Au travail / At work

Community project

AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK is a project based on a call for collaboration which is open to all. This experimental project urges artists and workers to consider their workplace as a site of artistic residence. In all cases, the space of reflection, production, or intervention becomes the space of the employer. The members of the collective appropriate the culture of work within the very framework of their daily lives and, ultimately, they produce themselves by making use of, subverting, or undermining the cultural and technological means that are available to them in the workplace. The workplace is considered as a field for experimentation and discovery wherein are deployed the conflictual relations arising between private Utopias, collective necessities, and economic realities. The members of the collective capitalize on the individual worker's right to manage his or her own free time, and they sometimes refuse certain conditions by means of the re-appropriation and self-valorisation of such time. The AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK collective offers its members a network of relations as well as methods for sharing, and it organizes exhibitions that ensure the dissemination of their ideas, actions, and accomplishments. Immersed in diverse economic sectors, this collective sketches the possible figures of a new form of commitment.

The movement was initiated in February 2005 with the aims of exploring and amalgamating multidisciplinary actions in the context of an incessant declaration of a new world order and its dominion over all economies. This act of resistance in the face of the power of neo-liberal economic rationality essentially seeks to enrich members of the collective by means of capacities for action, communication, creation, and reflection. The AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK collective allows each member to become the permanent arbiter of the use value of his or her time versus its exchange value. In other words, he or she judges between the "utilities" he or she may purchase by selling work time, and those he or she may produce independently by means of the self-valorisation of such time. An anarchical faction of the collective seeks completely to abandon the merchant-utilitarian economic conception of work, and considers the pursuit of human capacities for imagination and resilience as an end in itself. The members of the anarchical faction accept any form of work under any conditions whatsoever, and they overcome the limitations such work imposes. The victory of the new form of capitalism becomes total, and it is precisely for this reason that resisting capitalism's grip on our lives becomes increasingly eloquent. Various corporations have been infiltrated and thereby included in a territorial network, which is itself interconnected with other trans-territorial networks. The job market just got hotter.

Keywords Art, Work

Web Address of the Project

www.autravailatwork.org

Web-Adresse Login

Not necessary

Web-Adresse Passwort

Not necessary

Project Details

This project is an open and free collaboration initiative in between artists, unemployed and hard-workers brought together in a collective effort to reflect and put jointly micro circumstances and artistic actions coming from specific scenarios of employment.

PUBLISHED PARODY ADD: *Opportunity for advancement. We are seeking dynamic people to join our group. Are you interested in a exciting challenge? Are you motivated, responsible and flexible individual. Do you recognize the importance and value of exceeding peoples' expectation? Come join our winning, dynamic, fast-growing team. Take advantage of your skills and further your career. Recrutons artistes de tous ages. Avec ou sans experience. Horaire flexible / Flexible schedule. Engagement long terme. Sécurity.* Apply online at : www.autravailatwork.org

PROCEDURE: You are encourage to broadcast your interventions on your personal Web pages. We offer to put an hyperlink of your work on our main page or to edit (PDF) files for you. If you don't have editing skills, you can use online editing services. These softwares and services are independent of Au travail / At work.

WARNING: A visit to this site can cause momentary congestion to the hard drive of the interested person (PDF). Incrustation, insistence, contamination of ideas. Participate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Thanks to all our parasites, publicists and objective collaborators who send us free job offers through this free-hosted site. We know what to do with those jobs !

Please check out our actions and visit our Historical section.

What is the objective of your project? What is the common goal, topic, interest, etc. of the community or the main uses of the software?

Most members of the collective are artist who work to pay their bills and have no time to practice their art. So, the first objective of the collective is not to get bored from low-wage necessary stupid jobs by finding extra motivation to get up and go to work.

The second objective is not to feel alone accomplishing the first objective by having a group of people doing the same and watching the actions that are being executed on the work place. To share our accomplishment on the Web is a true mind opener (inspiration) and relief for everyone.

The third objective is to use different and unusual artistic residency context (jobs) in order to create different and unusual art actions and attract attention of the Web community, art institutions like forums, blogs, galleries, biennale and forums as well as art critics, theoricians and art historians through our website.

The fourth objective is to be proud to accomplish the third objective and not to be afraid of working anymore; not to be alienated from jobs anymore; to switch our perception of work and ideally to transform it.

Language and context:
In which cultural and geographic context is the project rooted?

The project is rooted in the work culture, the world economical system and is address to all worker and artists of the world. It first started in Québec (Canada), which is a French-speaking region. That explains the strong tights we have with francophone countries. But the collective is now developing over the world because of the partial translation of our actions as well as our open call for participation forced by multiple invitations to exhibit in English-speaking countries or in international context like yours (Ars Electronica). We now have members in Singapore, The Philippines, England, Russia, Finland, United States, English Canada and South American countries as well as in France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and so on. It seems obvious that all workers and artist of the world face the same problem than us. Those problems are clearly express in the following article:

Take this job and…

"The glamorous life of being an artist! You get to work like a dog to create your artistic vision, tackle the endless grant and gallery submissions and work a low-wage but demanding second job to pay the bills. But don't despair, the collective Au Travail / At Work is proposing a novel solution to the grind. They're sending out an open invitation for all to join their collective and embrace their vision of turning the workplace into a laboratory for developing art and ideas. Drop at their virtual job center anytime, let At Work help you find a job, and start enjoying the communal approach to exhibiting and promotion." Christine Redfern, The Mirror, Montreal, 2005

Project History:*
What was the project's origin, when and how did it start? How did it develop up to the present day?

The project start out from frustration from it's initiator (Bob the Builder) who was forced to work to pay his bills and not being able to do his artistic work because of lack of time and economical resources. The idea of using the cultural context of his low-wage job and the technological tools available to him at his employers' site became his only solution not to become alienated. Then he starts his first "at work" secret artistic residency. Within a few weeks, he realizes that he was not the only one in that situation and wrote down an open invitation to all on a free-hosted website (www.autravailatwork.50megs.com). The response was immediate and the collective project was launch. Art centers, galleries and biennales got interested in the project and its results (actions, performances and cultural hi-jacks) and through their mailing list and exhibition announcements, many more artists and workers joint the effort. The collective now counts about 100 active members and about the same amount of collaborators after 30 months of existence. (Please, check our website to see our accomplishment)

People:*
What is the core team carrying the project? How many (groups of) individuals are currently involved as members or users? How would you charaterize the people participating in the project? Is access to the project open or restricted?

The main team carrying the website projects is Aux Tomates Système and myself Bob The Builder. We have started the actual website together with the help of Marjolaine Samson and many others who have posted comment on a regular basis onto our mailing list. However, without all the members' contributions and their projects, our enterprise would be nothing. Those participants are really different from each-others because they all come from different artistic background. Their proposals generate various contents as their jobs are all different. The access to the project is open to all as long as the proposal comes from a work context. We have not refuse anybody yet. Our goals and parameters are simple after all and the addition or "mise-en-commun" of the projects goes above all individual possible desires. Together we make stronger sense.

Lesson #1- Give a man a tool or a context and he will play with it.

Lesson #2- Slacking at work does paid. Please read the following article who got publish in Canada's most read national newspaper:

GLOBE and MAIL, INTELLIGENCE
THE ART OF SLACKING
Nadja Sayej
July 21, 2007

While most of us scamper back to working when caught slacking, 32-year-old Montréal artist Dominic Gagnon has turned it into an art.

As a bored museum technician, he recently rearranged the museum's mandate to read gibberish, just for fun. (Art made of scrap/Inventing new functions/know the staff of the museum, »it read, in part.)

After posting a few copies on walls near paintings and in washrooms stalls for gallery-goers, he got called into the office of the executive director John Porter, who asked, « what's this? »

Mr. Gagnon is part of the Au Travail / At Work art collective (http://www.autravailatwork.org), which asks artists to make art of their slacking at work. Whether it's scribbing on Styrofoam coffe cups or videotaping trips to the water cooler, they poke fun at the tedium of office life. And so far, none have been fired for it.

In fact, in Mr. Gagnon's case, it paid off : Mr. Porter was intrigued by his work, and granted the collective a show at the Musée National des Beaux-arts du Québec that opens this august. But before that, the collective will be showing its work at the Toronto Free Gallery (660 Queen St. E) starting July 31. « All the crappy jobs that help me get by inform this project », Mr. Gagnon says. « It's like a sociological experiment and the documentation is the art. »

Lesson #3 / Problem- Language barrier is our strongest enemy. Nobody has the right skills to translate all the proposals and robot-translation-engine are not so good yet. For instance, this application was written by a francophone who learned English as a third language. (Sorry for the difficulty is may cause.) When magazines or book editors ask for our stuff we try to negotiate full translation towards English and re-use the generated text on our website. But this is a slow process and we still have problems to reach people in South America, Asia, East Europe and Africa. We totally have international goals but it is taking times to be everywhere and to reach people.

Digital community (Internet 1.0 + Internet 2.0 = Internet 3.0)

Our collective project is active in legally squatting the economy (jobs) and the web (social networking tools, message boards, profile and free-hosting site). We're not trying to reinvent the wheel and this is why the Collective integrates with members' existing social media accounts (You tube, Wikipedia, Flickr etc) instead of trying to replace them. From unlimited online storage to project management tools to mailing list and online chat - the Collective support collaborative projects with bespoke facilities usually reserved for paid-for enterprise-level services.

Making use of technological deficiency, unskilled users and parasites.

Without Internet, its free tools and free spaces we would not exist. We are trying to take advantage of all the constraints that come with free hosting as well as our limited technical aptitudes to put content and files online. In short, we prefer to maneuver the Web instead of re-building it. In the next page are examples of our modest but effective strategies:

Example # 1: Portable Document Format (PDF) as a preference.

A visit to this site can cause momentary congestion to the hard drive of the interested person (.pdf). Incrustation, insistence, contamination of ideas. Participate.

La visite de ce site peut provoquer un encombrement passagé du disque dur de l'intéressé (.pdf). Incrustation, insistance, contamination d'idées. Participez.

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Not always being able to make multi-lingual coherent HTML files, we have chosen (PDF) format. It is also our preference.

When the PDF first came out in the early 1990s, its general adoption was slow. At that time, the PDF-creation tools (Acrobat) and the viewing and printing software had to be bought. The additional size of the PDF document compared to plain text meant significantly longer download times over the slower modems common at the time, and rendering the files was slow on less powerful machines. But today, it is not a problem anymore and that format is more than known. It is everywhere and easy to produce to anyone with no computing skills. It is also blocking all hyperlinks function towards our site a situation which forces interested people to consult our main page and be aware of our collective mission.

Moreover, all visitors of our site as well as our members have no other choice but to download all (PDF) files to their own computer and then are capable to reconstitute and distribute our catalog of actions with a computer and a printing machine in any gallery, museum or biennale that ask for our stuff on hard copies (exhibitions). Those exhibitions look like big collages on walls.

What is the most important to us is the easy reproductive quality of the material available (PDF). Please, feel free to consult our site and to download all our achievements in PDF files format. Anyway, you have no other choice.

Example # 2: Parasites, publicists and objective collaborators.
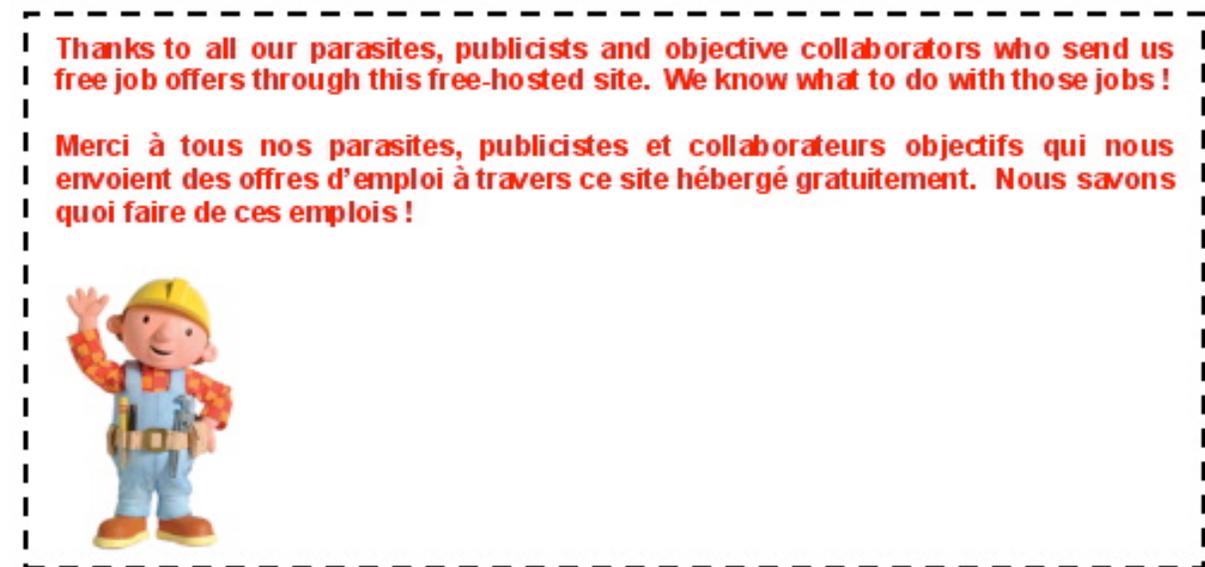
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: *Thanks to all our parasites, publicists and objective collaborators who send us free job offers through this free-hosted site. We know what to do with those jobs !*

Not being able to stop publicity, we enforce the word "work" in all our text and id.

Example # 3: multiple webmasters

For the multiple webmasters of our collective's site (we do share the access code of our server site), being creative means more than learning the basics and to apply them. We like to keep things simple so anyone feels that he can join and do better than the actual relative leader of the collective.

We also use the interactive facilities of Web 1.0 to provide "network as platform" computing, allowing members to run software-applications entirely through their own browser. Members can own the data on a Web 2.0 site and exercise control over that data. These sites may have an "Architecture of participation" that encourages members to add content to their own contribution to our larger project. The only control or moderation tool we use is to decide to link or not the members proposals to our main website. Like surfers, we never stop enjoying others WWW new inventions and mercantile tools.

To communicate share ideas and projects in between us we use a simple mailing lists and this web site: www.autravailatwork.org the best contamination tools; our free copy-left catalog.

Statement of Reasons:*
Why the submitted project deserves to win a prize in the "Digital Communities" category.

We have found a novel solution to the grind for alienated workers and artists who suffer from poor art funding structures and that are forced to work under bad conditions as well as created interest in the art community towards our almost immaterial productions. Together we make sense and inspire future members. We are developing our network really fast.

We are not computing systems developers but we are taking advantages of the WWW deficiency, our unskilled webmasters and what we call objective collaborators: people or institutions who helped us without knowing like parasite publicists or employers.

Also, for the individual who takes part in our activity, it just works with limited effort and makes their workday quiet different. A real shift is happening in their life and their work conception as well as in their artistic visibility.

We have made a free viral contamination digital platform that is meant to be copy as an idea, beyond computing. It is active in reality while only possible through free web technologies.

By over-simplifying the administration of our digital platform (website) we aim towards sustainability and head towards a long lasting movement. Our philosophy will always triumph whatever happen in our working life or in the technological era we are in. We adapt to changes and never missed an occasion to laugh at today's economical and technological system; our freedom.

Planned use of prize money:*

1-Hiring well skilled English translators to make all our actions, press coverage, essays and catalogs available to the WWW community.

2-Offering website development training and workshop to our self-taught webmasters in order to rock the WWW with fresh and new strategies, get more visibility and consequently enlarge our troops.

3-Buy publicity spaces on job site like Monster and other web based job center to influence people to slack at their future jobs and to join our collective efforts to turn the work place into a laboratory to develop art and ideas.

4-Organize an international meeting in Montréal to finally get to know our members in person and plan our digital future as a community.

Further material entered

Upload a detailed description of the work

Please, have a good visit on our website (www.autravailatwork.org) and please join our effort. Aren't you working right now?

Bob The Builder x

Upload additional material accompanying your entry

Bio: Bob the Builder
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Bob the Builder is a children's television character created by Keith Chapman. Bob appears as a construction contractor in a stop motion animated programme with his colleague Wendy, various neighbours and friends, and their gang of anthropomorphised work-vehicles and equipment (all made of clay). The show is broadcast in many countries, but originates from the United Kingdom.

In each episode, Bob and his gang help with renovations, construction, and repairs and with other projects as needed. The show emphasizes conflict resolution, co-operation, socialization and various learning skills. Bob's catchphrase is *"Can we fix it?"*, to which the other characters respond with *"Yes we can!"* This phrase is also the title of the show's theme song, which was a Comic Relief hit in England.