



Instituting the collective in creation : between discourse and practice

Université Rennes 2, France

Call for papers

The following text is a shortened and translated version from the French call for papers.
Please find the original version here : [<https://laboalef.hypotheses.org/926>].

Continuing the research carried out by ALEF about the articulation between archives and work and in the forms of investigation, this new seminar focuses on the configurations of artistic, literary and architectural collective creation.

Questioning the historical development of creative autonomy, as well as its consequences in terms of axiological promotion of the field, have already been explored in several theoretical and critical disciplinary works, leading to new methodologies, problematical and perspectives concerning the notion of collectives in arts. An extensive literature covers a wide range of case studies, terms and notions allowing us to explore the emerging contexts, modes of existence and shared creative practices paradigms¹.

The purpose of this seminar is to question what collective creation implies in arts and literature, going further than the simple opposition between collective and individual creation. It aims at highlighting relations between artistic activities and social structures by questioning what establishes collective creation rather than doing an inventory about artistic collaborations or cooperation. In this perspective, the focus is on the how collective practices define collective spaces, as well as their forms, determining the conditions to the production of a collective creation.

In this scenario several questions emerged about how do people connect, in a particular way that will define their singularity and differentiate them from other groups. If « noticing the effects of connected action leads one to reflect upon the connection itself² », such an approach allows the understanding of collective creation's production by analyzing the results on the interrelations and mutual influences established between the elements constituting the collectives, including its individuals.

The theory underlying this seminar have its origins in the works carried out by the Group of Aesthetics Researches at the CNRS in the early 1980s. Their multidisciplinary approach meant to realize a poetic study of collective creation, centered on the « establishment process » in order to « identify the specific modes of establishing when the promoter agent [...] is a group, or even a society³ ». Going a step further than a simple update of definitional or typological issues, such as the one by René Passeron from the syntagm « collective creation », this seminar proposes to take a step aside. Following this

perspective, which is primarily fixed on the forms of the collective and their configurations in the artistic creation, this distinction privileges « *modalité instituante* » rather than the « *modalité instauratrice** ». This shift is significant if we consider the concept of institution as « the collective's mode of being [and] the ways in which the collective presents itself⁴ » in its exclusiveness. Even if this is not a semantic relegation of the research coordinated by Passeron, it stands for a new perspective based on the assumption that collectives only exist in their own institutions. That leads us to focus on the « holding together » or the « between » when the act of gathering institutes a force that maintains the jurisdiction of different parts. The title of this seminar suggests an exploration of the connections between collectives and creations from an institutional point of view. It aims to go beyond the idea of collective work as the association of talents and skills through a simple process. On the contrary, it includes its failures, difficulties and resistances⁵.

Open to all disciplines and all types of media, this new ALEF seminar cycle's purpose is to explore these different perspectives. The seminar will have seven sessions, each one focusing on a specific aspect.

* These terms refer to French philosophical meanings. It is possible to read the call in French with the following link [<https://laboalef.hypotheses.org/926>].

Session 1. Apprehending collective creation

Questioning collective creation implies a confrontation in an extremely wide array of approaches and lexical fields. The term itself conjures up different geographic and historic contexts and fluctuates according to the groups it refers to. Facing the richness of its referents, this session proposes to question the research practices concerning the articulations of collectives in arts. It will question the constitution of lexical fields related to groupings and cooperation in artistic creation, but also to which particular conceptions these latter refer.

Session 2. Holding together

This session will tackle the processes of gathering and structuring, how their various components articulate and how their mutual connections establish a consistent organization in the manner of « heterogeneous elements holding together⁶ ». The objective is to focus on the operations that produces this collective configurations as a consolidation of the components in their interrelation, thus determining the existence of specific collective beings and forms.

Session 3. *Mobiles* and *motifs of collectives**

Each way of constituting collaborations in arts implies specific objectives. This session aims at exploring what leads into gathering and what are the founding, conceptual and working shapes of such initiatives.

Motives can refer both to efficient causes that allow to create collectives as well as to its goals in a way similar to final causes. As such they question the evolving relationship

between means and ends. Considering this twofold angle will allow a closer look at dialectical interdependencies and mutual influences between these two aspects.

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Session 4. Identities and auctorialities

This session deals with the different reflections that may emerge on the tensions between authorship and the notion of collective. Disposing of reductive conceptions opposing individual and collective creations is a starting point aiming at analyzing how heterodox forms and answers provide different thoughts and experiments regarding authorial forms. In other words, the session will question the ways in which collaborations can establish new readings and understandings of artistic identities.

In addition, it will reflect on the articulations between collectives and individuals, including how the latter integrate, have an impact, demonstrate their resilience or terminate their involvements.

Finally, how to analyze and define these « modes of collective existences of the work⁷ ». How do we understand the work of curators in mediating ephemeral artworks⁸?

Session 5. The modalities of expression of the collective

After having focused on the internal conceptions and organizations inside the process of gathering itself, the next step will question how collective forms of representation interact and generate particular relations with what is exogenous to it. The purpose of this session is to tackle how collective identities are claimed through material, sensitive and discursive productions. Studying these different kinds of expression intends to define how collective identities emerge through various activities and beings along collaborative creative processes. For example, we can focus on the closing credits⁹ in visual arts.

Session 6. Reconstitute the collective

This session will address critical discourses that redistribute contributions and collaborations in creation. It is based on works that reevaluate current authorial stable forms by taking connections and contributions part of the artistic identity as subject of their enquiry. Broadening the definitions of collective creation leads the way to an examination and identification of groups or communities that do not necessarily make their collaborative experiences public. Extending the boundaries of the collective's notion in art allows us to apprehend and think about collective creation where it is not necessarily claimed¹⁰.

In this perspective, the historical and critical approaches of the discourses on arts that configure groups, movements and genres by bringing together or assembling works according to common criteria could be questioned¹¹.

The point is to reflect on the collectives' borders, even on its own tensions between what is considered an obvious subjective signature and style that refers to a more complex array of elements within the artwork by putting the emphasis on the notion of attribution¹².

Session 7. Creating the common: the configurations of collective creation

This final session will be dedicated to contributions from practitioners and artists in order to confront issues outlining this seminar with testimonies of experiences and initiatives of collaboration in art. Artistic collectives will be invited to share their own thoughts on one or more elements from the axes and sessions introduced in this call for papers.

The suggested topics, but not limited to, are:

- Way(s) of making common worlds;
- Organization and mutualization;
- The individual's place and the collective strength;
- Sharing responsibility within the collective;
- Building collaboration spaces;
- Temporalities of a collective creation;
- The « group dynamic » in question.

Submissions

Your submission containing a 250 word abstract is to be emailed to labo.alef@gmail.com before October 15th, 2021.

Note : The seminar is being rescheduled for January 2022. **The deadline for proposals is extended to October 31, 2022.**

Practical information

- Languages of the seminar : French and English.
- Speeches will last from 30 to 45 minutes.
- Calendar : The sessions will take place the second Friday of each month from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- Given the current sanitary crisis, the seminar sessions might be partially or entirely held online.

Scientific board & Organizing committee

Sophie Barel, Priscilla Bittencourt-Biassi, Marie Druais, Alexandre Dupont, Dandelion Epaud, Élodie Le Beller, Lola Lorant, Sophie Lorgeré, Claire Pujol.

Head of seminar : Alexandre Dupont

Bibliographical notes

¹ GOUDINOUX Véronique, *Œuvrer à plusieurs : regroupements et collaboration entre artistes*, Villeneuve d'Ascq, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2015.

² DEWEY John, *Le public et ses problèmes*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Folio Essais », 2015.

³ PASSERON René (dir.), *La création collective*, Paris, Éditions Clancier-Guénaud, 1981.

⁴ LORDON Frédéric, *Vivre sans ?*, Paris, La Fabrique Éditions, 2019.

⁵ ROGOFF Irit, « Production Lines » in : Castelli Sundell Nina & Sollins Susan, *Team Spirit*, New York, Independant Curators, 1990.

⁶ DELEUZE Gilles et GUATTARI Félix, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2. Mille plateaux*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1980.

⁷ PASSERON René (dir.), *op.cit.*

⁸ BOLTER Jay David, GRUSIN Richard, *Remediation, Understanding New Media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2000.

⁹ TYLSKI Alexandre, *Le générique de cinéma. Histoire et fonctions d'un fragment hybride*, Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2008.

¹⁰ STILLINGER Jack, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1991.

¹¹ PASSERON René (dir.), *op.cit.*

¹² CHADWICK Victor, DE COURTIVRON Isabelle (dir.), *Significant others : Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, Londres, Thames & Hudson, 1993.

ALEF Research group

This seminar cycle is run by the interdisciplinary research group ALEF (Arts-Literature-Exchanges-Borders) founded in 2011 by PhD candidates from the CELLAM (Center for the Study of Ancient and Modern Languages and Literatures), APP (Arts: Practices&Poetics), HCA (Arts History and Criticism) and PTAC (Practices&Theories of Contemporary Art) laboratories. ALEF's objective is to conduct interdisciplinary research, confronting and crisscrossing different methodologies and bibliographic bases. Starting from a common trans-disciplinary notion, it intends to observe methodological and theoretical shifts between the different disciplines part of the research group activities, in order to overcome disciplinary divergences as well as consider issues through a crosscutting perspective.

As a result of previous research cycles, two publications have been produced by the successive members of ALEF: « Archive(s)&création(s) » in 2019 and « L'Enquête en partage et ses forces diagonales », currently in progress.

Contact & Website

Mail : labo.alef@gmail.com

Twitter : @LaboAlef

<https://laboalef.hypotheses.org>