

reSource Chat with Allegra Solitude, Liebig12

Liebig12 is Allegra Solitude's atelier. Inspired by chemist Justus von Liebig's empirical approach, the space transforms into a laboratory, hosting artists and researchers from different disciplines, exercising a non-profit attitude.

r: Could you start by telling us briefly about the background of why and how you decided to found Liebig12. I have read the following: The name Liebig12 is inspired by Justus von Liebig, chemist known for his revolutionary contributions on organic chemistry. What are the objectives of your space in terms of content development?

A: As Justus von Liebig (after whom the street is named) rejected the practice of science as a purely theoretical approach, preferring empiricism and phenomenism, so the approach of Liebig12 is to create a laboratory for experiments bridging between art and other disciplines / sciences presenting an organic (referring to chemistry) programme of events. Again Justus von Liebig appears as inspiration relating to some of his results, including one of his most revolutionary inventions: the further development of meat extraction in the form of a dried cube, containing potentially all the substances and elements of a complex organic structure as meat, synthesised into a sort of a post-organic and aesthetically fine solution. This is what I consider first of all almost a complete artwork that inspires the process and the results of the activities presented in Liebig12.

r: How do you relate to similar spaces in Berlin that work by crossing the field of performative art and technology? Do you consider your space part of a more extended scene?

A: I feel a strong synergy with all other spaces that present such a curatorial approach. Actually the general attitude is to meet,

discuss, and exchange opinions and ideas without competition, supporting each other and often working together to optimise our work and schedules. Every space might encounter restrictions relating to projects and to the urban context. Being very aware of these details and positions in a positive way, we can offer each other the possibility to exchange spaces, concepts, capabilities in a very fluid and spontaneous way.

r: In your opinion, what are the major problems and difficulties of the art and cultural production field in Berlin?

A: Well, Berlin is an enormous cultural factory based mainly on sub-cultural realities that often struggle economically; because of their independence from any institution / academy and as a cultural and political statement, their visibility and impact develops via social networks and peer groups / peer-to-peer relationships. I might say that this is an aspect I personally wouldn't change, as I find it a primary community quality, but definitely this scene should receive more attention, as it defines the daily social / cultural approach of the Berlin territory and works as 'touristic' attraction, too. Thanks to our growing capabilities to connect with each other and to start an open dialogue with the city government trying to find solution as to how could public money might finance more of those initiatives, we might see some positive change in the future (hopefully!).

r: How do you see the importance of a network that can join politically and artistically independent spaces working in the field

of art, activism and digital culture? Is that needed in Berlin? Is that possible?

A: Everything should be seen as possible, being aware of the risks. I think it is needed at the moment and I strongly recommend it, as I see results and a strong impact. It shouldn't be transformed into a dogmatic position, as politicians and lobbies often do become dogmatic. Discussions and cultural phenomena are, from my point of view, always temporary and related to the general social panorama and to different needs. Berlin can definitely be considered as one of the epicentres of such a cultural attitude worldwide. The contradictions encountered by the pirate party in Germany shows somehow how important it is to concentrate on certain topics and operative fields to propose sustainable options and solutions (...!).

r: What other spaces besides Liebig12 do you see in this field?

A: Oh, there are a few and they differ from historical and cultural points of view. Ausland can be considered one of the oldest experiments that included the reality of a being a squat, then house-project, until it became a cultural association offering a very qualified and heterogeneous programme in art, music, literature and various sciences. So I consider it one of the few almost established sub-cultural realities after the wall came down. Since Tesla started his activities as a main reference point for technology art and activism, transmediale grew exponentially, and meanwhile many other independent spaces like Art Laboratory Berlin, LEAP, NK projekt developed a very rich programme. There are many

others that work occasionally, cooperating with a less specific programme, hosting events and festivals dedicated also to gender issues, party culture and activism.

r: Do you have any suggestions or ideas on how to build a stronger connection between local agents in the fields of experimental art and technology in the city?

A: Thanks to initiatives like reSource from transmediale, Haben und Brauchen, Netzwerk Berliner Freie Projekträume, Koalition der Freie Szene, a more responsible dialogue started, producing regular meetings and cooperation on various levels. A natural affinity will play a role in creating further cooperation. A web platform as tberlin.de is developing as a virtual archive for the fragmented but homogeneous daily activity and discussion on art and technology based in Berlin. This is a radical and slow process, due to the plural aspect and the lack of funding.

r: In which ways can reSource transmediale culture, and the transmediale festival in general, contribute to forming a more critical and collaborative status for the arts scene in Berlin and its trans-local relations?

A: Being present and aware of this plurality that works on a daily basis, researching and staying updated and in contact with the various initiatives, eventually publishing links and events that seem representative of such a cultural debate. This is already happening and can be developed further during the festival and throughout the year as well.

r: What would you think we could offer to generate a useful platform of networking and art – not just economically speaking?

A: Probably intensifying the curatorial cooperation, hosting freelance curators, project spaces and initiatives that represent the scene, rotating to structure part of the programme curating some events... I'm not sure, but as an established and independent project / festival emerging from the same background / panorama could afford to include such cooperation, also in the production costs, starting from a small scale. Maybe? Anyway I'm looking forward a lot, since this 'generation process' started already, thanks to reSource. It keeps a very lively and dynamic dialogue; the possibility to propose ideas and further exchanges is already happening.