

## Characters:

Ardi Gunawan and Nikos Pantazopoulos

With James Deutscher, Christopher LG Hill,  
Joshua Petherick

Extra: Caterina Riva

Title: Desperate Exhibition Making Techniques

Time: GMT +10 hours

Space: Y3K, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria,  
Australia



## Scenario:

*Hi Caterina,*

*I have compiled a list of things and I will also provide documentation for some of the activities that have taken place in the past 3 weeks.*

*By the closing night I will remove most of the work in the show and will spend the time going around the space explaining what was in the show to the audience and point/gesture to the different parts of the gallery that the activities took part in. This way I will be using language as a way to explain the studio residency project.*

*You will have a week from today to write what you need and send it back to me (Saturday morning Australia time)  
I will post images once you and if you agree.*

*Nikos Pantazopoulos*

## Script:

### NON - CHRONOLOGICAL STUDIO ACTIONS

- Instructional score written by Ardi and edited by Nikos. Attempt at being enacted by the gallery directors James and Chris.
- Framed b&w portrait of James taken. Nikos will try to convince James to buy it and ask him to take it home and see if he likes the picture hanging above his bed.
- A blind sculpture was the main collaborative exercise between Ardi, Nikos and Chris. The video tape caught: cement mixing, destroying a plinth with a hammer, crashing pot plants and throwing around balls, chains and tree branches.
- Several failed attempts to go for a walk with Joshua to film him picking flowers at the value of \$20 from an instruction written by Ardi. A number of interesting conversations have developed instead around art making, materials, the degree of finitude in artworks, the use of the ready made...
- All materials from the studios no longer used by the artists have been taken into the gallery space. Ardi, with Chris and Nikos, cut the materials into little pieces.
- Ardi and Nikos have extended conversations on the phone, about the collaborative nature of the project.
- There was a list of materials on the wall that were used for most of the activities, they have now have been removed. What's left are holes in the walls from the nails that held up the tools.
- The only way to access what has happened during the studio residency is to ask either Ardi, Nikos, James or Chris how the space has been changing over the three weeks.
- Nikos will be removing all traces of what he has done for the closing event.
- Ardi will perform the blind sculpture on the closing night.



Nikos asked me to write something for the closing event that will mark the end of his and Ardi's residency at Y3K, we started discussing some sort of involvement on my part for Desperate Exhibition Making Techniques already while I was in Australia in July.

I am now back in London and what I have at my disposal are some photos of the situations that were created at Y3K in August and a list of events carried out by Nikos, Ardi with the cooperation of the gallery directors. I am somehow in a lucky position despite being far away: I have the information that has been concealed from the rest of the audience and will only be unveiled (partially) on the closing night.

What you will be reading from now on are the thoughts of an external witness, impressions I have gathered only from what I have seen and read on e-mails. I am aware and you should as well be, that it could turn out to be completely different from the 'real' experience had by its actors or what the audience will grasp from the mediated story that will be delivered by Nikos on the closing night. But this is precisely what is interesting: the different voices, expectations and 'stories' generated. And there are always many sides to a story.

I should also admit I have edited the list of events and selected just a few images from the original material I was given. I was interested in Nikos and Ardi's idea of engaging with the double skin of Y3K's space and making the boundaries of the studios and the gallery completely loose by inverting the functions of the two spaces. Also playing with the internal logics and roles at place and asking Y3K directors to do material and immaterial things while continuously negotiating with them the results. In particular, making a portrait of James Deutsher could seem a quite innocuous thing to do, but this action immediately triggers several questions. What does it mean to have the gallery director's portrait taken and used as the reference image for the project? Will James buy his own portrait? Will it be adopted as an official portrait like that of the US President in office? Why is it lying on the floor and is not hung?

Something I have noticed while reading the description of most of the actions performed is what seems like a destructive driving impulse. The procedure starts first with getting objects and materials (from the street or from the studio space) but then those things are abused, trashed, cut and destroyed. It almost feels like a cathartic cycle that goes from gathering and selecting (tools neatly ordered on the wall with nails, list of instructions), to collaborative destructive chaos. At the end order is restored, the surplus of the violent action taken away, and only some selected hints are left to give an idea of what might have happened. The very last act of the process will be a narration devoid of the objects that used to be there.

All these considerations bring to the fore what to me are the very dynamics of art making and that often times end up being unresolved percentages of illuminations, failures, ideas that are not materialised. Questioning how artworks can be presented and re-presented to an audience, also feels like a very relevant issue. What happens to all the discussions had around the studio activity? What changes when the studio becomes the exhibition site? Why does it need tidying up and ordering to be approachable by the public?

I am also very curious about the idea of collaboration, and whether this sets into place a truly democratic platform to work in. Implicitly it feels as if it is based on quite strict regulations, lists, instructions, tasks. The outcome often is not prescribed but the beginning point is and so are the people to whom the activity is directed. We can refer to it as some sort of "Regulated Freedom", which is a contradiction in terms and perhaps is the same conundrum that arises from what Nikos one day sprayed on wood: "Parochial/ non collaborative antagonism".

The last aspect I would like to point at is this discrepancy existing between visual and spoken language. Is there a hierarchy between the two? What shifts and to which one pertains an active role? There is a difference between looking and looking at what is described to you but no longer there. Some kind of authorial voice is introduced, a voice that will highlight some details and conceal others. But it's still up to you to put the pieces together and I am still the one in Europe...

Wish I was there with you!  
Best Wishes,

Caterina Riva

