oh, what a nice project." All of a sudden it wasn't a painting, it was a project. This is a subtle form of racism, a way of keeping what they perceive as undesirables in their place.'⁹⁷

To Oda Projesi, aesthetics is a dangerous word

While Rollins and K.O.S. initially used their aesthetic approach as a social strategy, Oda Projesi seem to reject aesthetics altogether. In an interview with Claire Bishop, the members of the group call aesthetics 'a dangerous word', and say they do not use aesthetic considerations to evaluate their work, but rather see the quality and nature of relationships as markers of success.⁹⁸ In another interview, the artists say that although they relate to aesthetics, because they are visual artists, the question of aesthetics is not relevant to their project and their goals.⁹⁹ Özge Açıkkol explains their position: 'I say we cannot talk about an aesthetic structure in the works of Oda Projesi, because this isn't our aim. In other words, I think aesthetics is something that you aim at, whereas we have no such aims in our way of production'.¹⁰⁰

One project that is among the slightly more visual, as it is both a community project and exhibit, is *Ada* (2003) (Illustration 6). Outside the 8th Istanbul Biennial main venue, Oda

⁹⁶ Abreu in 'Made in New York', no. 14, 2:00.

⁹⁷ McKenna, 'Art From the Heart of Amerika'.

⁹⁸ Bishop, 'The Social Turn', 180.

⁹⁹ Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 70.

¹⁰⁰ Özge Açıkkol in Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 70.

Projeksi erected a 1:1 scale model of a *gecekondu*, a makeshift house built overnight, common in the illegal shantytowns on the outskirts of Istanbul. They hired *gecekondu* builder Mustafa Tetik and his colleagues to construct it and named it ‘Mustafa Tetik Model’. The brick building was accompanied by ‘Annex II’, a leaflet containing discussions on urban issues related to shantytowns, and advertisements for a fictional *gecekondu* for sale posted on billboards across the city.¹⁰¹ *Ada* also included a series of activities in Galata, where artists were invited to do collaborations with residents in the neighbourhood. One was a portrait project by Belmin Söylemez and Orhan Cem Çetin, *The Picture of My Life*. Whoever wanted their portrait taken could take part. Participants decided how they wanted to present themselves and got to keep their photograph. A photo collage and video footage from the process were later exhibited in the Oda Projeksi apartment.¹⁰²

The word ‘Ada’ means both ‘city block’ and ‘island’ in Turkish and, according to art historian Derya Özkan, the title can point to the commodification of the city, as neighbourhoods are divided and sold to developers without regard for social context, a process that was happening in Galata at the time. In a more metaphorical sense, an illegal structure can be considered an island in regulated urban space, and a form of resistance to capitalist city development, Özkan argues.¹⁰³ By placing the ‘Mustafa Tetik Model’ outside the biennial venue, it could be considered such an island. As most of the Galata participants were not likely to visit the biennial, and the biennial visitors were not the participants in Galata, the project communicated to two separate audiences. Perhaps only a few people experienced the whole project. The organisation of *Ada* thereby draws attention to how people in the same city live their lives in separate spheres. In the end, the presentation at the biennial (the building and leaflet) is what the artists were the least happy with. Açıkkol explains their ‘mistake’, as she calls it: ‘The part of the project that we presented to the public was limited to a presentation that did not reflect the process of production; in other words, it remained mere decoration.’¹⁰⁴ Because they did not manage to make the collaborative qualities visible, especially the way they worked with Tetik and the construction crew, the building was perceived more as a symbolic and representational object, and less as an investigation into its actual social context.

¹⁰¹ Oda Projeksi, ‘Art’s Indecent Proposal’, 56.

¹⁰² Oda Projeksi, ‘Art’s Indecent Proposal’, 59.

¹⁰³ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 234-235.

¹⁰⁴ Açıkkol in Oda Projeksi, ‘Art’s Indecent Proposal’, 57.

The work of Oda Projesi often consists of social gatherings where sharing is more important than creating. It is impossible to analyse this work in any meaningful way using formal aesthetic criteria alone, as their work is both social and artistic, in Maria Lind's opinion. They are not occupied with discussions on what is and is not art, as long as art is a method and zone for their activities. Lind argues that the work of Oda Projesi must be judged by the relationship between artists and participants. But unlike social work, there is no official commissioner or local authority that will measure the effect of their projects, she emphasises.¹⁰⁵

To Bishop, Oda Projesi becomes the ultimate example of a project that privileges the social over the aesthetic¹⁰⁶ She accuses Lind of highlighting the ethical aspects of Oda Projesi, rather than their artistic significance, by which she means their conceptual, experimental, and visual accomplishments:

Lind downplays what might be interesting in Oda Projesi's work as *art* —the possible achievement of making dialogue a medium or the significance of dematerializing a project into social process. Instead, her criticism is dominated by *ethical* judgments on working procedure and intentionality.¹⁰⁷

Neither Lind nor the artists themselves seem to regard this as a valid contradiction. They see the relationships between the artists and participants not as directed by ethics, but by an artistic choice to examine social exchange, and see no way in which the working procedure can be separated from 'the art'. Açıkkol insists that art based in collaboration must always be read through a real-world lens: 'There is an instance of having contact with a community, and therefore it cannot be perceived as a one-dimensional work and it cannot be read solely through the context of art.'¹⁰⁸

I would suggest that the ephemeral quality of Oda Projesi's work is not, as Claire Bishop claims, the unfortunate side-effect of a method that emphasises the process over the result. Rather, it is the deliberate framing of their practise, where they take care not to leave anything behind that can be interpreted as art.¹⁰⁹ This is why it was a mistake, as Açıkkol says, to show the brick house in *Ada* as an object, not as a process. While they are not uninterested in aesthetics, they explicitly reject aesthetic criteria as a means to assess their work. By

¹⁰⁵ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space', 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Bishop, 'The Social Turn', 180.

¹⁰⁷ Bishop, 'The Social Turn', 181.

¹⁰⁸ Açıkkol in Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 56.

¹⁰⁹ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space', 3.

attempting to avoid aesthetics all together, they challenge the value system of art that privileges the aesthetic over procedural, relational, and spatial aspects.

Dialogical aesthetics can offer a framework to appreciate the temporal and durational nature of Oda Projesi's work, and the relationships that are formed through their practice. According to this view, Oda Projesi's projects are clearly aesthetic. Furthermore, they use their position as artists and their access to art institutions strategically. By relying on this artistic autonomy, by Kester's definition, they apply an aesthetic strategy. The question, then, is why do they not wish to be evaluated aesthetically? In his effort to encompass all interaction within a radically expanded definition of aesthetics, Kester does not offer an explanation as to why some artists would prefer to position themselves outside this framework, that is, not to be subject to an aesthetic evaluation. Can it be seen as a political position against aesthetics? Going back to Nato Thompson and Brian Holmes, they are both concerned about being able to value social and collaborative art projects through aspects such as social methodology and organisational skills, clearly separating this from the aesthetic. Similarly, the challenge for Oda Projesi seems to be how to use all the benefits of working within an aesthetic framework, without being absorbed by it. Rejecting aesthetics, at least rhetorically, could be part of their solution.

Summary: Aesthetics as resistance

Both collectives challenge the established system that values art, but in different ways. Rollins and K.O.S. produced their work through collective and consensus-based processes, thereby challenging the notion that academic art training is needed to become an artist. As with many art projects based in community collaboration, Oda Projesi do not produce anything in the traditional sense of the word, and operate completely outside the market, resisting the object-fixation of the art world. While Rollins and K.O.S. adapted an aesthetic strategy that made sure they could not be reduced to a social project, Oda Projesi seem more concerned about being not being limited to the context of art.

The two collectives came out of two different art historical contexts that have influenced their strategies.¹¹⁰ Rollins was educated in a conceptual art tradition, with Joseph Kosuth as his mentor. Only a few years earlier, as part of the artist collective Group Material, he advocated for the merging of art and non-art, high and low culture, and presented art in neighbourhood-

¹¹⁰ Rollins, interview by Deitcher.

spaces and used interventionist strategies in public space.¹¹¹ Rollins described himself as a conceptual artist,¹¹² which supports the idea that this aesthetic strategy was adapted for the purpose of this specific project. In a recent interview, K.O.S. member Robert Branch describes their work as ‘conceptual painting’.¹¹³ Oda Projesi, on the other hand, can be seen in light of the ‘strategic turn’ of the 2000s, that came as a reaction to the commercialisation of participatory art through biennials and public and private commissions. It was a turn marked by an increase in local, long-term collaborations, and a turning away from institutional exhibition spaces.¹¹⁴

Rollins knew that K.O.S. had to know their basics, and this was not only about education, but also about class. For the ‘outsiders’ to be taken seriously as artists, the members of K.O.S. needed the right references. Being from a working-class family in rural Maine, Rollins had used university as the way out of his hometown, and he believed in the possibility to transcend through education.¹¹⁵ Oda Projesi’s confidence that art does not have to be aesthetic, also has to do with class. The artists of Oda Projesi all came from urban middle-class families and could afford to rent an apartment in the centre of Istanbul as their studio space, straight out of art school.¹¹⁶ Unlike K.O.S., they had the autonomy and confidence necessary to assert that what they make is art, because they are artists.

3.2 Participatory strategies: The student as teacher (and artist as student)

Relationships between Tim Rollins and K.O.S. members

The documentary ‘Kids of Survival: The Art and Life of Tim Rollins + K.O.S.’ offers a glimpse into the relationship between Rollins and the K.O.S. in their studio.¹¹⁷ It shows Rollins’s many roles in the group, as artist, parent, and instructor, as well as footage of him spending hours on the phone from behind his manager’s desk, concerned with paying the bills. One scene shows how Rollins kept strict rules for the group. As he prepares to leave the studio for a few days, he appoints one of the group members as the interim director of the

¹¹¹ Jan Avgikos, ‘Group Material Timeline: Activism as work of Art’ in *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, ed. Nina Felshin (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 85-116.

¹¹² Julia Halperin, ‘Artist Tim Rollins, a Champion of Collaboration and a Powerful Evangelist for Art Education, Has Died at 62’, *Artnet*, 27 December 2017. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/tim-rollins-champion-collaboration-evangelist-art-education-died-62-1188836>

¹¹³ Studio K.O.S. ‘Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.’ 0:20:00

¹¹⁴ Thompson, *Living as Form*, 31-32.

¹¹⁵ Abreu in ‘Made in New York’, Abreu et.al., playlist, track 15, MoMA, 2021. 0:05. <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/291/4030>

¹¹⁶ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 198.

¹¹⁷ Daniel Geller and Dayna Goldfine (directors), ‘Kids of Survival: The Art and Life of Tim Rollins + K.O.S.’, Geller/Goldfine Productions, 1996. 87 minutes.

workshop space and instructs him to make sure another group member gets the painting work done. To be part of K.O.S., the members had to stay in school, do their homework before painting, and maintain an academic score of at least C-average. Yet Rollins insisted that when it came to creative decisions, they did everything together.

From the early days of the project, Rollins met criticism for his role as ‘white saviour’ to Black and Hispanic teenagers and was accused of exploiting the participants to boost his artist career. In 1991, some previous members made serious allegations that Rollins was being emotionally abusive, controlling, and spent their money on himself.¹¹⁸ Other K.O.S. members defended him, stressing the collective nature of the project. The accusers were largely dismissed as disgruntled former employees and expelled members, and the allegations were never sustained by other sources.¹¹⁹ Even so, the relationships in the group seem complicated and contradictory, with Rollins being described as employer, mentor, and father figure.¹²⁰

In the documentary the group members appear dedicated, yet young and immature, and above all vulnerable, growing up in an extremely violent environment where the drug trade is the number one job opportunity, and with school dropout rates at 70%.¹²¹ Stakes were high for the aspiring artists. The college fund that Rollins set up with money from art sales was the only chance some of these teenagers would have at a higher education. Even so, it would be ignorant to suggest that their options were limited to art or drugs. These teenagers had talent, were highly motivated and actively sought out membership of the group. However, the documentary shows how the group needed Rollins’s discipline even more than his art world know-how, and as much as he needed their creativity. Against this backdrop, accusations that Rollins was exploiting these teenagers for his professional gain might not be completely unfounded, but they are also naïve. In a recent interview, Angel Abreu says Rollins certainly did not pull him out of the gutter, as some people seem to think, ‘but what he did was show me possibilities’.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Mark Lasswell, ‘True Colors: Tim Rollins’s Odd Life With the Kids of Survival’, *New York Magazine* (29 July 1991), 30-38.

¹¹⁹ Romaine ‘Making History’, 46-47.

¹²⁰ Abreu, ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.’ *The Paris Review* (24 May 2019).
<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/05/24/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/>

¹²¹ Geller and Goldfine, ‘Kids of Survival’.

¹²² Studio K.O.S. ‘Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.’ 0:05:23

One reason for criticism of the project was the signature, ‘Tim Rollins + K.O.S.’ The name might have been a way to become more marketable, by using Rollins’s privileged status in relation to the group. Rollins addressed his position in the group an interview in 1990:

‘Obviously there’s some truth to the allegation that the media has focused on me because as a white, middle-class male they find me unthreatening. But, I am the one who got the project going and I am the one who’s been working my booty off for the last decade. But the kids are not shoved into the background by any means. They’d all be here today because they usually participate in interviews, but they’re on vacation this week – and believe me, they were happy to palm off the interviewing duties on me.’¹²³

The focus on Rollins was not only the fault of the media. Art historian Kellie Jones points out how galleries and exhibitions presented Rollins with his whole biography, while K.O.S. members were often not even mentioned by name, and rarely with their CV.¹²⁴ In part, this could be a result of galleries’ inexperience with collective work, but this is no excuse. It is shocking how artists who have been part of the collective for more than 30 years are made invisible and presented as unidentified ‘kids’, even today.¹²⁵ Regardless of intentions, this reinforces exactly the elitist individualism and racism that the group set out to challenge.

Art historian James Romaine points out that “Tim Rollins *and* K.O.S.” signify both unity and separation, and reflect a transparency about the collaborative structure.¹²⁶ After all, Rollins was the group’s leader. He was clear about what he demanded from the group members, and they all agreed that you had to prove your skills before you got near the big canvas. As Romaine suggests, the collaboration can still be considered a democratic one. It depends on how one defines equality:

Should all members gain equally from the collaboration regardless of input, or should their gain reflect the degree and quality of that input? ... Although, as in any democracy, not all members share equal power and influence in every situation, the structure of their collaboration aims for mutual and reciprocal exchange and division of work according to each member’s abilities.¹²⁷

The strength of Rollins, according to Robert Branch, was his ability to create an environment in which the participants’ ideas could grow.¹²⁸ When Rollins talks about the group dynamic, he

¹²³ McKenna, ‘Art From the Heart of Amerika’.

¹²⁴ Kellie Jones, ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: What’s Wrong with This Picture?’ in *EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 341-342.

¹²⁵ See for example, the biography available at Lehmann Maupin, New York, where Rollins and K.O.S. were last exhibited in 2019. ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: Biography’, Lehmann Maupin, accessed 6 May 2021. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/biography>

¹²⁶ Romaine “Making History”, 46.

¹²⁷ Romaine “Making History”, 46.

¹²⁸ Branch in Studio K.O.S. ‘Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.’ 0:31:10.

describes himself as an educator, not a teacher. Teachers give you resources, Rollins says, while an educator draws something out of you that you already have. He saw his role as extracting, promoting, and distributing this knowledge, and in that sense compared himself to the conductor of an orchestra.¹²⁹

Rollins clearly views pedagogy as a liberating force, in line with the ideas of Paulo Freire. When he talks about ‘the kids’ he emphasises their talent and knowledge. One early example of this knowledge can be found in art critic Lucy Lippard’s review of one of the first group exhibitions Rollins’s class participated in. The exhibition was a response to the Atlanta child murders (1979–1981) and took place at the Group Material artist-run gallery in 1981. ‘The most moving part of the show was a group of pictures painted by educationally disadvantaged schoolchildren and collected by artist and schoolteacher Tim Rollins as *Who’s Killing the Kids?*’ Lippard writes.¹³⁰ She applauds Group Material for incorporating children’s own views in the exhibition and describes their uncanny portrayals of the feelings of helplessness, sorrow, isolation, and fear. They knew violence and injustice. The most painful part of the show, Lippard writes, is the kids’ consciousness of the extent of their own victimization.¹³¹ Rollins saw his task as bringing their knowledge forward, and he recognized that his school class, and later the members of the K.O.S., understood things about being young, or about race and life, that he did not.

Like Jacques Rancière, it seems Rollins regarded equality as a precondition for learning. Rollins highlighted not only the equality of knowledge, but of ability. The problem, he believed, was unequal access to art, literature, and creative self-expression. He did not approve of how the school system put labels on his students. ‘If one of my “learning-disabled” students could memorize a Tupac CD, then surely that student could absorb a few lines from writers like Shakespeare and Ellison,’ he proclaimed.¹³² The emphasis on literary classics was a result of Rollins’s belief in intellectual equality, but paradoxically reinforces his position within the group, as he was the one who selected these texts.¹³³ Yet, Abreu still recalls reading author and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois for the first time, and the

¹²⁹ Rollins, ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: On Transfiguration’, artist talk, *Art Basel*, Salon, 17 June 2012. 14:55. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5owGJ3RhS8M>

¹³⁰ Lucy Lippard, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984), 252.

¹³¹ Lippard, *Get the Message?*, 252.

¹³² Rollins, interview by Deitcher.

¹³³ Rollins in McKenna, ‘Art From the Heart of America’.

words: 'I sit with Shakespeare, and he winces not'. As an artist in K.O.S., Abreu too sat with Shakespeare, Kafka and Du Bois, not as their student, but as their equal.¹³⁴

When Rollins insisted that the creative decisions were made together, even though he led the workshops and proposed the books, it is because the group provided the content in their 'jamming sessions' together, and later decided on the concept and composition of the final work together. According to Abreu, the artist is the one with the idea, so when an idea is created collectively by K.O.S., all those involved are authors of that work, regardless of who applies the paint.¹³⁵ At first glance, the workshop setting resembles the traditional classroom hierarchy. Using Rancière's ideas on the relationship between thinking and doing, providing content and ideas are the more active processes, and what makes an artist. The workshops can then be read as an attempt to reverse these roles of student and teacher.¹³⁶ Like Rancière, Rollins also attempted to remove the delay he saw in traditional learning:

'A big problem with the traditional school is that it places the student in a constant state of preparation. [...] I begin with a different premise. Instead of constantly training kids to 'become' artists, why not take on the job of encouraging them to be artists now?'¹³⁷

Workshops outside the studio, with new youth groups, still use the same framework. Participants are offered enough freedom to influence the result and to call themselves artists in the process. Branch calls their process a 'pedagogy of exploration'. They start with a question they want to explore, and a pedagogic framework, and within that framework there is room for trial and error.¹³⁸ To be able to make museum quality work with youth groups, you need structure and freedom, and then you need to 'put the pressure on', Abreu explains. When expectations are high, people rise to those standards, because they have to. He sums up their two most important values as mutual respect and no condescension.¹³⁹ But the workshops with new participants differ from the early studio works by K.O.S. In the *Amerika* paintings, the group spent months deciding on a concept and motif. In external workshops, time is short, and the artists often repeat a concept. As a result, many paintings are strikingly similar, such as the variations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream (after Shakespeare and Mendelssohn)* (Illustration 5), and artistically the influence of participants is limited. Even so, participants describe the

¹³⁴ Abreu in conversation with Kunsthall Oslo youth board, moderated by author. Video call, 20 February 2021.

¹³⁵ Abreu in conversation with Kunsthall Oslo youth board.

¹³⁶ Rancière. *The Emancipated Spectator*.

¹³⁷ Rollins, 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: The Workshop has Survived Because We Love Each Other', interview by Joshua Decter, *Flash Art*, no. 150 (1990), 90, quoted in Berry, *A History*, 12.

¹³⁸ Branch in Studio K.O.S. 'Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.' 0:38:58.

¹³⁹ Abreu in Studio K.O.S., 'Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.' 0:49:00, 0:47:49.

workshops as an eye-opening art experience, where they feel treated as equals and get the opportunity to be exhibited as artists under the K.O.S. signature.¹⁴⁰

Relationships between Oda Projesi and participants

Özge Açikkol, Güneş Savaş, and Seçil Yersel spent three years in the Galata neighbourhood before they formed Oda Projesi. They describe these as their learning years. They were always interested in public space, collaborations, and the neighbourhood, but as relationships gradually formed the studio space was slowly transformed. According to Özkan, ‘deciding to form an art collective meant deciding to explore how art could not only be inspired by but also become a material response to urban social life in Istanbul’.¹⁴¹ As discussed in the previous section, Lind suggests that Oda Projesi use art as a means to create relationships,¹⁴² but it can also be the other way around. The relationship with neighbours is what has enabled Oda Projesi to conduct their art projects. Through their long-term presence in the neighbourhood, relationships became fluid. Özge Açikkol notes that ‘we’ve had relationships that go beyond our being artists. We’re simply part of the neighbourhood, even if we are somewhat strange neighbours.’¹⁴³ This fluidity also runs through their collaborations, where participants are mostly people in the neighbourhood, and the separation between creator, participant, spectator, and critic dissolves.

Yersel is not entirely comfortable with the label ‘artists working with the community’ that Oda Projesi is often given by critics, curators, and collaborating institutions. ‘Working with’ suggests a separation between the artists and another entity – the other. They prefer ‘working together’, as that phrase describes a merging of groups or individuals. Yersel also dislikes the term community, as this concept risks forcing a group of people together within the context of an art project:

A unified and harmonious structure is always already unrealistic and impossible; or if any such claim exists, it is perhaps constructed retrospectively, or amounts to pretension. ... Therefore, I would propose a definition of Oda Projesi as a project involving *neighbours* rather than a pre-defined community.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Abby Kirchert, ‘Looking Back: Tim Rollins and K.O.S., A Midsummer Night’s Dream’, interview by John Epp, University Art Museum, Albany, January 2019. <https://www.albany.edu/university-art-museum/collection/tim-rollins-and-kos/looking-back>

¹⁴¹ Özkan, ‘Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi ...’, 51.

¹⁴² Lind, ‘Actualisation of Space’, 2.

¹⁴³ Açikkol in ‘Interview: Oda Projesi’ in *Networked Cultures: Parallel Architectures and the Politics of Space*, eds. Mörtenböck and Mooshammer (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers 2008), 288.

¹⁴⁴ Yersel in Oda Projesi, ‘Art’s Indecent Proposal’, 55.

Being someone's neighbour is often coincidental. Relations are shaped by the physical architecture, which in turn is shaped by people's life.¹⁴⁵ In contrast to community, the neighbour implies a two-way relationship and proximity to a physical space, rather than a shared interest.

The artists claim that the signature of Oda Projesi belongs to all who participate in a project, but between projects, it refers to the three permanent members. '[T]here is a need to distinguish Oda's neighbourhood projects from those in which we act more like an author. There are signatures in each project and these can be bracketed under the umbrella of Oda Projesi,' Açıkkol explains.¹⁴⁶ The artists work in a range of media, and also have their individual art practice outside the constellation. In *Ada*, Oda Projesi lent their name to others, making their role more comparable to that of an editor than an author. Only the leaflet was made by the artists, as well as the advertisement that directed potential 'buyers' to the Oda Projesi website. The participants in the neighbourhood events became co-producers.

Oda Projesi's motto, 'exchange, not change'¹⁴⁷, is rooted in the underlying principle that the neighbours hold the knowledge. Rather than educating their collaborators on art, Oda Projesi want to learn how they use and relate to urban space, so they can use these forms as models in their own art projects.¹⁴⁸ This way of understanding knowledge resonates with Freire but, unlike Rollins and K.O.S., Oda Projesi does not consider their work pedagogical. One could argue that they sometimes use pedagogic methods in activities, but this is far from Freire's pedagogy of liberation, as they do not aim to educate or empower groups. Like Rancière, they rather consider equality to be a precondition for exchange, which is why it is so important for them to emphasise the neighbour as their equal. Oda Projesi work from the assumption that art is needed in society and can increase understanding between people. But they do not believe that they, as a group of artists, should make attempts to empower another group, according to Özge Açıkkol:

Empowerment is too large a claim; it actually suggests that we have the power. Why don't we take this as something done together, collaboratively? At that point we can talk about empowering space and everyday life rather than persons. Empowerment is not something that can be done only by one side in a relationship. Oda Projesi, which takes nourishment from urban space, and whose survival is based on the city's dynamics, cannot have power by itself.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 55.

¹⁴⁶ Açıkkol in Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 63.

¹⁴⁷ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 219.

¹⁴⁸ Özkan, 'Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi ...', 53.

¹⁴⁹ Açıkkol in Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 70.

Summary: Learning from participants

In collaborative art, participants always have some influence over the work, to affect either form or content. In the works by Rollins and K.O.S., there is always the precondition that there will be a physical object. The process of creating the work is relatively fixed, as the artists always follow the same model, with a literary work or a musical composition as their starting point. In Oda Projesi's projects, there are no predefined limitations, and in each project the artistic concept, as well as the working method, is created in a negotiation between the participants. Unlike Rollins and K.O.S., where there is a clear distinction between the artists (initiators and facilitators), participants (in the workshop), and audience (visitors at the gallery), Oda Projesi's projects have no clear distinctions between these groups and audiences are often participants.¹⁵⁰ Their flexibility and authorial generosity also come from a privileged position. Oda Projesi could distance themselves from authorship, much as they claim to reject aesthetics, because their social position allows them to remain artists, whereas the young members of K.O.S. needed the artworks to become artists.

For Rollins, the members of K.O.S. held knowledge that he wanted to extract, promote, and distribute. For Oda Projesi neighbours had knowledge they want to share and learn from. In both cases the participant becomes the teacher, and the artist the student. But group dynamics are complicated. Between Rollins and K.O.S., Rollins had access to knowledge that the students did not due to his experience, education, and position in the art world. By emphasising the knowledge of the students, Rollins shifted this balance, but this does not cancel out other power dynamics such as age, race and class. The same is true for Oda Projesi. That said, Rollins and Oda Projesi both still attempted to go beyond these divisions and both have described this as a process where they had to reconsider their own preconceptions. Art-educated Oda Projesi needed to learn that the neighbours were in fact the experts, while Rollins realised that his students understood oppression and exclusion in ways he did not.

3.3 Claiming space: Show up in a suit (or with a picnic basket)

Oda Projesi and the transformation of space

In 2001, the visiting artist Erik Göngrich organised a picnic in the Oda Projesi courtyard together with the residents from the surrounding apartments (Illustration 7). Some participants

¹⁵⁰ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space', 4.

did the shopping, others the cooking, and they all brought carpets out into the courtyard. In his previous project, *Istanbul as picnic city* (2001), at the art museum Proje4L in Istanbul, Göngrich explored how Istanbulites would have a picnic almost anywhere in the city, temporarily transforming, or one could say claiming, urban places that were not meant for recreational use. A transformation also took place in Galata, according to Derya Özkan:

As soon as the plastic-based carpets were laid on the ground, the participants began to take off their shoes and the courtyard began to feel like an interior. This project involves an intervention into the public space of the courtyard while at the same time making it function like a private space, thus complicating the public-private distinction in the first place.¹⁵¹

This transformation from place to space is where the interest of Oda Projesi lies. The way they relate to the concept of space can be understood through the ideas of Michel de Certeau, who argues that the production of space happens through small gestures and actions in our daily life. Because space, unlike place, is mobile and changing, multiple and contradictory spaces can exist in the same place.¹⁵² Maria Lind applies de Certeau's idea of how space is created to Oda Projesi's work, and argues: 'Thus space is about actualisation, about active utilisation, and about the ambivalences and internal dependencies that arise in the very use of it, just as when a word is articulated it acquires layers of meaning through its specific context.' Oda Projesi's work, then, is about the uses of public and semi-public space, such as a street, a square, or an empty apartment, and the interactions that take place in these spaces.

The context of Istanbul is important for Oda Projesi, and how they deal with space is intricately linked to the city. Özge Açıkkol makes an interesting connection between authorship and the creation of urban spaces in modern city development, when she asks who can claim and define space:

The concept of authorship, just like the concept of gentrification, originates in *the West*. We might argue that authorship never existed here in Istanbul in the Western sense; the city was not structured predominantly according to this dynamic. ... Actually, space is first formed and then appropriated. That is, from the beginning there is no authorship. We can discuss the author of the space of Oda Projesi from this perspective. The space is first established and then come the signature and naming.¹⁵³

In other words, the authorship of an artwork is linked to the authorship of space, in Oda Projesi's work. This is problematic for the artists, who do not wish to claim shared space.

¹⁵¹ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 222-223.

¹⁵² De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 126-127.

¹⁵³ Açıkkol in Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 59.

Things that happen there [in Galata] are built upon lived experience; at that stage who is the author and who isn't becomes rather complicated. The stage that turns Oda Projesi into an author is the moment at which it claims that what is happening is an art project – now whether this happens in the neighbourhood or in the gallery doesn't matter. But in the meantime, let's also remember that we aren't making any such claim. We aren't saying that this is an art project. Instead we say that it is a proposal for an art project. Lived experience forces us to say so; that is, it remains a proposal since there are no strict definitions and rigid limitations in daily life.¹⁵⁴

One example is the first project Oda Projesi created together as a collective. In *A Space Without a Use* (2000) the artists cleared out the middle room of the apartment (Illustration 8), to investigate useless space, and create a meeting place. It was inspired by George Perec's text 'About a Useless Space', that is about searching for a room that is intentionally functionless.¹⁵⁵ Seçil Yersel explains:

This one room never looked like a white cube or a gallery space. It was just empty and cleaner than the other rooms. And because it was empty and clean, it was like a gap in the neighbourhood, and the neighbours kept asking, 'Why is the room empty?' This is when we started talking about a space's possibilities. In a sense, it was really about a space that could become a place.¹⁵⁶

What separates this project from the many artists who have presented the audience with an empty gallery space is the proximity and exchange with local inhabitants, often families with small living quarters where space must always be functional. Açıkkol states:

'A space without a use' is also a comment on my neighbor's single-room apartment which was saturated with function, one single space overflowed with many different uses. The project sets up a contrast between our empty middle room and our neighbors' single-room apartments, asking how these two different spaces can exist together.¹⁵⁷

Oda Projesi continued this exploration with a series of projects titled *One Day in the Room* (2000), opening the room to different uses by the neighbours.¹⁵⁸ They also continued to encourage people to make use of the space as they wished, by keeping the doors open and leaving the keys with neighbours.¹⁵⁹ By not having opening hours or advertising, they further distanced themselves from the organised spaces of galleries and institutions, as well community centres, places where space has specific purpose. Through these actions, Lind suggests that the space became both public and private: 'They set up situations for various types of exchange in which intimacy and personal contact are stressed.'¹⁶⁰ Looking back at

¹⁵⁴ Açıkkol in Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 62.

¹⁵⁵ Seçil Yersel in Oda Projesi interview by Mörtenböck and Mooshammer, 288.

¹⁵⁶ Yersel in Oda Projesi interview by Mörtenböck and Mooshammer, 288.

¹⁵⁷ Açıkkol interviewed by Özkan 31 May 2005, in Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 214.

¹⁵⁸ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 215.

¹⁵⁹ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space', 2.

¹⁶⁰ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space', 2.

their time in Galata in 2005, Yersel highlights this flexibility of uselessness: ‘Over the past eight years, the space has actually been ‘useless’: it has gained and lost its function during projects and daily life. It has not really been an ‘art space’, a living space, workspace or studio. In between, it has had many different uses.’¹⁶¹

Like much of collaborative art, Oda Projesi work both inside and outside traditional art spaces. According to Özkan, Oda Projesi play with space in different ways in their Galata works and their works for exhibitions. In Galata, works are site-specific and require corporal participation. They use two strategies in these works. The first is to use the socio-spatial situations in the neighbourhood. The second is to bring in new people, ideas and practices, foreign to the immediate neighbourhood, to respond to these situations, as Göngrich did with his proposal of a picnic as an art event. These strategies have been used to create events such as book readings, a theatre play, and an experimental music workshop, either in the apartment, or nearby.¹⁶² These collaborations typically erase the division between artists and participants and, according to Lind, this affects the space itself:

This minimises the degree of theatricality – there is seldom an outside, purely observing, audience. Those present participate and the artists' own personal presence is central, which creates an unusually intimate relationship that is sometimes difficult to grasp by 'outsiders'.¹⁶³

When the spaces where art is produced are inclusive and familiar to participants, people who normally inhabit the art world can be the ones to feel excluded, while the communities that are often otherwise seen as in need of inclusion have no trouble understanding these projects. Lind calls this ‘reverse exclusiveness’.¹⁶⁴

According to Özkan, the works that are made for art institutions also play with both familiar and foreign spaces, using two different approaches. The first is to extend the inside of the exhibition room to include an outside space. In the exhibition *Becoming a Place* (2001), curated by Vasif Kortun at Proje4L, Oda Projesi put up posters redirecting visitors to a space in the neighbourhood. They repeated this strategy in Munich in 2003, when they had a residency at Kunsthalle Riem, but worked in different places in the neighbourhood, such as the kitchen of a community centre and a grocery store.¹⁶⁵ The other strategy, according to

¹⁶¹ Yersel in Oda Projesi interview by Mörtenböck and Mooshammer, 288.

¹⁶² Özkan, ‘Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi ...’, 51.

¹⁶³ Lind, ‘Actualisation of Space’, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Lind, ‘Actualisation of Space’, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Özkan, ‘Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi ...’, 52.

Özkan, is to bring objects from the non-art realm into the art institution, such as the brick house model they built in the Istanbul Biennial as part of the project *Ada* (2003),¹⁶⁶ or in *Annex* (2003), where they brought an emergency earthquake relief house to the Venice Biennial. *Annex* also included photographs of how 12 specific families adapted their temporary-turned-permanent homes by adding multifunctional annexes to give them more space. The houses were named after the families who lived there, with titles such as ‘Güllü Model’ and ‘Fırtına Model’. As Özkan points out, ‘Once they are *annexed*, these ‘models’ deviate from the state’s definition of the prefabricated disaster relief house as temporary low-income housing,’ and thereby the inhabitants appropriate the space.¹⁶⁷ In this sense, annexing is both a practical and political act.

Although I agree that Oda Projeksi make deliberate use of the coded, institutional art space in these two works, I do not agree with Özkan’s separation between what she refers to as object-based exhibitions and situational projects. I think the physical structures in *Ada* and *Annex* should not be seen as ‘representational space’ as Özkan calls it, meaning objects that symbolise a certain type of space. Rather, they function as placeholders pointing to a specific place outside the exhibition room, in this case the shanties of Istanbul and the houses with annexes and families who live there. In this sense, *Annex* and *Ada* are a result of the same artistic strategy as the posters in *Becoming a Place*. They use the symbolic space of art institutions to redirect their audience to existing places and situations that cannot be shown in an exhibition space.

Tim Rollins and K.O.S. claiming the gallery space

Just as Rollins and K.O.S. used the logic of the art market and its desire for something young, urban, and authentic in just the right amounts, they used the rituals of the art world in the gallery space or the *vernissage* as part of their toolkit. In the documentary ‘Kids of Survival’, the filmmakers follow the group as they prepare for the first exhibition at their new commercial gallery, Mary Boone, in 1992.¹⁶⁸ Rollins has made sure everyone has a suit to wear to the opening, and the group members dress up in their homes. They are meticulous about their image and determined to break the stereotype of what a gallery audience thinks poor teenagers from the Bronx look like. When they show up to the gallery in SoHo, they

¹⁶⁶ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 199.

¹⁶⁷ Özkan, *The Misuse Value of Space*, 246

¹⁶⁸ Geller and Goldfine, ‘Kids of Survival’.

look antsy, nervous, out of place, yet ready to perform. As the audience arrives and start asking questions about creative process, inspiration, the idea behind the works – things they are not used to discussing in ‘art language’ – the suits start looking more like straitjackets, and they seem relieved when the evening ends. They get together after the guests have left and celebrate their victory. They have made it.

De Certeau’s idea of the difference between a place and its many possible spaces is a way to view the group’s relation to the South Bronx. When K.O.S. was formed, the project was about claiming their identity and right to self-expression. Starting from the specific neighbourhood, the group members needed to expand the space available to them as teenagers who did not do well in school, in a violent and hyper-masculine society, with limited opportunities. As the collaboration continued, it became about claiming other spaces as well, and to confront barriers in the art world connected not only with geography, but also class and race. Rollins talked about *reclaiming* art, language and culture that already belonged to his students, but was being withheld from them, through economic and social inequality and the school system. One of the reasons he gave for engaging with classic literature, music and art history was that ‘we had to familiarize the foreign and not tolerate to be treated like foreigners in our own country, our Americas.’¹⁶⁹ Their workshops with groups of young people are now dislocated from their place of origin. The social context of the South Bronx has become less relevant to the project, but challenging art spaces, and thereby the definition of who can be an artist, remains central to their work.

A gallery is a place to see and buy art, but it can also be described as a space where value is created. Returning to de Certeau’s theory of how a place is turned into a space, a combination of gestures, uses, and actions create value in the gallery space. De Certeau makes two points that are particularly relevant to Rollins and K.O.S. The first is that stories, like actions, transform places into spaces,¹⁷⁰ and secondly, that every border between spaces is also a crossing. These borders often take the metaphor of a river, door, bridge, or fence – blockages and connectors that de Certeau calls the space in between.¹⁷¹ Crossings between different coded spaces are important in the work of Rollins and K.O.S., and rivers are a recurring

¹⁶⁹ Rollins, ‘Prayers with Legs’, 9.

¹⁷⁰ De Certeau, ‘Part IX: Spatial Stories’ in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Part IX: Spatial Stories, 115-130.

¹⁷¹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 126-128.

theme in their artworks.¹⁷² Unlike much other collaborative art, their paintings and sculpture fit naturally into traditional art spaces, even when the artists do not. But instead of transforming spaces through their art, as Oda Projesi do, they rely on personal stories. The artwork is presented as object, accompanied by stories in the forms of texts, interviews, and artist talks where the origin story can be highlighted and repeated, and workshops where they can present the process and method as part of the exhibition.¹⁷³ Because the story is such an important part of their work, it has been moulded and polished through numerous reiterations throughout the years. Every time it is retold, it contains some of the same elements, often with variations of the same quote. In my description of the collective in the introduction to this thesis, I also retell a version of this story.

The story often begins with the epiphany of Tim Rollins, as he walks off the subway into the school or the classroom for the first time. While he is taken aback by the grim realities of the neighbourhood, he quickly realises that these kids have raw talent. This is often exemplified by Rollins referring to the boarded up and graffitied art classroom as ‘the Hip-Hop Sistine Chapel’.¹⁷⁴ Another much-repeated quote from this context is Rollins saying to his students: ‘Today we are going to make art, but we are also going to make history.’¹⁷⁵ This sentence has been a mantra in their work, repeated to each new workshop group, even today.¹⁷⁶ The story goes on to give an account of the ‘jamming sessions’ in their studio, where they read out loud to each other and drew together. It often includes the anecdote of how one of the members, Carlos Rivera, doodled on a book page, which sparked the idea of the book collage paintings. Here, it is retold in a newspaper article from 1990: ‘‘I wanted to kill him at first,’ Rollins recalls, ‘but it looked really great. And, I was blown away by the fact that here was this dyslexic kid who had captured the essence of the book in a drawing on the book.’’¹⁷⁷

From here the story leaves the studio, and fast-forwards to give an account of the group’s rise to fame, with exhibitions at large biennials and museums, and the number of collections that

¹⁷² Angel Abreu, ‘Life is a River’, interview by Scott Thor, *ArtPulse*, 21, 6 (2015).
https://scottthorp.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/artpulse21_life-is-a-river.pdf

¹⁷³ The exhibition ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: Workshop’ (2019) at the Lehman Maupin, New York, included workshops with local schools. ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: Workshop’. Press release. 2019. Accessed 24 November 2020. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/exhibitions/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s4/press-release>

¹⁷⁴ For one example, see Abreu, ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.’

¹⁷⁵ Abreu, ‘Tim Rollins and K.O.S.’

¹⁷⁶ Angel Abreu in ‘Studio K.O.S.: Collaborative Workshops for Transcendence through Art and Knowledge’, Wexler Gallery Philadelphia, 2021. Video teaser for exhibition. Uploaded 12 January 2021. 0:12.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz9cK1TMgu4>

¹⁷⁷ McKenna, ‘Art From the Heart of Amerika’.

have acquired their works. Curiously, this revolutionary tale speaks about why, but not so much about how, the group conceive of the conceptual and physical process of making art. It offers little about what happens between the reading/drawing sessions, which are something any school class can hold, and the finished paintings. Because there is so much emphasis on the value the kids had with them from the start, there is no room for talking about the transformation that takes place through education and hard work. These aspects become more apparent in other sources, such as the documentary by Geller and Goldfine, or in-depth interviews.¹⁷⁸

This origin story highlights two border crossings. The step from the classroom into the artist's studio, and from the studio into the art world. It also shows Rollins as a master of quotes. In interviews, through lectures and artist's talks, he was always the spokesperson of the group and, even when the other members were present, he tended to steal the show.¹⁷⁹ He had an eccentric charisma, and an ability to connect concepts and actions and think on his feet, that captured reporters as well as art students. When speaking about K.O.S., he was constantly building the brand. Even after his death, Rollins's way of telling the story of K.O.S. lives on, first in obituaries¹⁸⁰ and then in interviews with the remaining members.¹⁸¹ In an interview, Rollins addressed the second border crossing, through an often-repeated metaphor for how K.O.S. were met by the art world and its institutions: 'No one did us a favour. We just broke in. Not everyone banged on the palace doors; many went through the back door. We walked in, pretended we were servants, and decided to stay for a while.'¹⁸² Here, Rollins explains both the structures they are up against, and what the project is trying to achieve, by drawing attention to the invisible border between an art space and a non-art space, and how insiders are separated from the outsiders. At the same time, he emphasises, like de Certeau, that the border is possible to cross, and that you can claim this space, even without an invitation.

In the real art event in the documentary, the group did not sneak in, but they might still have felt like imposters. They talked the talk, walked the walk, and claimed the gallery space as their own. But at the same time, their apparent unease and 'out of place'-ness reveals the

¹⁷⁸ Geller and Goldfine, 'Kids of Survival' and Rollins in 'Make Some More', interview by Berry.

¹⁷⁹ See for example Rollins and K.O.S., 'On Transfiguration'.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, 'Tim Rollins Dies at 62' and Oliver Basciano, 'Tim Rollins Obituary', *The Guardian*, 12 Jan. 2018.

¹⁸¹ Examples include Studio K.O.S. 'Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.' and Studio K.O.S., 'Past, Present, and Future of Tim Rollins and Studio K.O.S.', panel discussion, *Lehmann Maupin*, 3 May 2019. Video, 1:16:24. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/videos>

¹⁸² Rollins, interview by Deitcher.

absurdity of artists needing to perform in the role of the artist. The gesture exposes the exclusionary structures with a subtle humour. As a result, the gallery professionals and audience are also revealed as part of a meaningless charade.

Summary: Appropriating space

While Oda Projesi work with how space is formed, predominantly outside the exhibition space, Tim Rollins and K.O.S. took another approach to challenging the spaces produced by the art world. Their strategy seems to be to learn and adapt to the codes of spaces such as the gallery, and rituals such as the opening event, in order to reveal how they function. Rather than expanding these spaces, they expose the borders, to allow more people to cross, and in the end leave the boundaries without function. There is a contradiction here, as they also depend on these structures for validation. Rollins and K.O.S. rely on the galleries and museums to present their work, on the critics to review it, and on the spectators to show up for the opening event. For the participants to be considered artists, they need to maintain a boundary between art and non-art.

Oda Projesi, on the other hand, more often create new spaces for exchange and interaction, and have distanced themselves from art institutions. Therefore, reverse exclusiveness can occur in the work of Oda Projesi, but not that of Rollins and K.O.S., as K.O.S.'s work remains accessible to an art world audience. When Oda Projesi conduct projects in art spaces, they often try to challenge the exhibition as form, by working in art and non-art spaces simultaneously.

3.4 Summary and concluding remarks

In this chapter I have examined the similarities and differences between how Tim Rollins and K.O.S., on the one hand, and Oda Projesi on the other, deal with aesthetics, participation, and space, and what this means for their relationship with the art world. The most immediate difference between the two projects is how they relate to the artistic product. While the K.O.S. create paintings, Oda Projesi produce no such tangible results. The work by Rollins and K.O.S. can be appreciated for their aesthetics and references to art history, classic literature, and music. Yet the artists view the process as part of the artwork, and have contributed to breaking down the boundaries between art and education. The physical art object enables collaboration and is therefore central to the K.O.S. pedagogy. Showing young workshop

participants that everyone can make art, and therefore everyone can be an artist, requires a piece to present as proof, to be valued by gallery professionals, critics, and an art audience. The rituals of the exhibition and *vernissage* are crucial because they offer participants the experience of being acknowledged as artists. In addition, they elevate the workshops from the field of art education and place them firmly in the realm of contemporary art.

Oda Projesi explore how space is formed and how the use of in-between space can be renegotiated. Through producing art that has no object, no clear author, and by being explicitly uninterested in any aesthetic judgement of their work, the artists challenge the idea that art must be valued on the basis of aesthetics. If the project produces anything, it is social situations, conversations, and relationships. While the work of Rollins and K.O.S. is created to be shown in galleries, Oda Projesi mainly work outside the exhibition context. Because their artworks are ephemeral, instantaneous, situation- and conversation-based, they are challenging to exhibit, especially in institutional spaces where they are separated from their social and geographical origin. Even though Oda Projesi participate in exhibitions, their focus here is not on presenting a work or project, but on using artistic methods to investigate social and spatial situations. They erase the boundaries between art and non-art, between artists and participants, and participants and spectators. But although they claim their work is non-aesthetic, their relationship with the art world is more complicated, as they use artistic strategies, and their work can be considered as a form of dialogical aesthetics.

When it comes to artist-participant relationships, both collectives strive for equality, yet encounter internal contradictions. Rollins started as a teacher in the traditional sense, but soon discovered that what the K.O.S. members already knew was far more interesting than what he could teach. This prompted his change from ‘teacher’ to educator’, a philosophy that is still at the core of Studio K.O.S. today. Rollins’s insistence on equality in creative decisions, while he still functioned as group leader, illustrate the ambiguities in this project. Similarly, Özge Açıkkol, Güneş Savaş and Seçil Yersel took a while to reach the conclusion that their neighbours were the experts, and this realization became the foundation for Oda Projesi’s work and their belief in the exchange of knowledge, rather than advocacy for change.

In the same way that Rollins and K.O.S. have carefully decided how to tell their origin story, their painting practice is based on repetition, with series stretching over decades on the familiar grid of book pages and musical scores. Oda Projesi seem more unpredictable, and

take specific places and situations as their starting point. Although Oda Projesi's projects are rarely repeated, they often respond to an earlier work. Their work takes on many different media and forms, and often appear differently to project participants and exhibition audiences. In the same way, the three members do not seem too comfortable speaking 'on behalf of' the projects and their participants, and their story has not found a fixed form.¹⁸³

Maria Lind suggests that what separates Oda Projesi from much collaborative practice is that their project is not reactive, 'that is, they do not respond in the first instance to a social or cultural problem'.¹⁸⁴ They rather attempt to examine how society functions, and do not seek to help or empower the groups they work with. Their work can still be considered a form of resistance. According to Açıkkol, this involves 'producing art beyond all kinds of top-down definitions or requests. We can resist the macro by researching micro-situations and relationships, and by looking at their dynamics.'¹⁸⁵ When the artists look at how everyday actions create social space, projects are shaped by the participants, but participants are not expected to deliver a predefined outcome. This gives their work an openness. As the artists do not give instructions, it becomes a project of learning, where the artist is the student.

Rollins and K.O.S. can be considered reactive, as they respond to a specific problem. In the words of Rollins: 'You had a [school] system that was telling us what these kids couldn't do. I wanted to create an arena where we could prove what our kids can do.'¹⁸⁶ The artists respond to two situations. First, urban, underprivileged youth have limited access to artistic and creative self-expression, in an education system that does not acknowledge students' abilities. Second, access to the art world is unevenly distributed, and exclusionary structures are upheld by a closed-minded and conservative art world elite, as illustrated by Rollins's metaphor on the need to 'break in', referenced in the previous section. Agreeing on a set course allows the group to move in the same direction. This contrasts with the work of Oda Projesi, where such predefined goals would limit the influence of participants. Due to the emphasis on the participant's existing knowledge, which both collectives share, one could still argue that they both present models for learning, rather than teaching.

¹⁸³ Açıkkol discusses this in Oda Projesi, 'Making', artist talk, *Creative Time*, 12 October 2012. Video, 8:32. <https://creativetime.org/summit/2012/10/12/oda-projesi/>

¹⁸⁴ Lind, 'Actualisation of Space,' 2.

¹⁸⁵ Açıkkol in Özkan, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 70.

¹⁸⁶ Rollins, lecture at Rollins College. 00:41:00.

The most common criticisms of collaborative practices confront Rollins and K.O.S. and Oda Projesi in different ways. Claire Bishop separates between ‘the social discourse’, or artist-activists who reject aesthetics, and the proponents of an ‘artistic discourse’, who embrace aesthetics and reject most collaborations as artistically uninteresting.¹⁸⁷ But neither Oda Projesi nor Rollins and K.O.S. fit the scale from activist to aesthete. Oda Projesi are met with a formal critique. According to Bishop, their work looks like community collaboration, and does not offer enough visual or conceptual rewards.¹⁸⁸ It is not easily presented to those who are not present when the event is taking place.

The fact that Oda Projesi refuse to even discuss aesthetics, and their ambiguous treatment of authorship, give the impression that authorship is hidden or even dissolved. I suggest that this anti-aesthetic is a deliberate strategy of resistance. They do not reject aesthetics because they prioritize social goals, as Bishop seems to think, but because they wish to free themselves from the expectations and demands of the art world. Bishop accuses Oda Projesi of allowing participants to influence their activities to the extent that they lose their autonomy as artists. However, when Oda Projesi keep art institutions at an arm’s length, this can be seen as an attempt at collaborative autonomy. Ultimately, although they claim to reject aesthetics, Oda Projesi do rely on their artistic autonomy and use their affiliation with the art world strategically in their work.

Rollins and K.O.S. are met with another type of critique. Their work does not look like collaboration. Rollins have been suspected of using his young collaborators to fulfil his own artistic vision, thereby appropriating collective authorship. The minimalist and conceptual paintings do not resemble something a group of teenagers would create. Unlike Oda Projesi, they do not shy away from discussing aesthetics and how they define quality.¹⁸⁹

Paradoxically, it is as if the visual presentation of their work overshadows the process-based and durational aspects of their practice. While institutions are unsure of how to exhibit Oda Projesi, they are confident in how to present Rollins and K.O.S. as painters and their work as objects, rather than making serious attempts at presenting the social and pedagogical aspect of their work in a gallery setting.

¹⁸⁷ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 275-276.

¹⁸⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 20-22, and ‘The Social Turn,’ 180-181.

¹⁸⁹ Studio K.O.S. ‘Daser: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.’ 0:49:00.

In their practice, production and reception are easily separated. However, Rollins and K.O.S. have explicit social goals and embrace aesthetics as part of their activist strategy. They use the art objects to enter the spaces that would otherwise be closed to them. I suggest that one can view Rollins and K.O.S. through process and exchange, in much the same way one would consider Oda Projesi. Taken further, Rollins and K.O.S. could even be considered a continuous performance, where the spectators become participants as they play important roles in making the project function within the realm of art.

In this thesis, I have aimed to show reasons for artistic collaborations through a comparison of the strategies of artist collectives Tim Rollins and K.O.S and Oda Projesi. These artistic approaches produce different results depending on working methods, conditions, and framework, as well as intentions. I suggest that ‘the hack’ is a way to explore alternative solutions. Collaborating is in itself a hack, a way to pool resources, gain autonomy and challenge individual authorship by working together. A hack is just a suggestion, not a solution. Just as a life hack does not alter the basic structure of the object it improves, both these collectives leave the machinery of the art world intact. Instead of confronting the structures they would like to change directly, they work around them. I consider this a kind of non-activist form of resistance to the status quo. By appropriating or rejecting aesthetics and ‘high culture’, shifting the hierarchy between artist, participant, and audience, and appropriating new territory inside and outside the art world, the artists suggest alternatives that in turn can lead to new possibilities.

Seçil Yercel describes resistance as a series of gestures, and a process rather than a position: ‘Resistance is something more than opposition; it creates new spaces. And there is a continuity in resisting.’¹⁹⁰ The greatest achievement of K.O.S., according to Rollins, was to challenge ‘elite notions of fine art that put boundaries on who can appreciate art, who can make art, and who can feel the impact of that art’.¹⁹¹ Rollins always considered his work a form of resistance to more conventional kinds of artmaking, display and judgment, but as a positive rather than negative resistance: ‘Positive critique is when you don’t like what someone’s doing and you respond by doing something you think should be done instead. It’s a can-do ethos that sustains our work to this day,’ Rollins said in an interview in 2003.¹⁹² This

¹⁹⁰ Yersel in Oda Projesi, ‘Art’s Indecent Proposal’, 70.

¹⁹¹ Rollins quoted in Halperin, ‘Artist Tim Rollins, a Champion of Collaboration ...’

¹⁹² Rollins interviewed by Deitcher.

can-do approach seems to resonate with both collectives. While Oda Projesi have created new space, both inside and outside the established art institutions, Rollins and K.O.S. have claimed existing space, in the same way that they have appropriated literary classics.

Bibliography

- Abreu, Angel. 'Life is a River'. Interview by Scott Thor. *ArtPulse*, 21, vol. 6 (2015).
https://scottthorp.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/artpulse21_life-is-a-river.pdf
- Abreu, Angel. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.' *The Paris Review*, 24 May 2019.
<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/05/24/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/>
- Abreu, Angel, Jorge Abreu, Rick Savinon and Robert Branch. 'Made in New York'. Playlist, track no. 14, for *Amerika VIII. The Museum of Modern Art*, 2021. Audio, 3:00.
<https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/291/4029>
- Abreu, Angel, Jorge Abreu, Rick Savinon and Robert Branch. 'Made in New York'. Playlist, track no. 15, for *Amerika VIII. The Museum of Modern Art*, 2021. Audio, 2:00.
<https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/291/4030>
- Avgikos, Jan. 'Group Material Timeline: Activism as work of Art'. In *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, edited by Nina Felshin. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 85-116.
- Basciano, Oliver. 'Tim Rollins Obituary'. *The Guardian*, 12 January 2018.
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/12/tim-rollins-obituary>
- Berry, Ian (ed.). *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.
- Blom, Ina. *On the Style Site: Art, Sociality, and Media Culture*. New York: Sternberg Press, 2007.
- Bishop, Claire. 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'. *October*, 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79.
www.jstor.org/stable/3397557
- Bishop, Claire. 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', *Artforum*, 44, no. 6 (February 2006): 178-183. <https://www.artforum.com/print/200602/the-social-turn-collaboration-and-its-discontents-10274>
- Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Freire, Paulo. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Ramos. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- Geller, Daniel and Dayna Goldfine (directors). 'Kids of Survival: The Art and Life of Tim Rollins + K.O.S.' Documentary. Geller/Goldfine Productions, 1996. 87 minutes. (Accessed on Vimeo. Courtesy of the directors)
- Halperin, Julia. 'Artist Tim Rollins, a Champion of Collaboration and a Powerful Evangelist

- for Art Education, Has Died at 62'. *Artnet*, 27 December 2017.
<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/tim-rollins-champion-collaboration-evangelist-art-education-died-62-1188836>
- Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Socially Engaged Art. A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011.
- Helguera, Pablo, 'A Bad Education'. Interview by Helen Reed, *The Pedagogical Impulse*, The Living Archive. Accessed 06.05.2020. <https://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/a-bad-education-helen-reed-interviews-pablo-helguera/>
- Jackson, Shannon. *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Jones, Kellie. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: What's Wrong with This Picture?' in *EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*, edited by Jones. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011: 341-342. First published in *Parkett*, 20, (1989).
- Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: California University Press, 2013. First edition 2004.
- Kester, Grant H. 'Involvement, Autonomy and the Aesthetic'. Lecture. *Public Art Norway (KORO)*, Critical Issues in Public Art, 16 June 2016. Video, 1:32:51.
<https://vimeo.com/171072010>
- Kirchert, Abby. 'Looking Back: Tim Rollins and K.O.S., A Midsummer Night's Dream', interview by John Epp, *University at Albany*, University Art Museum, January 2019.
<https://www.albany.edu/university-art-museumcollectionstim-rollins-and-kos/looking-back>
- Kwon, Miwon. *One place after another: Site-specific art and locational identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.
- Lasswell, Mark. 'True Colors: Tim Rollins's Odd Life With the Kids of Survival'. *New York Magazine*, 29 July 1991: 30-38. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=4-gCAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA32&dq=1991%2C%20New%20York%20Magazine%20tim%20rollins&pg=PA30#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Lind, Maria. 'Actualisation of Space: The Case of Oda Projesi', *Transversal*, 10 (2004): 1-8.
<https://transversal.at/pdf/journal-text/743/>
- Lind, Maria and Brian Kuan Wood (ed.). *Selected Maria Lind Writing*. New York: Sternberg Press, 2011.
- Lippard, Lucy, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984.
- Lippard, Lucy R. (ed.) *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book on information on some esthetic boundaries ...* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. First edition 1973.

- Lehmann Maupin, 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: Biography'. Accessed 6 May 2021. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/biography>
- Lehmann Maupin. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: Workshop'. Press release, 2019. Accessed 24 November 2020. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/exhibitions/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s4/press-release>
- Lehmann Maupin, 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.' Artist CV, 2020. Accessed 23 May 2021. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/attachment/en/5b363dcb6aa72c840f8e552f/TextOn eColumnWithFile/5b364a09a09a72437d8b5014>
- McKenna, Kristine. 'Art From the Heart of Amerika: Straight out of the South Bronx, Tim Rollins brings his K.O.S. (Kids of Survival) and their art, "Amerika I–XII"'. *Los Angeles Times*, 8 July 1990. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-07-08-ca-429-story.html>
- Oda Projesi, 'Interview: Oda Projesi'. In *Networked Cultures: Parallel Architectures and the Politics of Space*, edited by Peter Mörtenböck and Helge Mooshammer. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008.
- Oda Projesi. 'Art's Indecent Proposal: Collaboration. An Attempt to Think Collectively'. Interview by Derya Özkan. *On Curating*, 11 (2011): 54-71. https://on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/old%20Issues/ONCURATING_Issue11.pdf
- Oda Projesi. 'Making'. Artist presentation. *Creative Time*, Summit: Confronting Inequality, 12 October 2012. Video, 8:32. <https://creativetime.org/summit/2012/10/12/oda-projesi/>
- Oda Projesi. Artist blog. Accessed 21 May 2021. <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com/>
- Oda Projesi, 'Oda Projesi CV'. Accessed 21 May 2021. <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com/p/oda-projesi-cv.html>
- O'Neill, Paul and Mick Wilson (eds.). *Curating and the Educational Turn*. London: Open Editions, 2010.
- Özkan, Derya. *The Misuse Value of Space: Spatial Practices and the Production of Space in Istanbul*, Ph.D dissertation. University of Rochester, 2008. <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/6201>
- Özkan, Derya. 'Spatial Practices of Oda Projesi and the Production of Space in Istanbul'. *On Curating*, 11 (2011): 51-53. https://on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/old%20Issues/ONCURATING_Issue11.pdf
- Rancière, Jacques. *Den emansiperte tilskuer*. Translated by Geir Uvsløkk. Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2012.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Sanselighetens politikk*. Translated by Anne Beate Maurstad. Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012.

- Rollins, Tim. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: The Workshop has Survived Because We Love Each Other'. Interview by Joshua Decker. *Flash Art*, no. 150 (1990).
- Rollins, Tim. 'Tim Rollins Talks to David Deitcher', interview by David Deitcher, *Artforum*, 41, no. 8 (April, 2003). <https://www.artforum.com/print/200304/tim-rollins-4467>
- Rollins, Tim. 'Only What You Do For Christ Will Last: A Conversation with Tim Rollins'. Interview by James Romaine. *Image Journal*, issue 60 (2009). <https://imagejournal.org/article/christ-will-last-interview-tim-rollins/>
- Rollins, Tim. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S. – A History'. Lecture. *Rollins College*, 1 November 2013. Video, 1:02:36. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeLG_rBh0YQ
- Rollins, Tim and K.O.S. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: On Transfiguration'. Artist talk. *Art Basel, Salon*, 17 June 2012. Video, 40:04. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5owGJ3RhS8M>
- Sayre, Henry M. 'The Object of Performance: Aesthetics in the Seventies'. In *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. Vol 4, edited by Philip Auslander. London: Routledge, 2003: 188-205. First published in *The Georgia Review*, 37, 1, 1983.
- Smith, Roberta. "'Amerika" by Tim Rollins and K.O.S.' *New York Times*, 3 November 1989. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/11/03/arts/review-art-amerika-by-tim-rollins-and-os.html>
- Smith, Roberta. 'Tim Rollins Dies at 62; Turned Bronx Teenagers Into Art Stars'. *New York Times*, 8 January 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/08/obituaries/tim-rollins-dies-at-62-turned-bronx-teenagers-into-art-stars.html>
- Studio K.O.S. 'Past, Present, and Future of Tim Rollins and Studio K.O.S.' Panel discussion. *Lehmann Maupin*, 3 May 2019. Video, 1:16:24. <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/videos>
- Studio K.O.S. 'Daser Experiment #5: The Evolution of Studio K.O.S.' Video conversation. *Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences*, Washington D.C., 22 March 2021. 1:01:40. <https://youtu.be/x7yLImoZ65c>
- Studio K.O.S. 'Tim Rollins and K.O.S. is now Studio K.O.S.' Artist website. Accessed 21 May 2021. <https://www.timrollinsandkos.com/>
- Thompson, Nato (ed.). *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012.
- Wexler Gallery, 'Studio K.O.S.: Collaborative Workshops for Transcendence through Art and Knowledge'. Video teaser for exhibition. Uploaded 12 January 2021. 0:12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz9cK1TMgu4>

List of illustrations



Illustration 1: Tim Rollins and K.O.S. Workshop for *Amerika IX* at the Mint Museum of Art, in collaboration with local students, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1987. Courtesy of the artists. [<https://fryemuseum.org/exhibition/3315/>]



Illustration 2: Tim Rollins and K.O.S. with Angel Abreu, Jose Burges, Robert Delgado, George Garces, Richard Lulo, Nelson Montes, José Parissi, Carlos Rivera, Annette Rosado, Nelson Ricardo Savinon, *Amerika VIII*, 1986-87. Watercolor, charcoal, and pencil on book pages on linen. 175.6 x 426.7 cm. Jerry I. Speyer Fund and Robert and Meryl Meltzer Fund. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Courtesy of the artists. [<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78570>]



Illustration 3: Tim Rollins and K.O.S., *Frankenstein (after Mary Shelley)*, 1983. Acrylic on book pages mounted on canvas. Approx. 289 x 402 cm. Lehmann Maupin, New York. Courtesy of the artists. [<http://origin.www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/featured-works>]



Illustration 4: Tim Rollins and K.O.S., *I see the promised land (after the Rev. Dr. M. L. King, Jr.) Triangle*, 2008. Acrylic on book pages on canvas, approx. 274 x 183 cm. Installation shot from Tim Rollins and K.O.S., *Workshop*, Lehmann Maupin, New York, 2019. Photo: Matthew Hermann. [<https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/exhibitions/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s4/installation-views>]

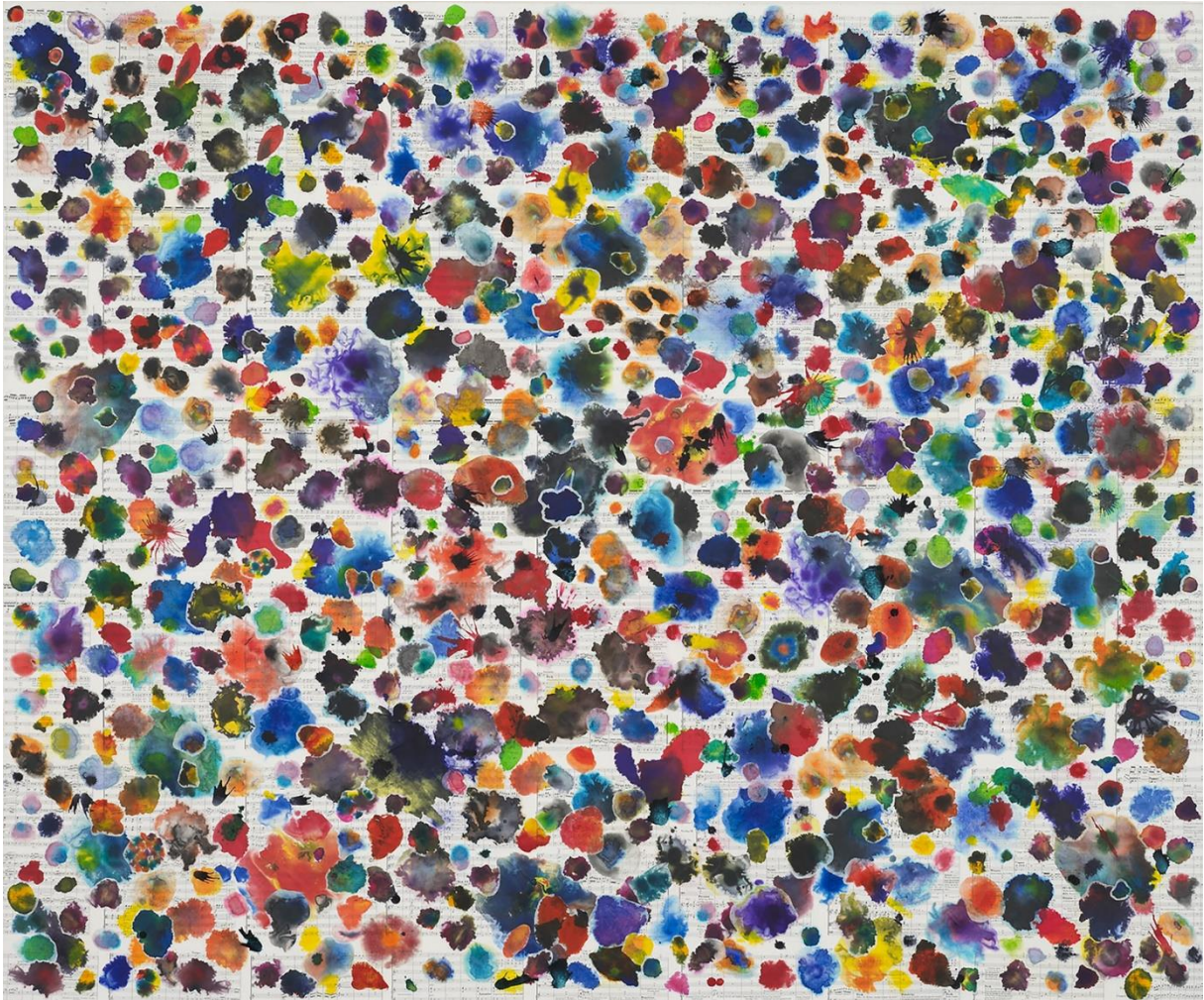


Illustration 5. Tim Rollins and K.O.S. *A Midsummer Night's Dream (after Shakespeare and Mendelssohn)*, 2013. Ink, mustard seed, glue, gesso, apple juice, mulberry paper, music score pages on canvas. 152.4 x 182.9 cm. © Tim Rollins and K.O.S. Courtesy of the artists and Maureen Paley, London. [<https://www.maureenpaley.com/exhibitions/tim-rollins-and-k-dot-o-s?image=3>]



Illustration 6: Oda Projesi, *Ada*, (*Mustafa Tetik Model*), in collaboration with Mustafa Tetik and his colleagues for the 8th Istanbul Biennial, 2003.

Retrieved from Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal: Collaboration. An Attempt to Think Collectively', interview by Derya Özkan. *On Curating*, 11 (2011): 58. Courtesy of the artists. [https://on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/old%20Issues/ONCURATING_Issue11.pdf]



Illustration 7: Picnic in the courtyard in front of the Oda Projesi space in Galata, 2003. Retrieved from Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 54. Courtesy of the artists.

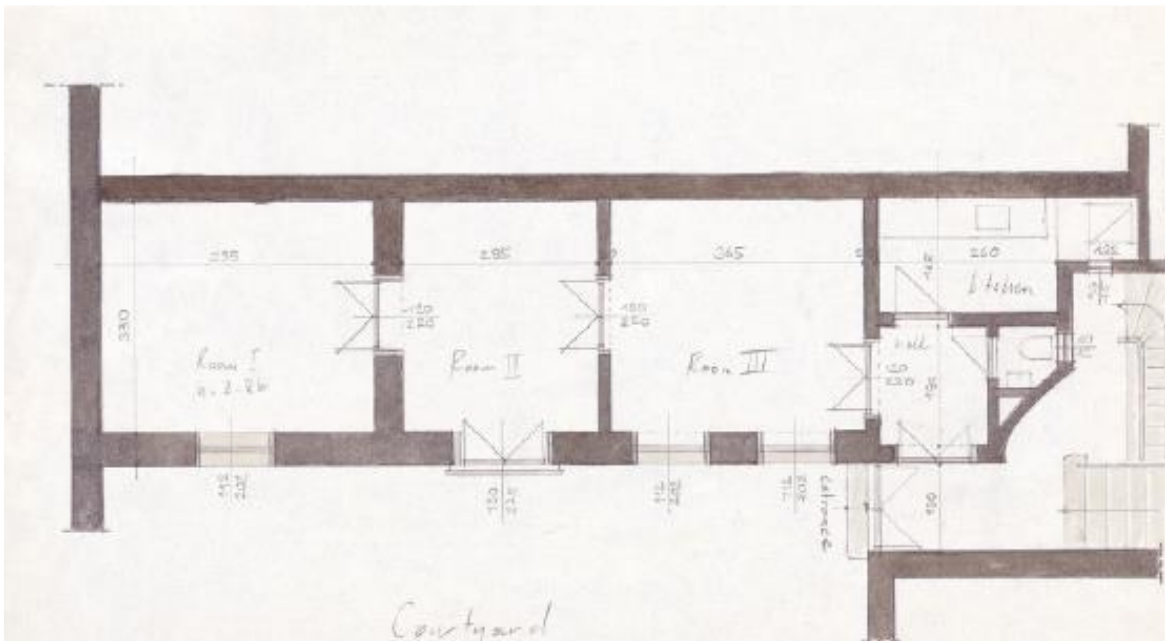


Illustration 8: Plan of Oda Projesi space in Galata, 2000-2005. Retrieved from Oda Projesi, 'Art's Indecent Proposal', 68. Courtesy of the artists.