We are happy to present the second issue of PLATOON MAGAZINE. As the launch issue created so many surprising reactions, we are looking forward to see how it inspires you this time.

PLATOON Cultural Development was founded in the year 2000 as a communication organization envisioning a global creative network aiming to change the world through culture. As most commercial agencies fail to assist brands in using their large influence to fulfill cultural responsibility, our goal was to create a bridge between the two main players in the cultural field: artists/creatives and brands/institutions. We believe in the strength of cultural development to resist pure economic or power-driven objectives. But on the other hand, economic resources are often necessary to fully realize an artistic project. PLATOON COMMUNICATION provides this catalyzing partnership of artists and brands in various international projects and campaigns.

Over the course of the last 15 years, we have gathered more than 8000 members from over 50 countries in our PLATOON NETWORK who believe in this strategy. Working with them on artistic and commercial projects of different directions led us to create a space for these activities: PLATOON KUNSTHALLE. First opened in Seoul, Korea, in 2009 as our headquarters for Asia, it was quickly followed in 2012 by PLATOON KUNSTHALLE Berlin. The shipping container structures became the physical platforms and steel ambassadors for all of our activities.

The PLATOON MAGAZINE is another physical platform to showcase the visionary energy of our network. While also published online on www.platoon.org, the print issue will be distributed via the network to all populated continents. Each edition not only highlights the creativity we see on a daily basis within our network, it also includes a theme—an artistic topic of global relevance. This time: Temporary Spaces. We explore the topic in various texts, offering a general overview and opinions, as well as profiles of several of our members working in the field. As our own spaces are temporary, we personally experience the energy of these unique buildings and situations created by them. In one of our next issues we will also unveil the next location of PLATOON KUNSTHALLE Berlin.

Ultimately, this magazine is for inspiration, another step to reach our goals of cultural development. If, like us, you’re interested in changing the world, then read on. We want to share the experience with a like-minded community. We hope that you will join us in doing so: Contribute your projects to our network or subscribe to the magazine.

Join our network: recruiting@platoon.org
Subscribe to the magazine: subscriptions@platoon.org
We usually tend to view architecture as permanent, as aspiring to the status of monuments, and that kind of architecture surely has its place. But so does architecture of a different sort, temporary architecture that contests the preoccupation of architecture as permanent. An architecture that precisely distinguishes itself by its impermanence, and its physical departure from the site.

Interestingly enough, both understandings go way back to the very origins of the theory and critical reflection of architecture in the Western world. Since Vitruvius—the prolific architect and scribe of antiquity—the primitive hut has been an example of the temporary and ephemeral origin of architecture, as well as a standard in architectural theory. The reconstruction of the original image of the first archetypal dwelling of mankind probably remains one of the most prevalent leitmotifs in architecture theory and building practice to this very day. Marc-Antoine Laugier—the 17th-century French Jesuit priest and maybe first modern architecture philosopher—stated that Ancient Greek temples owed their form to these earliest habitations erected by man. The primitive hut had a horizontal beam supported by tree trunks planted upright in the ground and a tent-like roof that kept out rain, provided shade and, perhaps just as importantly for a hunter/gatherer, offered mobility. Simple and easy to erect by draping a skin or leaves over a branch, this rudimentary, temporary tent actually represents man’s first architectural work. Over time, this structure naturally grew in complexity, and did not necessarily retain its mobility. However, against the backdrop of these early reflections about the impermanent infancy of the architectural practice, Vitruvius also imparted three principal and permanent virtues in his book De architectura unto the Western architects that would fall under his influence, which roughly translate to utility, durability and beauty. With these virtues firmly in place, Vitruvius equated the Roman Empire’s commanding marble cities with built perfection. The monuments that he extolled in the first century BC are an unmistakable tribute to the import of permanence.
Over the centuries, the association of great architecture as fixed and timeless permanence has long persisted, along with the Vitruvian triad. Our environment has been built, altered and rebuilt in overlapping waves. While some buildings stand the test of time, most seem to expire in relevance. Today we are increasingly witnessing new tendencies within the profession that lean more towards a polar opposite of Vitruvian values. Such temporary design practices often exist on the fringe of architecture and are dealing with the absence of physical matter—with the qualities of airiness and ephemerality. They take us back to the meeting beginnings of the building practice per se.

**Pavilions of the Future**

There might be something contradictory about architecture that is not meant to last, but obviously such temporary architecture also serves a different purpose from permanent architecture. And one needs only to think of world fair, exhibition, pavilion and festival architecture to realize that temporary architectures have been flourishing for centuries. Some of the world’s most famous buildings were not built to last, yet they have stayed put nonetheless. Gustave Eiffel’s temporary tower survived way beyond its intended tenure presiding over the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. So did Mies van der Rohe’s German national Pavilion for the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona or more recently Olympic Park’s numerous temporary sporting venues built for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. In most cases, these temporary architectures function largely as an exhibit and even more essentially as an advertisement for new materials, techniques and designs. They also clearly serve a rhetorical and political function of communicating to and convincing crowds.

Thereby some of the most extreme and radical designs in the history of modern architecture were actually realized in such temporary buildings, with specific regard to pavilion architecture. Historian Beatriz Colomina argues in her brilliantly written essay, “Pavilions of the Future”, that historically, “pavilions made dreams seem real, and reality seem dreamlike... the unique role of a pavilion [is] to fuse image and structure... the pavilion is the key instrument for negotiating the relationship between image and physical structure.”

**Temporary Architecture throughout the Ages**

Beyond the architectural significance of pavilions for modern architecture, the tradition of temporary architecture goes back much further. In fact, it goes all the way back to antiquity. Many temporary structures were erected for relocations in the ancient world. The tabernacle of the Jews, for example, was a portable enclosure of wooden posts and fabric, a place of sacrifice and worship that was carried through the wilderness during the Exodus, and that influenced the form of the original temple and all synagogues to follow.

Another instance amongst many, is the fact that both the Greek and the Roman temples are basically stone versions of their wooden predecessors. But as Sarah Bonnemaison and Christine Macy note in their excellent scholarly compendium on Festival Architecture, this history of temporary architecture “is not only restricted to religious constructions, it also includes architectural works commissioned by rulers to celebrate and proclaim their reign.” Yet, a coherent history of temporary and festival architectures emerges only in the Early Renaissance and all the major architects had their experience in staging festivals at courts or in cities for emperors, popes and princes across Europe. At that time, such structures became a distinct genre, an art form to be cultivated throughout Europe. This genre reached its perfection in the Baroque when political conditions were most favorable. Renaissance and Baroque temporary structures were erected for the sake of public celebrations and public mourning. They were decorative edifices usually laden with figurative and ornamental sculpture, paintings, inscriptions and inscriptions. Such temporary structures were virtually ignored by art historians until the mid 20th century. Throughout the ages, these constructions ranging from coronations to consecrations, and carnivals to world expositions, have allowed architects to experiment with new ideas, new forms and new spatial arrangements, and thereby also played a much neglected role in the development of Western architectural and urban theory.

**Reclaim the Streets**

In different ways, these temporary architectures indeed raise significant questions around participation and the negotiation of the urban imagery in a broader sense. What stands out about these temporary architectures is their public aspect and their power to generate spatial imagination in the urban realm. Throughout history they were all too often used as political tools in the service of ruling elites, but also against them. The latter we are increasingly witnessing in an interesting recurrence of the ephemeral within the urban discourse, namely the apocryphal unfolding of a worldwide wave of political movements that temporarily occupy existing urban spaces. From its origins in the global demonstrations in Spring 1968 in Paris and its international successors, to the more recent protests on Wall Street in New York, Tahrir Square in Cairo, Taksim Square in Istanbul, Puerta del Sol Square in Madrid, Maidan Square in Kiev (as well as a myriad of smaller ones), cognate groups around the world are part of an urban protest movement that is both global and local.

All of these sites have activated discussion and demonstrated a version of live negotiation about space in the city through a temporary intervention. The protesters here occupy highly sensitive public spaces and often even camp out in them in temporary architectures, such as tents and bricolage-like barricades. The city here truly serves not just as a “strategic site for understanding some of the major new trends reconfiguring the social order,” as sociologist Saskia Sassen points out in her Globalizations article “The Global Street: Making the Political”. As she continues, “The city and the metropolitan region are one of the locations where major macro and global trends, even when not urban, materialize; it is, then a space that can give us knowledge about developments that are not urban per se.” Just as temporary structures inherently dispute the dominant role of architecture as an ever-lasting solution, temporary occupation of urban space proactively questions the social fabric of the existing city.

**One needs only to think of world fair, exhibition, pavilion and festival architecture to realize that temporary architectures have been flourishing for centuries.”**

“The discipline of space creation has long ceased to be the exclusive domain of architects.”

National Parking Day—as seen here in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, in 2008—is an annual worldwide event where artists, designers and citizens transform metered parking spots into temporary public parks.
POPP-UP URBANISM

This novel form of bottom-up instigated temporary urbanism reaches far beyond today’s social and political movements and is influencing contemporary urban planning and design strategies. Couched as spontaneous, pop-up, do-it-yourself, tactical or temporary urbanism, this emerging new field of planning includes temporary interventions and spaces that are short as a few hours or as long as a number of years, those that are both legal and illegal, and those that are community driven, state-sanctioned or privately financed. These temporary spaces convey just a taste of the intense and diverse language of creative spatial practices. In their often poetic eccentricity they are also expressions of a shifting, multi-dimensional understanding of architecture and space. The discipline of space creation has long since ceased to be the exclusive domain of architects. For many creatives it has now become an emotionally-charged expression of their urge for originality in spatial structures. This of course means that architects are losing their traditional sovereign right to the formal design of large-scale developments being questioned, small-scale temporary urbanism opens up scope for action that penetrates, extends and dissolves the classical idea of solid and permanent space. With the influence of accelerated changes wrought by new technologies and shifts in social perceptions of the world on architecture, approaches are being formulated that are increasingly turning to the dynamic,

void finality

City-making may have happened all at once at the desks of master planners, but that’s really not the way things should happen today anymore. No single master plan can anticipate the evolving and varied needs of an increasingly diverse population or achieve the resiliency, responsiveness and flexibility that shorter-term, experimental endeavors can. Which is not to say long-term planning doesn’t have its place, but there is undeniable opportunity in the temporary: it is an apt response to a civilization in flux. Acknowledging the possibilities of temporary and ephemeral approaches in architecture and urban planning, opens up scope for action that penetrates, extends and dissolves the classical idea of solid and permanent space. With the influence of accelerated changes wrought by new technologies and shifts in social perceptions of the world on architecture, approaches are being formulated that are increasingly turning to the dynamic, transversal and performative character of the contemporary city. Clinging to static perceptions of the world do not allow for a quick response to an ever evolving set of circumstances. Navigating this world requires flexibility and freedom. Maybe the architecture of the future will therefore no longer be strictly the province of the static, the monumental, the permanent, but will share the stage with the temporary and the Meeting and whole-heartedly embrace impermanence. Or to quote French philosopher and poet of space, Gaston Bachelard in his 1976 book The Poetics of Space, “It is better to live in a state of impermanence, than in one of finality.”

A shorter version of this article was first published by the author under the title “Pretty Vacant. Embracing Impermanence in Architecture and Urban Planning” in Transforming Cities: Urban Interventions in Public Space, Berlin, 2014 (Kristin Pfeiriss and Oliver G. Hamm, Eds.)

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Their most recent project, **LIVEBOAT - Chapter 5**, addressed the ongoing refugee tragedy with a “lifeboat” in Tempelhofer Feld.

**DER RETTUNGSRING (“The Lifebuoy”) sat on Berlin’s Spree River in July, 2010.**

**Space Invaders squeezed into a Berlin house in 2008, creating extra rooms.**

Light, flexible, inflatable, capable of odd shapes and sizes and temporary pneumatic environments—that’s **Plastique Fantastique**’s modus operandi. The Berlin-based installation team, founded by Marco Canevacci, specializes in exactly the kind of temporary spaces their name implies. Their fantastical, futuristic, sometimes transparent plastic bubble constructions are filled with air to gain their true shape—often within an existing, more traditional structure for delightful contrast—for streamlined design and a charming kitsch. With dozens of different projects realized all over Europe since 1999, most of them site-specific, **Plastique Fantastique** are now renowned for their instantly recognizable work.

As artists, **Plastique Fantastique** foreground dialogue about space, access, transition, and separation in an unusual architectural way. As public spaces, their installations retain elements of novelty and fun, making accessible, enjoyable attractions for visitors. But as an experimental realm or artistic pursuit, the potential for further usage in other, more pragmatic disciplines feels vast—it’s easy to envision their research being used in scientific and humanitarian causes. The implications for temporary spaces are enormous, and **Plastique Fantastique** are exploring many different aspects of it simultaneously.
Born as a reaction to the late nineties, post-war cultural vacuum (their words) of Croatia, Numen/For Use is the 17-year-old collaboration of three industrial designers turned artists. Now distinguished for a number of strands of work—including configured objects and theatrical scenography— their large-scale, site-specific installation projects have been particularly successful at transforming space. Using the kinds of materials that seem to emphasize impermanence—ropes, nets, plastic wrap and tape—the structures they make delight in such malleability. Take their String social sculpture from last year: when fully inflated, the internal rope system extends to perfect lines that can hold the weight of people. The resulting 3D grid both entangles and provides an aerial playground for visitors.

While great effort by a team of people is needed to create such structures, there’s a simple elegance at work in their ideas, design, and execution, combined with a kind of thoughtful economy. While referencing post-industrial modernism, the inherent playfulness means these constructions work on multiple levels, including the popular. When one interacts with the work, it opens up interaction with others, transforming not only space but psychic atmosphere, and ultimately, even ourselves.
As an award-winning architecture studio with offices on three different continents and a reputation for innovative and sustainable design, GRAFT are known for their work all over the world. Noted not only for their collaboration with actor Brad Pitt, rebuilding homes in New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward following Hurricane Katrina (not to mention their work as architecture partners for PLATOON KUNSTHALLE in both Seoul and Berlin), they also take their expertise into developing communities. One such project they've lent their engineering and design skills to is SOLARKIOSK, addressing energy needs of rural communities on the African continent. The low-cost, self-contained, modular, container structures are outfitted with solar panels bringing clean electricity to off-grid areas. The kiosk units are robust, expandable kit-of-parts that are easily transportable, even to remote areas, providing energy round the clock, with battery packs for nighttime operation.

As temporary structures, SOLARKIOSK are also a first step toward self-sufficiency for communities where no electricity is available, or energy comes at high financial and environmental costs. As one of the only spots in a village with power at night, kiosks are information points and shops turned community centers, and eventually can serve as the nucleus of a decentralized mini-grid system, providing energy to homes, businesses, schools, clinics and more. More units can be added to make for bigger services, including assembly halls, refugee camps or health centers. SOLARKIOSK—just announced as the 2015 winner of the Erasmus Energy Business Award—is another example of good design transforming the world.
Raumlabor—the pioneering Berlin-based participative architecture and urbanism collective—made their name with a series of spectacular site-specific interventions combining contemporary art with city planning, beginning in 1999. Their projects have seen multiple transformations of the city’s historic Palast der Republik—first flooding it and offering dinghies for visitors to travel to the ‘islands’ within (each containing an exhibition on the theme of urbanism), then building a geometric mountain formation in, around and in front of it, drawing record crowds—as well as a collaboration with another notable name in temporary spaces, Plastique Fantastique, to make Das Kuhremenonument. Leading on from that work’s inflatable room, Raumlabor took their Spacebuster truck, with an inflatable structure stored in the back, all around New York. But the project that has most affected the daily life of a city is their ongoing engagement with the former airport turned city park Tempelhofer Feld, incorporating both long-term planning and temporary interventions. Their most recent project, Fountain House, finds a pavilion in Montreal with a fountain in the middle, supplying water to the growing plants that form its walls. With public space more and more on the line in any discussion of urbanism, Raumlabor’s work directly addresses cities in transformation and the boundaries between public and private, while also operating intellectually in theory, education and open discussion. Also concerned with small-scale projects and the deeply local, the complexity contained within their ideas has brought them international acclaim.

Raumlabor’s Fountain House in Montreal is built around a fountain that feeds plants growing in the walls.

Der Berg, a collaboration with Exyst, was a geometric mountain around the infrastructure of the former Palast der Republik.

Raumlabor were a key collaborator in developing the activation concept for Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin’s former airport turned park.

Their ongoing work at Tempelhofer Feld has seen the orchestration of several large events, including inviting other artists to come in for simultaneous installations, like the one above by Tracey Rose.

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within the temporary autonomous zone of California’s infamous Burning Man festival, artists create works intended as fuel for flames at the event’s conclusion. Such was the fate that befell Uchronia, the sculptural pavilion made entirely of wooden planks and fastenings by Flemish artist Arne Quinze in 2006. For its brief duration, the huge, graceful structure provided shade from the desert sun and inspiration for the festival participants—who numbered in the tens of thousands—but it also marked the start of a new strand in the artist’s work. Quinze—who began as a graffiti artist and never finished formal art studies—has a successful career with kinetic sculptures, but his larger-scale works can be considered a series born from Uchronia, transforming a city landscape at their installation point and becoming their own temporary spaces.

You can see his idea of temporary spaces scaled down in his Stilthouses series. Portrayed as a metaphor for human beings, the tall, thin, architectural sculptures appear fragile and shaky standing on two narrow legs—as humans do, but we possess enormous flexibility enabling us to adapt. Our lives are fragile, but we survive. Seen together with his large installations—which can be viewed as many stilthouses together—we are stronger together, uniting our strength.
DECLINE OF THE POLITICAL INSIDE TEMPORARY SPACES
by Miodrag Kuč

It has been a while since “temporary-spaces” became fashionable in mainstream urban-planning, usually in the form of orchestrated public art, over-designed “indeterminate architecture” and community-driven urban gardens. However, the most important components of the form, such as socio-political meaning or didactic potential, have been overlooked through a mix of transition-management and real-estate speculations.

Most people see the concept of T.A.Z. (Temporary Autonomous Zones) by Hakim Bey as a first attempt in underlining the importance of socio-political tactics in the creation of spaces outside of formal control. But historically many communities developed those zones inside the gaps caused by the empire’s extensions and shrinkage. Building alternative infrastructures and social cohesion inside temporary spaces in many cases led to anti-authoritarian communities—from self-sustaining villages to pirate radio stations. Later revisions by the author and the concept of P.A.Z. (Permanent Autonomous Zones) shows the importance of keeping independent status as the main challenge in the times of Structural Funds, the festivalization of urban lifestyles and the tendency towards “social innovation.”

Looking closer to architecture and its relation with temporality, one can claim that all building environments are temporal, depending from which time-distance the object is observed. Nevertheless, the unbuilt is also considered part of architectural history, showing the importance of spatial-principle, imaginary social relations and political significance of any proposal. For that reason, inside contemporary understanding of temporary architecture, we should rather think about diverse time-based scenarios, which allows multiple spatial outcomes and unexpected social relations. This learning process—open to diverse outcomes in which time is considered as a “fourth-dimension” of space—proposes experimentation and curiosity instead of fixed social relations and various systems of control, currently embedded in the paradigm of the “smart city.” In the absence of the real-political, the predominant concern has been a danger of temporary architecture serving only as a Trojan horse for “stabilizing” precarious cultural labor and cracks in urban development.

Temporary spaces have become a speciality of post-Wall Berlin, allowing diverse actors and grassroots groups to develop multiple visions of society to come. Predominantly political, spaces formed inside the vacuum of the non-functional state had a strong didactic component, allowing different “professionalizations”—the consequences of which we see nowadays in the rich spectrum of independent cultural institutions. After stabilization of the authorites (planning systems in particular) and the introduction of retrograde Critical Reconstruction, temporary spaces became a sort of danger for elites wishing to mimic the pre-war urban fabric. The failure of this top-down project was (and still is) the total ignorance of the radical demographic, economic and mental changes Berlin inhabitants faced after World War II, resulting in a network of micro-political structures operating simultaneously on all spatial scales.

Furthermore, after realizing that temporary spaces could somehow be part of the master-plan of urban marketing, authorities introduced non-confrontational modalities, such as temporary-permissions, tax-benefits or elastic opening hours. This gray zone allowed many so-called urban-pioneers to establish their own organizations, always looking for a possibility to stay temporal for as long as possible. In that period, a foundation for precarious (mostly cultural) labor was made, with strong intervention from the state in the sense of diversifying financial opportunities (grants, sponsorships, international financial networks, etc). Relaxation of political tensions, real-estate bargaining and saturation from events-driven locations characterized the current period in which spaces for experimentation are limited and peripheral.

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Above all, the instrumentalization of urban pioneers clearly visible in projects such as the conversion of the now defunct Tempelhofer Airport or strategic planning documents such as STRUKT 2030 (Stadtentwicklungskonzept Berlin, or the official urban development concept for 2030 issued by the city), shifted discussion from confrontation towards collaboration, with focus on “participation.” Involvement of all citizens (including ones inside temporary spaces) is nevertheless staged by district-municipalities and mostly involves the white-middle-class with a surplus of free time. Prearranged models of participating based on compromise rather than a strong argument has been framed by the illusion of live-streamed social relations and open-data accessibility. On top, ongoing click-click urbanism makes collective knowledge production particularly complicated due to the comfort our hyper mobility is producing, in which nobody really has time for “activism.” Over-aestheticization of temporary spaces and the introduction of Berlin-like leisure-hype also opens them up to cultural-tourists, international expats and bond academics. Unfortunately, their relation with those spaces is mostly about taking and rarely giving, reducing potential for the critical pedagogy and self-empowerment which has marked Berlin’s scene since the fall of the Wall.

The absurdity of looking into Berlin as a role model for bottom-up revitalizations of dilapidated urban areas, when Berlin at the same time is trying hard to become an ordinary city, asks for the serious re-mapping of the fragmented urban-pioneers scene, which is fully integrated into the real-estate logic of valorizations and rehabilitations. Additionally, many actors from the scene started consulting other municipalities, political foundations, foreign ministries and diverse universities, showing power of knowledge transfer beyond locally occupied space.

More global, urban pioneers from Berlin can be found at art and architecture festivals, in sleek books, projects run by national development agencies and cultural promotion organizations. Demand for this specific type of “expertise” again shows importance of knowledge produced around the condition of instability; showcasing resilient labor of insecure future. In this know-how transfer lays the potential for micro-political empowerments, in the form of shared resistance tools, juristic advises or alternative infrastructures.

However, local urban pioneers also benefit from global intercultural-communication, learning about urban tactics of the so-called “Global South.” Unconventional ways of dealing with waste, energy shortage or corrupted banks have inspired many international cooperation agents, turning them into “culture-vultures.” Urban agriculture methods from Cuba have been re-introduced as “land-reform” strategy, African SMS-banking (so-called mobile-money) presented as the future of financial flows, Chinese vendors’ infrastructure considered as prototype for the new relation between labor and place, just to name a few. All of this shows how production of “alternatives” also relies on inter-scalar relations between global urban nodes and temporality of its architecture. To make it simple: A gram of cocaine produced in the temporary lab inside the jungle, moved across the sea with a help of temporal disappearance from radar (via old Russian submarine, of course), ends up at a temporarily rented flat in Lichtenberg to be remixed and moved further to temporary clubs inside the industrial ruins of Berlin. A chain of multiple uncertainties and tensions or a collage of Temporary Autonomous Zones?

Seeing temporary spaces not just as spatial-cracks in urban development but preferably as places of political struggle and social mobilizations, we should confront the lack of argue-culture and underline topics such as the eviction of vulnerable inhabitants, access to public services and data security. If not, indeterminate spaces will continue being speculative goods, placed under the logic of event-management and urban recuperation. Last but not least, narratives about ephemeral place that once existed and actors involved in the creation of it produce many realities and perspectives—the main quality of the temporal spaces. Sadly enough, tendencies of augmented reality and ongoing self-culture shifted urban lifestyles much more towards ego-smart-shooter perspective, reducing the possible digital potential for the further development of interim spaces.

“Indeterminate spaces will continue being speculative goods, placed under the logic of event-management and urban recuperation.”
PLATOON is responsible for delivering inclusive, creative brand thinking through our parallel goal of cultural development. But what characterizes PLATOON is the spirit of opportunity—we believe in unlocking the potential of ideas wherever they come from, inspiring institutions and brands with a sense of the necessary and possible.

All open-minded brands and institutions have to question their understanding of the cultural status quo. Pure customer statistics do not give an understanding of the fast-paced, creative development of our societies. Therefore PLATOON provides its own Intelligence Lab to put the unique insights of its network members into account. It’s a specialist practice of socio-cultural intelligence, deconstructing the questions of culture and trends to identify the changes that are occurring and predict what’s next. The objective of the Intelligence Lab is to uncover unexpected findings on a macro and micro level within the whirlwind pace of cultural change.

As such, PLATOON is uniquely placed to offer an opportunity for direct contact with a global network of creative developers. We are responsible for a wealth of modular research which we process before constructing the narrative arc. We believe that the combination of quantitative (the science) and qualitative (the art) research is essential in deconstructing the future. First, we turn to quantitative data, answering what facts and statistics underpin a particular trend. Then we turn to our network of experts and trendsetters, adding additional layers of insights. We design research based on creative minds, and are driven by a great curiosity about cultural changes. We gather the people responsible for such change together in discussion groups to decipher cultural codes and synchronize a brand to the zeitgeist. We design solutions for the future—according to the needs of the commissioning institution or brand.

The results are conversations and debates that are revealing and enlightening, which distill deeper understanding into what lies ahead.

To bring all of these findings into effect we establish think tanks of global experts to design solutions for the future—according to the needs of the commissioning institution or brand.
In a six-month research project, we investigated the perception of the German car brand in the fast-changing Korean society. After evaluating an abundance of quantitative research, we formed qualitative research groups out of our network in different fields of expertise. One group incorporated experts from the industry, another was formed by open-minded customers and the third consisted of creatives and trendsetters. The results of the quantitative research revealed a shift in perception of the brand slogan, “The best or nothing,” within the Korean society. This important communication issue was analyzed by the expert groups to gather a deeper understanding and to develop conclusions, which were not only based on statistics but on a creative understanding of the Korean society and its changes. The surprising findings and solutions of the PLATOON INTELLIGENCE LAB led to a strategic brand consultation and have been implemented in a nationwide communication program taking the regional perception of the brand into account.

In 2014, Germany was awarded first place in the annual Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index, which ranks countries based on measuring their reputations globally. The analysis revealed that position was gained by an increase in the culture section of the survey. Unfortunately, this was only achieved by the fact that sports are part of the culture segment, and as Germany had won the FIFA World Cup, first place was clearly vulnerable in the years to come. PLATOON was invited to a governmental think tank on the national branding of Germany to gather some insights how the position—especially in the potential culture segment—can be developed. The goal was to understand the global perception of this nation besides the existing data, which takes mainly classic categories like economy, political stability, wealth, tourism and leisure into account. In a global survey, we asked our members to give us their insights into how Germany is culturally perceived in their countries. Our network members provided surprising and detailed information combined with some fundamental advice on how to improve the perception of Germany as a cultural nation.
PLATOON cultural development is a multi-stranded organization moving within the communication, art and cultural sectors. Since early 2000, our organization collaborates with an international network of like-minded individuals from different fields of expertise, sharing inspiration and participating in projects with passion. Visionaries, inventors, radical minds, artists and creative professionals have all applied in person to be part of PLATOON’s network and joined forces to envision and invent a possible future. Together, we are a community of people who want to change the world. Today, we total approximately 8000 members, hailing from over 53 countries.

As part of the PLATOON NETWORK, members can present their work to their peers, find an array of intriguing collaborations and participate in the development of inspiring projects. With a set of 23 professional fields spanning architecture, art, design, communication, science, education, crafts, health, IT and more, members benefit from skill exchange and an expert knowledge base from which to crowd-source, an important/necessary combination to realize a fully-executed concept.

The cultural seismograph of PLATOON works with this constant input from our network. Local conditions are included, new cultural developments are scanned early, the network receives knowledge of upcoming trends worldwide, creatives develop their own strategies according to these ideas and share it with their counterparts.

PLATOON MAGAZINE is another platform of international exposure for players in the contemporary culture landscape. Also designed as a reference for curators and other programmers in the cultural sector, we present our members’ finest projects, highlighting the diversity of their talents and skills, as well as the extent of their achievements. Each issue’s selection of network members reveals a wealth of ideas, conviction and personalities—certain eye-openers for any reader.

In this second issue, we introduce you to the visionary prophet-artist DADARA, who created LIKE4REAL, guiding you on the path to Enlikement in his candid interview. Discover Korean multi-media artist VAKKI and her kaleidoscopic work. Peak into the world of urban interventions, l’enfant terrible of urban interventions, and his outrageous artwork. Read our tribute to TROLLEYBOOKS’ founder Gigi Giannuzzi and learn about his tireless fight against injustice. This noble man working for the noble causes of art and fairness unfortunately departed this world too soon, but left behind his courageous work and an everlasting memory. Find out about our THINK TANK SESSIONS, which gathers creatives and makers specialized in creative coding, interactive technologies, physical computing, visual programming, hacking and circuit bending. These aren’t just in this issue, they’re part of our network.

Join the network! Come to one of our headquarters to get your dog tag or send us an invitation request at recruiting@platoon.org
Somewhere between psychedelia and pop art lies Vakki, the Korean artist whose colorful imagery not only provides eye-popping stimulation, but also relates to a historical moment in her country’s past. Via collage, video art, and installation, Vakki often references the South Korea of the early eighties, where, after much delay, color television and printers were finally introduced to the public. The resulting explosion of color in the media—especially in advertising or even government propaganda—forms the root of a lot of her work, which regularly recycles vintage content and kitsch into kinetic, graphic, geometric playfulness.

With an aesthetic that operates in both the commercial sphere—no surprise, given her inspirations—and the gallery, her previous work as a VJ and short film and music video director surely informs her practice now. With solo exhibitions in Seoul, Berlin, Beijing, and New York, plus collaborations with other artists, musicians and designers, her unique vision of the world is finding more and more outlets—including an upcoming exhibition later this year at PLATON KUNSTHALLE Berlin.

With her “VaVaVa Investigation Lab”, Vakki specializes in “visualizing untamed emotions.” She also seeks to transport the viewer or audience back to an age of innocence, a chromatic playground intending to evoke a kind of pure, pre-existential happiness—which can also read as a kind of escapism from this modern life of war, terror and financial instability. Vakki would have us believe that the future is still bright, and her artwork reflects that.

Vakki regularly creates kinetic installations, such as What I Dreamed (2013) pictured above, which is motorized and made with wood, mixed media, foamex and vinyl sheeting.
Much of her collage work demonstrates her affection for vintage kitsch of Korea’s eighties. Above: Clean Ladies Are Loved (2010).

Influences from advertising and government propaganda are most evident in her collages. Above: Room Nobody Visits (2013).

Vakki sees the pre-experiential world as a colorful playground. Above: the main collage image for her studio, the Vakki Investigation Bureau.

Color, motion and design regularly collide in her work, as evident in her 2014 kinetic installation Irregular Romantic Rule.
Brad Downey's feted documentary on street art, Public Discourse, helped birth and frame an unusual hybrid vision of artistry for the Berlin-based, American artist. Now known for his "spontaneous sculptures" and independent public art, his street sensibilities are steeped in art historical references. Sometimes his work manifests only as minute gestures—a plastic bottle placed to signify genitalia on an Antony Gormley figure, for instance—at others it's overly conspicuous—as when he used a fire extinguisher to paint the 100 meter storefront of Berlin's KaDeWe department store green, a commission in 'honor' of Lacoste's 75th anniversary that the clothing brand came to regret. While the prankster element is clear, Downey also regularly operates on the subtle level of subverting the quotidian in a way that many passers-by may not even notice. There is often a sense of order (or disorder, depending on your point of view)—especially in the collection of public barricades and arranging them just so—and humor through visual puns or a celebration of the absurd. And while he's received a number of shows, commissions, and awards, his most affecting work bears no sign of an institution, and sometimes even remains completely undetected.
Somewhere at the intersection of science, art, sound, and light lies Nicolas Bernier. The Montreal-based Canadian, who holds a PhD in sonic arts from the University of Huddersfield in the UK and the 2013 Golden Nica top honor from Austria’s prestigious Prix Ars Electronica festival, uses organic sound sources and digital processing—most notably, granular synthesis—to strike a balance between the cerebral and the sensual. While he releases albums and has made a name for himself in field recording and musique concrète, perhaps his most notable work has been informed by synthetic sounds for his frequencies series, which has also manifested as several installations and performance works.

frequencies (light quanta), the most recent frequencies iteration, features one hundred transparent, acrylic panels, laser-engraved with vectorial graphics and arranged in a row. Sound and light sequences are triggered in random order, creating animations by turning panels on and off. Synchronized to a soundtrack of crackling, hissing, fragmented tones and sequences, the resulting audiovisual display is also a mesmerizing metaphor for quantum physics principles, such as particles, probabilities, wave/particle duality, and discontinuity. While built with a certain amount of inherent randomness, the compositional rigor of the piece makes it a gorgeously rich, technologically enhanced demonstration of the complexities of our natural world.
In the case of street art, the eye of the beholder not only dictates the beauty of a piece, but also its legality. As such, the work of Berlin-based trio Bosso Fataka—like most street art—is ephemeral in nature. Maybe even more so for the genre, due to its three-dimensionality: urban wrappings using an excess of cling film to form playful creations from objects—either found or already there as municipal infrastructure.

Goofy animals made from waste cardboard, anthropomorphized rubbish bins, a tank made from a dumpster, public seating in odd arrangements, objects suspended between two poles—a healthy imagination makes new forms using plastic wrap for structural integrity, even if they don’t last long before they’re taken apart.

While commentary on refuse, recycling, upcycling, and yet more waste springs to mind with no clear political slant, you’d have to possess a heart of stone not to appreciate any of the whimsical, comical or even mischievous qualities of Bosso Fataka’s work. Street art can be controversial depending on who you’re talking to, but especially in the age of austerity, lively, homemade public art is an indication of thriving culture.
Bisque Rage is a one-day battle royale of the moving image with six editions under its belt in Lausanne, Copenhagen, Paris, Seoul, Stockholm and Berlin. Organizers Barefoot Basterds encourage the utmost chaos to elicit unusual cinematic experiences and inventiveness. Bringing together the world’s finest filmmakers in no time at all—the last one at PLATOON KUNSTHALLE in Berlin saw over 150 of them—participants work in teams and have just nine hours to produce a video piece, including filming, editing and any post-production. The event closes with screenings of all of the works, plus a party with DJs, VJs and performers.

A kind of DIY filmmaking on steroids, the Basterds refer to their event as, “a berserk video bootcamp,” and the results (you can view the collected film reels on their website) deliver on that promise.

Within the context of an artistic marathon challenge lies an intense level of fun for both participants and audience, borne of the feverish energy generated in completing the task. With plans to take their event to other locations around the world, another fascinating by-product of Bisque Rage is the insight into cultural differences and concerns amongst the local cutting-edge talent.
Dadara, as seen in the middle above at a 2012 performance of Exchanghibition in Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. Exchanghibition issues its own bank notes in denominations of Zero, Million and Love.

To call Dutch artist Dadara a provocateur touches on only part of what he does as a painter, designer, sculptor and conceptual artist. He might enjoy getting a reaction with his work, but his explorations of the boundaries and absurdities of reality also contain layers of thoughtfulness. For example, examining finance, Dadara started his own bank as an artist in 2011. The Exchanghibition Bank issued banknotes in denominations of Zero, Million, Love and more. Similarly, commenting on social media and the attention economy, he refers to his Like 4 Real project, which worshipped ‘Likes’ (of the Facebook variety) as a religion that guides people on their spiritual path of Enlikement. In Hourtopia, time also became a currency. With his penchant for critiquing and replicating social structures, his new undertaking is the Beyond Festival, the first edition of which took place May, 2015, in a field in The Netherlands. We spoke with him about the themes that guide his work.

You are now known for a number of different projects. Aside from their conceptual nature, what ties all of your work together?

Dadara: Looking back there’s definitely a common theme. It’s all about life and humans, and how we as humans interact in this thing called society/life. And we somehow seem to mix up life and society. You seem to be making some pretty pointed comments about these topics.

Yes, there’s always a message—sometimes hidden, sometimes very clear. It’s not just pretty and visual. I realize more and more that so much stuff in our world has become entertainment. But I think it only becomes interesting when it goes beyond fun. As I read somewhere: “Art focuses our attention. Entertainment distracts our attention.”
Do you think your works have been successful in their messages? What kinds of responses have you received? It’s amazing how they touch people. And somehow they always seem to be controversial. It’s interesting to see that when a thousand people see your work, you hear a thousand different stories about how people interpret them. Often I get goosebumps. Someone recently for instance mailed me and said that if they would die, they would take one thing with them in their grave: a piece of your work. Another person has had a photo framed and put in their living room. It’s amazing how they touch people. And somehow they always seem to be controversial. It’s interesting to see that when a thousand people see your work, you hear a thousand different stories about how people interpret them. Often I get goosebumps. Someone recently for instance mailed me and said that if they would die, they would take one thing with them in their grave: a piece of your work. Another person has had a photo framed and put in their living room.

Something that I found impressive about your projects is how large scale they are and the high production values they incorporate. There is a lot of work going into them. Some projects are really large scale, but it’s not always about scale. Maybe the production value you mention is better. I like both huge and small—sometimes tiny details can have more impact than large scale. Mixing both together, I noticed, works great. The details often make it real for people, blurring the line between fantasy and reality.

It also implies that you have a lot of ‘fine art’ training, in terms of the imagery, designs, etc. I went to six art schools before I was 22. When I was 18 I got kicked out of one art school because of, “total lack of both visual and creative talent.” They advised me to become an accountant. Luckily, I did not listen. I became the in-house artist/designer of my own reality.

But it’s great to see big conceptual works supported by truly talented plastic arts skills, as opposed to being only about ideas. This goes back to the details you mention.

The combination of the intellectual and the physical. I somehow also believe in a kind of romantic ideal of being an artist, which also means creating your own imagery and style, and combining that with the conceptual part. All is one.

You must also have a team of people helping you? For instance, I read that your partner is a fashion designer. Yes. Sometimes I work alone, sometimes it’s fifty people. Going back to your earlier question, at the beginning of this year—with a friend of mine, Eileen Azad—we decided to start a new kind of festival. In four months, without ever having done it before, we went to museums, to Occupy, to festivals, but also to real banks. Like 4 Real is about the way we connect with each other in this digital age, and became a theater play. But I also gave a talk/performance at The Next Web conference. I hope people for this edition can let go of expectations. That would already be an accomplishment in our nowadays society. We have no line-up, no timetable, etc. It will be about living in the here and now. It will be about connecting with other people without technology—that’s why we have Wi-Fi (Human Fidelity) instead of Wi-Fi. There are a lot of points of address, instead of one as in these other projects. It’s an experiment. I mostly do things because I feel I should do them. I feel it in this stage it would be too crystallized people would have too many expectations, and it would limit the possibilities.

I see that it’s already sold out. Yes, and thousands of people trying to get a ticket without anyone who knows what it is. I think that’s great.

I was going to ask about the festival. What’s the concept behind it? It’s a story, I love stories. The night after we decided to organize the festival, I slept and dreamt some weird dreams—I always dream a lot. And then I woke up at 5AM and wrote a story. It’s about community and connecting people beyond the box they or others put them in. And as a community it could become a platform for a lot of ideas. Creating your own land, kind of. So next year, we could, for instance, work on creating an alternative currency and start using it at the festival—as I did in theory and conceptually with the Exchanghibition Bank.

Can you be more specific? How do you propose to accomplish these goals within a festival setting? This first edition is the first seed planted; obviously in four months there is a limit to what you can do. But it already seems we started creating a community, which transcends existing communities/societies, based on ideas and visions to a bigger audience. Building bridges with the real world is another thread in my work. With, for instance, the Exchanghibition Bank, we went to museums, to Occupy, to festivals, but also to real banks. Like 4 Real is about the way we connect with each other in this digital age, and became a theater play. But I also gave a talk/performance at The Next Web conference. I hope people for this edition can let go of expectations. That would already be an accomplishment in our nowadays society. We have no line-up, no timetable, etc. It will be about living in the here and now. It will be about connecting with other people without technology—that’s why we have Wi-Fi (Human Fidelity) instead of Wi-Fi. There are a lot of points of address, instead of one as in these other projects. It’s an experiment. I mostly do things because I feel I should do them. I feel it in this stage it would be too crystallized people would have too many expectations, and it would limit the possibilities.

Is that off the back of your reputation as an artist, you think? I guess partly. There are people who give me the benefit of the doubt.

You said you have a philosophy in place, and that it’s a story. Life is a story. But I have the feeling in this digital age, people are more and more turning into digitis-predictable. That’s how companies can make money and governments have control. But as Nietzsche said, “Chaos gives birth to a dancing star.”

I also feel as if there is an element of prophet or shaman or cult leader in what you do. I think you are right. Somebody recently told me that festivals have become the new religion. So that means it would be the logical follow up to starting the Like 4 Real cult guiding people on their Spiritual Path to Enlikement. Also, recently in an interview someone called me bank-director/shaman. I loved that combination.

Right. And it also ties into the whole idea of starting a new political space—one that might need a passport. It’s also about magic. I think our society needs more magic and serendipity.

That goes back to the chaos you mentioned, the unpredictability. Yes. Because no matter how hard we try to control the unpredictability of life—and it seems we are trying hard to do that in our society—I think it will never cease to be unpredictable. And that’s beautiful. I hope we never turn into a Brave New World. I have read Brave New World and 1984 quite a few times.

It sounds like you should have gone into politics. Maybe a political party should become my next art project.

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Following Exchanghibition, Dada’s Hourtopia project examined the idea that time is money and his Hourtopia banknotes—as seen above, acrylic paintings on linen—were a way to preserve moments in time forever.

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If painting is one of humanity’s oldest artistic mediums, South Korean artist Jazoo Yang brings new life to it. Take her collaboration with musician Haku Sungho: metal springs are attached to her canvas, and as she paints, the sounds produced via the springs are amplified by prepared speakers and guitar amp, collected by Sungho’s laptop, and recorded and manipulated in real time. Live painting is a large part of her practice, often in collaboration with musicians, as is a literacy in street art and their unique characters. Her painterly touch also regularly informs her installation work, which focuses on reconstructing the lost history of a space.

As a painter, Yang’s Wall series, in particular, starts from a number of different materials on canvas to evoke the classicism of abstract expressionism. Crumbles of leftover paintings are stuffed between steel bands or dribbled over bricks, recontextualizing painting itself. There’s a historicism at play in much of her work—a sense of temporality in a static image or arranged objects in a space; acknowledgement, respect, and mourning for the past. The ancient art of painting finds some renewal in Jazoo Yang.
TILL THE COWS COME HOME

If a slow food, vegetarian café operating out of a shipping container in Berlin’s fashionable Mitte district doesn’t nod to several zeitgeists, then Till The Cows Come Home is merely a place to have a meal. Founded by creative director Natalie Viaux and health consultant Dr. Christiane Cordes, the dedicated team is responsible for a tiny oasis of ayurvedic, kosher and macrobiotic cuisines sourced from regional, sustainable and organic farming, inspired by flavors from all over the world. With an interior clad in Norwegian birch, the calm they aim to inspire is reflected in their name.

With bespoke dining table, seats and terrace, Till The Cows Come Home presents itself as a momentary respite from everyday urban life, offering sustenance and rejuvenation to help launch people back into their city lives. There’s also an aspirational element at play—who says we can’t have it all? Health, taste, the choices offered by a capital city and a pastoral benefit from rural influences are all neatly embodied in one shipping container.
An unusual interdisciplinary twist, Anja Humljan launched The Urban Yoga as an experiment to explore a dialogue between body and city. As a top track and field athlete during her youth in her native Slovenia, a trained dancer, and a yoga teacher of 13 years, Humljan has always been in touch with her body and the sensory world it allows us. As a trained, exhibited architect who has studied sound recording, her methods for analyzing space became more intertwined with the sense of her own physicality and search for harmony with her environment—wherever that may be.

In an unusual interdisciplinary twist, Anja Humljan launched The Urban Yoga as an experiment to explore a dialogue between body and city. As a top track and field athlete during her youth in her native Slovenia, a trained dancer, and a yoga teacher of 13 years, Humljan has always been in touch with her body and the sensory world it allows us. As a trained, exhibited architect who has studied sound recording, her methods for analyzing space became more intertwined with the sense of her own physicality and search for harmony with her environment—wherever that may be.

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Off the greens and onto the streets, urban golfing (or "crossgolf") is an underground sport growing in popularity worldwide since 1992, and the brainchild of inventor Torsten Schilling. With Natural Born Golfers, Schilling leads a crew of adventurers dismantling what some would call a yuppie, elitist sport, turning industrial complexes, high-rise buildings, and more into your next eighteen holes. In their street-legal golf carts, instructors for hire help you navigate the city in an entirely new way—sometimes leading to much larger events with dozens of participants, bands, and some real rock ‘n’ roll flavor. In fact, Schilling’s Natural Born Golfers parties led to the creation of their very own, eponymous vodka brand. An independent distillery made with grains from the north of Germany, created in small batches, they’re even resolutely independent about the way they unwind after a long day on the links and a few golf cart crashes. And if that weren’t enough, Schilling tops it all off at Le Bums, the secret vodka bar in the back container of PLATOON KUNSTHALLE Berlin’s shipping container space. You need a password to get in, but once you do, you enter the world of Natural Born Golfers—sport, music, and fashion.
In an ambitious and expansive project encompassing ten cities across two continents, Ten Cities engineered musical crossovers and examinations between Europe and Africa. Enlisting DJs, producers, musicians and journalists across Nairobi, Lagos, Luanda, Cairo, Johannesburg, Naples, Lisbon, Kyiv, Bristol and Berlin, meetings resulted in recording sessions, parties, talks, seminars and more. Contextualizing with local accounts of the histories of the clubbing scenes of each city, the four-year undertaking—a large initiative involving multiple institutions and organizers, including brothers Hannes and Andi Teichmann from the PLATOON NETWORK—culminated in a compilation album documenting the cross-genre, transcontinental collaborations and a final blowout event in Berlin last November, with a forthcoming book collating all of the written materials.

Recognizing music—in this case, unique micro-genres of club music—as more than entertainment, something central to popular culture, Ten Cities taps into a number of political threads. While raising the specter of colonialism, the focus is a subversion of stereotypes and the desire for nuance. Exposure is also important—the overlooked contribution of underappreciated but exciting musical forms becomes as important as the creation of new ideas formed from different perspectives meeting. Born out in the club, it also reveals, again, the power of the connectivity of music.
What started as one man’s passion in 2001 has grown into an art publisher of the highest order and an award-winning example of activism through aesthetics. Founded by Gigi Giannuzzi, Trolley Books quickly became renowned for their high production values and elegant design in photography book publishing, even as far back as 2003’s Agent Orange – Collateral Damage in Viet Nam by Philip Jones Griffiths. Trolley regularly works with photographers of note— including the likes of Robin Maddock, Nina Berman, Stanley Greene, and more—setting an agenda of difficult subject matter and using photography as a tool against power, hypocrisy and injustices with the belief that books have an innate power to act as cultural testaments to events in the world that should be seen, and not be forgotten.

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Sadly, the infectiously exuberant Giannuzzi (a fondly missed PLATOON number) died in 2012, but the Trolley directive remains upheld by Hannah Watson, his business partner since 2005. Giannuzzi lived to see the opening of their London contemporary art gallery TJ Boulting, and the first book published following his passing was Trolleyology, a celebration of the books he had published in Trolley’s first ten years with new contributions from the worlds of photography, art, and publishing. The outpouring of affection for Giannuzzi—especially in the form of works donated to raise nearly a quarter of a million pounds for his cancer treatment—was testament not only to the man, but also to his legacy, a book publisher beloved by both artists and the public.
The concept of “asphalt pilots” may not conjure an immediate image, but it’s a phrase that suits the eponymous international, interdisciplinary artist group well. Steered by dancer Anna Anderegg—usually in conjunction with musician Marco Barotti and live painter Herve Thiot, amongst others—their dance installations turn urban spaces into unusual and arresting happenings. Whether playing with perception geometrically using projected line art in a small space or with architectural images projected over actual architecture in a sprawling, multi-story spectacle—all to an otherworldly soundtrack—ASPHALT PILOTEN’s basic elements of choreography, music and visual art combine for an ephemeral, site-specific multi-sensory celebration.

Drawing in the political, ASPHALT PILOTEN specialize in unannounced, public performances, making whoever is passing by their audience. The gesture reflects their anti-elitist stance as well as devotion to playful, random acts of beauty. Additionally, their use of waste materials such as newspaper, cardboard or bottle tops for costumes and set design is both environmental statement and quotidian allegiance. And while their approach is clearly informed by “high art” traditions, ASPHALT PILOTEN’s uniquely modern sensibilities bring dance out of the institution and onto the street, opening it up to an entirely new group of people.
If Psy’s 2012 hit “Gangnam Style” was K-pop going worldwide, bands like EE are an indication of a healthy underground back in Seoul. Manned by husband and wife duo Hyun-Joon and Yun-Joung, respectively, the pair revel in bastardizing their mainstream influences to make energetic, electro-clash pop. And while music may be the message, they prefer to think of themselves as a Total Art performance team, responsible for their own videos, costumes and album designs, as well as the details surrounding it all. EE has been keeping them busy for the past seven years, in tandem with Yun-Joung’s work as a stylist and Hyun-Joon’s work as an installation artist—whose work was shown alongside this year’s Venice Biennale and at PLATOON KUNSTHALLE Seoul’s Artist Lab (where his final performance revolved around his proposal to Yun-Joung).

While EE clearly follow a lineage as children of Warhol, their endearing, unselfconscious demeanor makes actions like banging their heads, making faces and dancing on camera all the more charming. Equally, their music is upbeat and fun, with just enough edge to keep things interesting. And while they may still be underground, their unusual flavor crosses borders; they were the first Korean act to ever be invited to perform at premier US festival Coachella in 2011.

With a visual identity as strong as their music, EE create turbulence within Korea’s culture scene. Their take on what an artist is may irritate the local establishment, but would probably find warmer reception internationally.

Having said that, the duo were recently selected as artist-in-residence of Korea’s National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art for the latter half of 2015 in a collaborative project with visual artist Lumpens.
In a city famous for street artists, El Bocho is one of the most well-known. His recurring characters painted on paper and then pasted on walls—such as “Tina Berlina” or his Citizens series—have been well-documented, and show up all over Berlin. Having arrived here via Frankfurt from his native Spain, El Bocho—whose name translates from Mexican as “little donkey”—manages to keep his true identity secret, despite his numerous gallery exhibitions all over the globe, full participation in the art world and easy engagement with the press.

While he takes a pragmatic view of the art market and his role in it, that doesn’t prevent El Bocho from taking a political stand. His work in public spaces spans a number of different themes—including playfulness and romance, respectively, in the aforementioned pieces—with dedicated series addressing topics such as increased violence, in this case adapted to resemble public notices. A street artist with a conscience isn’t new, but being able to delineate so many different facets of an artist solely by their work is always fascinating. The diversity of his projects make El Bocho a person, not just a street art myth.
If adhesive tape in the realm of street art is an increasingly visible medium, in Berlin at least, this is partly due to the activities of Klebebande—the trio of artists working exclusively with the sticky stuff. With different, brightly colored rolls of tape, they create fantastical displays of geometrically-inspired imagery, even playing with a third dimension of line art with their “tape-mapping” projects. It’s bold, eye-catching stuff, whether it encompasses the entire interior of a space—as with their installation in PLATOON KUNSTHALLE—or scaled down as a single figure on a wall.

Intriguingly, Klebebande operate in a number of different contexts, including gallery, street, and corporate settings. They also offer workshops, sharing their vision with participants around the world. And it’s certainly a matter of vision; the tools at their disposal can be found in any hardware store and require no special instruction for use. Yet a Klebebande piece brings this simplest of equipment to vivid life, without the aid of digitization, often as the product of collaborative improvisation. Straight lines, sticky tape, and imagination.
THINK TANK

Over the years, PLATON members have often gathered together to explore various relevant issues. From bootcamps, hackathons, visioning/design workshops and more, the network regularly mobilizes to share expertise, create new ideas and find a way to bring them to life. Towards that end, in May 2013, PLATON initiated a new series: the THINK TANK sessions, curated by Artist-In-Residence Tikul (of acclaimed video/3D graphics and sculpture duo Pussycrew) and Cultural Manager Aanisa Ru.

A regular gathering of open-minded creatives, the THINK TANK sessions focus on creative coding, interactive technologies, audiovisual and physical computing, visual programming, creating apps, hacking and circuit bending. It’s an informal environment where each session investigates a different theme with invited guests and professional artists working with various tools and technology.

Launching the first series, TOKYO DATA demonstrated the coding of spatial sound and DIY electronics for prototyping physical data visualization. Onyx Ashanti presented his sonic exploration from fully custom software and 3D printed hardware, the Beatjazz Controller—his full-body musical system playable with hands, arms, mouth and body. We also got a taste of visual performance and video mapping techniques from VJ Fader, a visual artist who works with multimedia in a variety of disciplines ranging from generative animation, music videos, stage design and art installations.

THINK TANK presenter Kanno So’s piece Jizzed in My Pants features what he calls a "senseless drawing bot," as an automated painter in the gallery.

Electronic Evocations

Robert Seidel presented work exploring mapped sculpture, animated paintings, linked digital and physical imagery and more in 2013. Above: His projections on the water from a fountain create explosions of color, light and movement in his Advection exhibition.

All photos: Courtesy of the artists unless otherwise noted
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ELECTRONIC EVOCATIONS

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His work has been shown to broad audiences around the world and has been exhibited at numerous festivals such as Coachella (California), Burning Man (Nevada) and Mapping Festival (Geneva).

For a media artist like Fader, a visual music app and instrument for phone and tablet was the next logical step. With his EDMT app, Fader gives the user nine different screens, or “scenes” to choose from, each with distinct, generative 3D graphics, multi-touch and accelerometer interactivity, audio reactivity and dynamic sound. Scenes can be shaken to change the audio preset, colors can be transformed via three-finger touch, and work can be synced, saved, and shared. As technology fuels creative endeavors more and more, the race is on to make things more intuitive and accessible for the user. Technology also strengthens interconnected projects and practices. In the case of EDMT, the interface for music is not merely visual, but visuals are as much the output as music. And when artists themselves are involved in the designing and programming of new tools, we also get a glimpse into their specific mode of working.

While exploring mapped sculpture Berlin-based artist Robert Seidel was invited; he not only transforms drawings into animated paintings in his experimental films, but also connects them to sculptures and architecture in the real world. In his lecture, Seidel presented some of his multi-faced works—including a pictorial reinterpretation of biological processes in video installations and virtual sculptures or water projections—and offered an insight into his artistic process. With young, multi-awarded Japanese artist Kanno So, we entered the realm of robotics. Kanno presented “Making Things That Make Something”, illustrating his path through robotics, electronics, nature and sound art. With no intention of mass production but only of art interaction for gallery attendees, he puts forward refined and sensible research on the phenomenology of the media he uses, translating sound waves into visuals and vice versa—a journey into algorithms, wave forms and movements.

Robotics was also a topic for Felix Bonewski, a generative video artist and teacher at a robotic project lab at the Technical University in Berlin. Bonewski is a programmer, specializing in interaction and building motion sensors using Arduinos, specifically PS3 cameras modified for infrared tracking and computer vision simulated dynamic systems. He has done installations for Berlin’s Sillophos event series and Fusion Festival, as well as contributing to the Hugo exhibition at London’s Saatchi Gallery.

Some THINK TANK participants have also contributed to important international scientific projects, such as Sébastien Bourdeauducq—an inventor passionate about science, electronics and open source, with an interest in the world of music and live performances and the desire to open up system-on-chip design (SoC) integrated circuits. Some of his work has been reused by NASA in 2009, with a successful launch onboard the International Space Station in August 2012. Since 2011, Bourdeauducq has also provided gateware and electronics engineering services to scientific projects such as CERN’s open hardware repository. He is also the developer of the Mixxeo, a digital video mixer built on the open source Milkymist system-on-chip technology. Many video artists need a device that can blend video streams from two or more computers. Digital video mixing is not easy, and requires specialized high speed logic design skills whose results are seen everyday (mobile phones, computers, etc), but nonetheless, very few open source developers choose to learn. As a consequence, all those devices are mere controllers for a proprietary module doing the actual mixing. Such approaches lack flexibility and transparency.

Another highlight from the THINK TANK sessions was the panel discussion “Movements of Disturbance: Excess Ecology, Post-Digital Networks and Queer Illegibility”, with Misha Cardenas (Local Autonomy Networks), Pinar Yoldas (Speculative Biologies) and Zach Blas (Facial Weaponization Suite). It was a welcome opportunity to discuss and actively protest biometric facial recognition and global surveillance, as well as to consider the creation of a post-human eco-system and both digital and non-digital networks of communication in an effort to increase community autonomy.

Following a range of THINK TANK sessions—including kinetic prototype testing with Eric Heavey, science fiction multimedia art with Danish artist Ulrik Jørgensen and the role of the contemporary human being in a digitally augmented world with Markus Kison—the PLATON NETWORK has also encouraged collective video mash-ups, mobile interventions, urban explorations, jamming and mixing video material and distorting/data bending/pitching. And as THINK TANK sessions have been crucial for providing a much-needed space for open collaborations, creative encounters continue on an irregular basis. THINK TANK, much like the PLATON NETWORK itself, is open to anyone with a good idea.
Harnessing the talents of a team of architects, media artists, musicians, cultural scholars and technical specialists, URBANSCREEN are in the business of creating beautiful, large-scale spectacles out of the overlap between the material and digital worlds. Specializing in public, site-specific media installations—most commonly taking the form of 3D-video mapping on architecture and augmented sculptures (a physical object with custom-fit projection mapping)—the Bremen-based collective have won numerous awards, displaying the breadth of their imaginations and the strength of their technology on five different continents.

Allowing their work to also guide a research strand, URBANSCREEN feels like a particularly modern concern. Their cumulative practice illustrates and investigates the principles of communication, lifestyle, and art in the post-digital world, emphasizing how intertwined such ideas have become. They rely on the most up-to-date movements of video technology to create futuristic, yet still poetic, panoramic scenes, and participate in the conversations that surround it. Whether explorations of light and space, virtual theater, or research study and debate, URBANSCREEN are clear leaders in their interdisciplinary field.

In 2009’s 555 Kubik (above) — projected onto the Hamburg Kunsthalle — urbanscreen imagined what it would look like if a house was dreaming.

2014’s 320° Licht projected 320° around on the 100 meters high wall interior of the former gas holder, Gasometer Oberhausen.

On the ground floor for 320° Licht, which used 23 interconnected projectors.

2011’s MQ10 featured an audiovisual staging of the Leopold Museum’s architecture in Vienna’s MuseumsQuartier.

Lighting The Sails (2012) projected onto the famous fins of the Sydney Opera House.

Rice University in Houston, Texas, celebrated their centennial in 2012 with 270° projections along 240 meters of wall with 6.1 full spatial sound.

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If the idea of playing physical space like an instrument sounds intriguing, then welcome to 4DSOUND. The audio experience organization, founded by classically-trained composer Paul Oomen in Amsterdam, is responsible for a new take on soundsystems that delivers a phantom imaging previously unheard of. With 16 columns arrayed in a 16 by 16 meter configuration—each column containing three omni-directional speakers set at a different height—plus nine sub-bass speakers beneath the floor, it offers immense precision to the musician controlling it (musicians who have already performed on it include Vladislav Delay, Pantha Du Prince, Stimming and more). Sound not only becomes truly three-dimensional—the fourth dimension is time—variables such as sound walls, which limit how far sounds can travel, create unique experiences for individuals within the space.

As 4DSOUND Creative Director John Connell relates in his recent talk, "Understanding Space Through Sound", presented at CTM Festival in Berlin last January, spatial sound not only creates new realities for the listener, it also plays a role in exploring consciousness. And as an example of the integration of cutting edge technologies—each interface to the 4DSOUND system is digital, using the likes of software such as Ableton Live or Lemur—the capabilities of 4DSOUND also imply a whole new era of perceptual possibilities.
Boris Hoppek’s grinning costumes for the PictoOrphanage by WerkstattKollektiv in 2006 have simple features but express a lot.

Foregrounding character, the work of Berlin’s Pictoplasma, has turned out to be more than just anthropomorphism. Now the world’s leading and largest festival and conference for contemporary character culture, what started out as a research project for a former animator has turned into an entire strand of events, including a separate, annual academy session of workshops and masterclasses and a New York edition. Incorporating the theories of images and encompassing all of the means to make characters come to life, Peter Thaler and Lars Denicke invite us in to the fastastical, wonderfully creative, unusual world of Pictoplasma.

You describe Pictoplasma as an event geared around “characters.” Can you give us a definition of characters?
Lars Denicke: We like the triple meaning:
1. someone in a play, virtual world, etc.
2. a typographic sign.
3. the German Charakter, which translates as personage and adds supposed psychological depth.
Putting the three together for us means that we see characters as reduced, almost typographic illustration (the second connotation) of beings that create their own worlds (the first connotation), and...
One of the proponents of image theories, Georges Didi-Huberman, put it into the slogan, “what we see is looking back at us.” What recent theories of images agree on is that a picture is different from a mere object in that it gives us this feeling. This feeling is the quality that adds to its physicality, that makes a drawing an image and not just a piece of paper with crayon on it, or what makes a stone a sculpture. It is a metaphysical discourse of images as ideas.

Above: El Grand Chamaco’s illustration

Peter, maybe this next question is more for you: how have your feelings about characters changed or evolved over the years of Pictoplasma?

Peter: I guess I don’t really see the characters themselves anymore, or not as much as I used to. I was more excited about a radical style and fresh graphics in the beginning. Now I feel like I’m enveloped in the matrix. I see behind the style and graphics, trying to understand their true character.
At Platoon we are always scanning the activities of our worldwide network. Additionally, as there are so many interesting projects continuously in the making, we are inviting Platoon members to submit their works to our editorial team for possible features in the magazine and on the website.

Members can apply at Platoon.org/submit or simply scan the QR code, if you are not a member yet. But you want to actively engage, find out more at Platoon.org/register.

Platoon.org/submit
The PLATOON ARTIST LAB enables selected PLATOON members to develop their own projects or forge collaborations within the facilities of PLATOON KUNSTHALLE. To date, we have hosted six different residencies, including Pussykrew’s video transformation of the KUNSTHALLE’s facade, Digital Fragments’ interactive multimedia installation, and Simonne Jones’ interactive LED pictures. Each artist has come into our space for a length of time and worked with the PLATOON team for feedback and brainstorming, culminating in an exhibition or performance—usually site-specific to our unique container space.

The most recent ARTIST LAB resident Steffen Seeger’s work is a unique mixture of graffiti writing, illustration/graphic design and contemporary art. He created his own one-line technique which also became the key artwork for PLATOON’s campaign for HUGO, “RED NEVER FOLLOWING”, at the Saatchi Gallery in London, 2013. His paintings and drawings offer complexity from the deceptively simple.

Seeger had a special project in mind for PLATOON KUNSTHALLE Berlin. After several experiments with different materials, he transformed the striking glass facade into a burst of color and geometric design.

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The initial prototype of the Malloy Hoverbike was built in 2011. The company recently announced new investment from the US Army Research Laboratory.