

Helmi Vent

30 Years Lab Inter Arts (LIA)

A review of the years 2008–2013 and preceding

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History and Background

The abbreviation LIA stands for an experimental and performance platform open to all students at the Mozarteum University Salzburg. Established in 2008, LIA was a derivative of the Dance Music-Laboratory founded in 1983 (1983-1992), as well as the interdepartmental and interuniversity Dance Music Theatre-Laboratory (1993-2008), each under the direction of Univ. Prof. Helmi Vent. (As they are bound by similar central themes, these pre-forms will henceforth also be referred to as LIA.)

The origination began with the "Interdisciplinary Projects" (formerly known as "cross-disciplinary projects"), conceptualized in 1983, at first unofficially, and becoming official in 1993. The foundation for the subsequent LIA concept for video-based teaching and artistic research was established in 1983, a first for Austrian universities of arts at the time. The University of Salzburg proved to be a helpful partner with audiovisual productions, until the realization of in-house production capabilities in 1992.

LIA projects were combined with seminars under the newly established course title "Aesthetic Theories". As of 2004 both LIA projects as well as LIA seminars were accepted as free electives at the Mozarteum. Numerous LIA performance art-projects and lectures were offered through interuniversity science and art programs. In the 30 years of lab-work, around 450 people participated in LIA project events, including students from various academic disciplines from the University Mozarteum Salzburg, the University of Salzburg, and the degree program Multi-Media Art at the University of Applied Sciences Salzburg. Non-university students took part as well.

LIA celebrated its 30th anniversary in the Solitär of the Mozarteum University on May 17, 2013, with a film series of selected performance projects dating from 1983 through 2013. In 2013, for the conceptualization of “LIA - Lab Inter Arts”, Helmi Vent received the “Ars Docendi State Award” for Excellence in Teaching at the Austrian Public Universities in the category “Innovative Teaching Concepts”. In 2013 Helmi Vent became professor emerita at the Mozarteum University Salzburg.

Central Ideas

- Art-Making as an Experiment

LIA's work centralizes around its participants and their experiments in performing art as a form of living, feeling and thinking, and ultimately as a co-composition. This concept seeks to find connections to a cultural practice which attempts to view life itself as a laboratory, a thousand year-old, or rather an always newly reinvented concept within its own artistic, cultural, and social environment. Within the context of this inventive process, the artistic as well as the anthropological aspect of the experiment is of particular importance. In the wake of current volatile instability and uncertainties in politics and society, an experiment with imponderables serves to stimulate students into creative and flexible ensemble “playing.”

- Artistic Research Laboratory

The laboratory work is carried out within the interconnected fields of sound and body, sound and physical theater, experimental music and dance-theater, performance art, action-theater, installation, fine art, literature, film, etc. The foundation of the work is the sounding board “body”- which is understood as an integrative interface of human learning and mutual physical, emotional, and spiritual understanding.

Through analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the systematically produced documentaries (1983-2013), the LIA research laboratory develops and provides models in which the artistic laboratory processes are visible, repeatable, and again in the direct lab work comprehensible, debatable, and in alterations and transformations made applicable for students.

One focus of the artistic research at the LIA is the development of an aesthetic profile of the performance genre Space-Sound-Body-Theater. Some of these results include *Songs of(f) Stage*, 1998 (Film-Edition: 32 Min., 2000 / CD-Edition: 43 Min., 2004), *Auf weiter Flur*, 2000

(Film-Edition: 59 Min., 2001) and *Kellertheater*, 2009 (Film-Edition: 22 Min., 2010). A second focus of the artistic research at the Lab Inter Arts is the development of experimental working methods, which can promote performative communication, interaction, and presentation forms.

- Process Orientation

LIA projects develop their hypotheses, their language, their material, and their forms from the respective laboratory process and the persons involved in the process. That which is set into motion and brought to the surface through these guided explorations, will become the fuel for the later performance concept. The vocal, dance, instrumental, pictorial, linguistic, etc., focuses of a project are largely determined by the artistic competencies of the respective participants.

- Transculturality

The transcultural ConCom Projects, which are a part of Lab Inter Arts, are internationally oriented. They bring students together from different countries and are characterized by a joint development of projects which take place at a partnering institution. In the ConCom Projects socio-cultural as well as societal phenomena are combined into the laboratory work, and provide a framework as well as presenting a challenge. ConCom Projects define themselves as an artistic futuristic workshop, which shift common forms of expression, communication and discourse, as well as artistic hybrid languages in new collective identities into the focus of interest. This interest raises the question for all the participants of how culturally differing potential amidst the diversity of cultures can be used as a driving force within the artistic debate.

Performative Formats

In addition to working in groups, the participants are individually advised, supervised and trained in terms of their design objectives. This also includes instructions for a conscious interplay between performing artist and performance artist, as well as impulses for the utilization of the acquired artistic skills in a broad social-cultural context.

- Project

With their many guest performances and outreach projects at international theaters and cultural institutions, universities and congresses, the "Interdisciplinary Projects" comprise the core of the laboratory work (<http://www.labinterarts.com>). Among the main research areas there is a series of filmed results which include *City Walks Mumbai 2010* (Mumbai 2010 / Film-Edition: 42 Min.), a meeting and performance project with various partners from Mumbai (India) and students from LIA, and *REP & RIP – REPertoire and Repertoire In Process* (Manado, 2012 / Film-Edition: 56 Min.), an experimental vocal-theater project with the Indonesian Manado State University Choir and an LIA team.

- Seminars

LIA seminars take their content from the ongoing artistic laboratory practices and consider the relevant project topics with overarching questions. The seminars orient themselves around the trends of "expanded" art theories on trans-cultural philosophy and cultural anthropology, as well as newer communication, media, and societal concepts in which culturally dependant terminology such as art, culture, performance, body, identity, communication, space, stage, theater, teaching and learning, are questioned and rethought. In the process of this re-questioning, the LIA seminars give students the impetus to deal with post-colonial and trans-cultural paradigms such as diversity, plurality, and difference. Two examples are: „*Bitte, nehmen Sie Platz. Ein Stück zur Ausleuchtung von Positionen*“ (1985), „*Lebenskünstler – Lebenskunst*“ (2013)

- Audiovisual Documentation and Filming

The LIA film archive currently consists of 56 filmed productions, including 30 documentaries of LIA performances, 15 documentaries about LIA work process, as well as 11 module series on selected teaching and research topics. Helmi Vent is responsible for the film productions. Martin Gerhard Hantich has overseen the technical management of the film productions since 2009. At the design level, Hantich ensures that already existing documents, through compository revisions or by theme-specific modularization into new formats and / or modified content-related correlations, can be made available for academic and discussion purposes.

Homepage

The German and English language website (<http://www.labinterarts.com>) is managed by Michele Gaggia. In July 2013, the website contained more than 70 main and secondary pages, several hundred pictures, and about 30 films. Helmi Vent is responsible for the content.