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Group Anarchy

Concerning the anarchist principle in the process
of the creative group-activity of "automatic
painting"

Rik Lina

1994

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Our COLLECTIVE AUTOMATIC PAINTING AMSTERDAM (CAPA) has been organized in order to research collective automatism. Automatism meaning undismayed spontaneous action in the painting process. For these experiments we come together and work together. The research is something we are all interested in NEXT to our personal work, our personal discoveries in our own disciplines, these are different for all of us, as are our backgrounds, both personal and cultural. We do have in common much experience with automatic techniques and a curiosity in the collective exploration of these. Everyone, in his or her way, found out that by working automatically you are lifted to a terrain which is no longer personal: the collective subconscious.

History also taught us that a collective of freely joined individuals is dangerous for any kind of authority, artistic or otherwise, the more when this collective is not fixed into a steady group. CAPA is not a group. We did not fall into the trap of official group-organizing with its unavoidable goals, regulations,

ins & outs, leaders, quarrels and power-games. We do want to stay free and prefer the "free-jazz" model. In modern jazz-music these free improvising styles developed, in the Americas as well in Europe, into styles that sometimes do not even sound like jazz anymore, but where constantly changing ensembles of creative personalities are working together in an original and often "automatic" way. Of course, painting and music are different, but for us, the connection between free painting and free music is situated in what happens on the moment of creation, the moment when this strong upsurge of impulsive thought and action comes directly from its unconscious source.

This liberating force shows in every collective automatic work, and - as we assume-what is liberating for us may be liberating for all. When we are working together, we are using our individual freedom of choice and expression to work together, and not to express our own unique artistic qualities. We step in and out of this process as we feel. It is not a question of restriction, but of "opening-up" and honest curiosity to the surprise of the unexpected. Every personal "hand" will show anyway, everybody leaves his or her tracks, but the most important is the unexpected, in all its surprising combinations, the unthinkable inputs and outputs appearing during these experiments, which are leading us into unknown aesthetic levels.

We do not claim to be innovative, this is only a fashionable word invented by art-critics. We do want to change the meaning of art itself. But in a natural, organic way: to use all the combinations of change during the work-process itself, by direct interaction in totally free association.

With these two weapons we are trying to destroy one of the most fixed ideas of art-history: the idea of "the individual genius".

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