

CHAPTER IV

"INSIDER" ACCOUNTS:
DOUBLE WRITING AND DOUBLE READING

In this Chapter, the researcher applies the deconstructionist model of the "bifurcated writing" by Jacques Derrida, reported at page 6, as a strategic interpretational procedure to present a "double reading" of "insider" accounts by Plexus participants in parallel with the researcher's interpretation. His emic account is intentionally written at the margins of them, with the purpose to allow these emic accounts to have relevance in the study, claiming that, in aesthetic inquiries, "insiders" like the artists as well as their emic accounts, do not have fully received a relevant academic consideration, which instead is given to the formal analysis of the "outsider" researcher as an "objective" interpretation.

The following "bifurcated" writing is presented by the researcher with the intention to offer a "double reading" of "insider" narratives as well as an overall insight of employed researcher's interpretational strategies. The researcher applied the "bifurcated" model as a coherent shifting procedure, with Alfred Schutz's system of relevances, as reported at page 29.

As direct quotation therefore the researcher could not use any scholarly grammatica device for a further editing of some of following emic accounts reported in this Chapter and in Chapter VI. "Insider" accounts are reported within a sigle spacing, like direct quotations, with no indented paragraphs when they are transcripts from interviews.

Insiders Narratives

Giancarlo Schiaffini

<p>Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in Rome, in December of 1995. It is approved by Giancarlo Schiaffini.</p> <p>The seminal idea for setting up the multiform structure complex of Plexus was conceived in 1981 in the kitchen of east 6th street, in New York, by Sandro Dernini, Antonello Neri, Massimo Coen and myself. There, we were talking about how to organize a space to perform many different kind of music. This conversation began some years before, in 1978, when I started my collaboration with Sandro in Cagliari. I played some concerts of improvised music and we were talking about the role of improvisation, the role of music, the role of performance and of performance art and of any kind of performance you may think of. So there we placed the seed of Plexus several years before it came out. In the kitchen, in 1981, we were three performers and a maitre a penser, a provoker, to stimulate our creativity, all of us were and we are in several performing arts, music theatre, movies as well, dealing with improvisation in different sites, sometimes we play music completely composed organized, sometimes totally improvised, with all possibilities between the two extremes. When you perform or improvise, even in a theatre piece, a lot parameters you have to consider, which are may be the skeleton of such a work, in the definition of my work and of a project like Plexus. For me it is very difficult to define my work. First, I like my work. I do my work because I like my work. I find some ways of life, desires, aims, in my work. I think that I am not one dimension man, all my work is often very various, as composer, sometimes I compose for other people, sometimes for myself, sometimes I just write simple structures for improvisers or just improvise other structures, generally. Anyway, for me it is important to be involved in the work, from its birthtime, from the first concept of the work, and thinking that the work lives just in the</p>	<p>The first "insider" Schiaffini offers an historical description of how the seminal idea of Plexus began as an open multiform complex of many different art realities.</p> <p>By bringing together into Plexus an account of music, theatre, performance art, cinema, and other artforms, he points out the open features of Plexus artform.</p> <p>Schiaffini, presenting himself as not one dimension person, underlines the creative value of the improvisation process in the development of Plexus process, dealing with many parameters and components, at the same time, and sometimes placed in different sites and times.</p> <p>Schiaffini, with his historical avant-garde recollection, points</p>
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<p>moment in which it actually performs, because all composition speculation, planning, are finalized to the moment in which the work will takes place and that is the real moment in which the work acts. Plexus is a great reality, with many faces and different realizations, my contribution to Plexus was bringing all my experience in performing arts, in music, in theatre, in different ways to make art, in brainstorming which served to setting up the ideas and Plexus events within a larger landscape. I worked with John Cage, Luigi Nono, with several international groups and theatre directors, even with certain importance in improvisation and many of these pieces, on which I worked, were fine written but started with collective improvisation by the soloists works. We know that beyond the improvisation, beyond the actual happening, there is a long work of years, a hard training which makes that the improvisation never can be improvised and happenings just cannot happen. They are the results of years working on structures, ability and attitude to modify structures in a moment, an attitude to relate oneself to the other ones working with you, it is a certain kind of discipline or a certain kind of rigorous study and very long and very alive. I worked with many different realities in the field of art and Plexus may be is one of the most complex, one of the most universal, in Plexus we find so many different kinds of performances of art, actions and exhibitions, which is important as a kind of summa of all works since the Living Theatre, Cage, all the schools of improviser art. So we have Plexus, may be, as a big container, just in the sense of not a neutral container but of something which can contain several different artforms, performing arts, a container which is in relationship with what is contained and allows to cross, to link different realities, different musicians, performers, different facts, which may be never do otherwise. Plexus Black Box performances were so rich in interrelations among all elements playing and involved which was just not a collection of different form of art or players, with different languages, minds, and from different art fields and characters like painters, theatre players, musicians, singers, poets, dancers, videomen, but inside there was a big cohesion, a quite big interaction and relationship among participants,</p>	<p>out, and at once re-opens, the experimental role of "open musical forms" in the Plexus art process. John Cage and others experimented with "open forms" through an improvised musical collective process where only few elements were fixed. These performance took place in the '60s with the open purpose to generate new art forms, exchange new ideas and energies, and provide a revolt against the formalism of modern art. Schiaffini, by underscoring the hard task of modifying structures, moments and people, foresees Plexus like as a kind of "summa" of the avant-garde previous experiences. "Plexus Black Box" was made in the '80s as an synergetic container where the "insider" reality is interconnected with the "outsider" one, speaking many different languages, but</p>
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<p>which was born there in the action and it was not planned from us in advance. What was in the '80s in art and in the '90s is different. The '80s was a period of time which was very hard against the performance art. It was very difficult to work for the performer artists in the '80s because the performance art, which in the late '60s and 70's was "a la mode," it was not anymore in the wave and the media and the organizing structures were not anymore interested in it. Now in the '90s it seems that there is a new opening toward improvisation and performance art, in a different way respect the past, with people more curious, with a more accurate interest. It is a positive signal.</p>	<p>anyway communicating to each other, as both members of a many faceted complex. Schiaffini, as a not planned in advance action event, re-opens "Plexus Black Box" and allows many different worlds and artforms to come out. He has a vision wider than of the closed artworld's one, which builds upon the dominant misleading use of the word "art" as referred only to visual art.</p>
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Mitch Ross

Transcript of the interview made by the Researcher in New York, in November of 1994. It is approved by Mitch Ross.

<p>Plexus acted in 1982-83 as an art performance space, for one and half year, and then in the mid of 1984 moved in the Lower East Side as The Shuttle Theatre which acted more as an art jazz night club. I started during this period to exchange ideas and books on the work by Nobert Wiener with Sandro. Plexus Black Box as concept came later. It is a computer term but it is also a metaphor for what cannot be defined. In all computers programs what they do not understand goes in a black box. Plexus Black Box project is basically a container for all miscellanies archetypes of art which are not explainable, when they not fit in the existing stereotypes of artworlds of music, theatre, visual art, etc. Plexus every two -three years goes into</p>	<p>Mitch Ross, as m.c. (master of ceremony), presented Plexus 6, a Zone for the Next Zone, a cabaret program, held in the fall of 1983, at the Plexus performance space in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. It was conceived as an open</p>
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<p>a reborn phase, redefining what is going to do and Plexus Black Box serves for it. The big problem that Plexus is facing is money. A community-based urban intelligentsia, placed in different cities in the world, is the today core of Plexus and each has theoretically pieces of the original archetype of Plexus Black Box turned into a metaphor. None knows what it is and what they are doing with it. But it allow all Plexus people to feel part of that culture and to make their own definition of it, which is fine because more information goes into and more information has to be defined. Plexus Black Box is an artform of artificial intelligence which about nobody knows in advance because it is made as an happening with no money. In the end, the methodology of the conceptual Plexus Black Box may be considered as the methodology of the construction of a Faustian toy, in which more non useful information goes in there, in turn in Plexus Black Box more metamorphosis will come out.</p>	<p>flexible multiform container for all miscellany of performances which could not fit into "traditional" experimental multimedia programs.</p> <p>Ross was exploring new ideas and their implications, like cybernetics and Norbert Wiener's concern of "the human use of the human being."</p> <p>Mitch describes Plexus cybernetic retroactive control and its ethical concern on reflective feedback shaping through several "reborn phases, "Plexus Black Box," as an open artificial artform that offers the opportunity to many people to feel part of a cultural context, without knowing in advance the full picture of it and their reason for doing it.</p>
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Figure 5

Plexus 6, A Zone for the Next Zone



M. Ross as M.C., Plexus space, New York, 1983, photo by L. Kanter.



L. Kanter and F. Evers, Ridotto del Colosseo, Rome, 1990, photo by M. Brusa.

Lynne Kanter

<p>Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, in August of 1995. It is approved and edited by Lynne Kanter.</p> <p>In 1982 I took pictures at the Plexus performance space in Chelsea and I was the first to document Plexus events on an ongoing basis and following Plexus on the Lower East Side and then in Rome.</p> <p>In 1985 I performed in the multilayered Plexus event Goya Time.</p> <p>Since 1986 I created a kind of iconic Marilyn Monroe character, "performing" and taking polaroid photos of what was happening on stage. In the early 80's I continued to experiment with photo self layered Plexus event Goya Time.</p> <p>Since 1986 I created a kind of iconic Marilyn Monroe character, "performing" and taking polaroid photos of what was happening on stage.</p> <p>In the early 80's I continued to portraits, often using mirrors, which led to the Plexus recall performances where I made photos of the photos in the photos of previous events in which were other photo in the photos, etc. This led to a polaroid book collaboration with Sandro who started to "play" with the all the polaroids, creating a kind of art altar installation.</p> <p>My experience in Plexus during the 80's was a receiving of energy connection within a world wide group. Plexus gave a broader context and a deeper meaning to my artistic endeavors than they had in isolation. Suddenly, I was less isolated in the world. To my mind, the world became more fragmented in the 90's age of Internet.</p>	<p>Kanter describes Plexus compressionist process of taking "photos in the photos" of Plexus participants holding photos of other Plexus events, or of the same people but of other events, holding photos of preview events, and creating new art operative forms which are characteristic features of the Plexus "compressionist" art process which was theorized by Lenny Horowitz in the middle of the 80's.</p> <p>Kanter also points out how Plexus experience increased her artistic awareness of being part of a collective art effort which turned into an healing art process and a release of energy from art.</p>
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Figure 6

Plexus Artopera Example: Goya Time, 1985, New York



B. Morris as il Maestro, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985, photo by J. Day.

Figure 7

Goya Time, 1985, New York



Royal Family, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985, photo by J. Day

Willem Brugman

Transcript of the interview made by the
researcher in Amsterdam, in
December of 1996.

It is approved by Willem Brugman.

<p>My story with Plexus started when Plexus was a physical location on the west side of New York city. A retrospective of my work and collaborations with people took place in that space. I was a performer and I performed there <i>Christopher Columbus Reflections from His Deathbed</i>. Without me realizing it, as soon as I entered in that space and put this story on stage, I had already started a journey through universal mythology. Before I know it I was already playing a character in that journey, in this case the character of Christopher Columbus. Since then, I made in New York several participations in Plexus art co-operas like <i>Eve</i> and <i>The Night of No Moon</i>. When I left the United States and went back to Amsterdam then Sandro was very fast to pick me up and hook me back up with him in Sardinia and in Rome. So this became a fantastic experience in terms of our communication. We established ourself in Gavoi village in the center of Sardinia with 160 artists from all over the world. From there we sent out a communication into free space, outer space, it was a message of freedom for art and communication. That was an extraordinary development, of course, from just coming in solo and being focused on the aspects of your own piece of art and from there going to the ocean of story telling of the universal mythological journey and to move from the sea into the electric sea and go into outer space. This is basically what I did with Plexus up until I came back in Amsterdam to build a Plexus working station. So we went around trying to find out where there were very specific archetypal elements of the journey' story telling. In Amsterdam was an artist Hans Hiemers who had brought elements from the black slaves who had fled the</p>	<p>Willem Brugman describes his "lived" intense experience in Plexus as a performer as well as a theatre director. In 1986 in the Plexus "artopera" <i>Eve</i>, Brugman experimented with Butch Morris the concept of modular construction with which he had already previously experimented as a combination of music, dance, theatre, video, and architectural stage design. Modular construction in Plexus was used by Brugman as a participatory facilitating process to merge, in a transparent multi-layer energetic design, all possible art forms without a dominance of one form over the other one, without a hierarchic directional structure. It</p>
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plantations in Surinam and had gone back into the jungle, called themselves marons and tried to find a life back into nature away from all these opposing structures. After all because of the slave trade by the Dutch they were brought over from Goree to Surinam. So we built this working station.

Back in Amsterdam, we're talking 1987-88, it was important to make a Plexus working station where all kinds of different ethnic groups could meet in order to prepare the commemorations around the Atlantic Basin in terms of 500 years of colonial history in the light of Christopher Columbus. And Amsterdam, of course, there were all the points of departure of the slave trade.

So Goree, was also reconnected in there. In this level, where my participation in Plexus took on absolutely magic, realistic dimensions.

I now found myself playing parts as a performer that more and more is focused on aspects of male identity, if there is something as universal as male identity, then how would it be expressed. "Kosai", which was the war cry of the marons, who were the slaves who had fled back into the jungles of Surinam, and then tried to find their own existence, became a very important symbol for freedom. the symbol that was used at that time was the ark.

Hans had built a huge ark that was located in the center of the harbor and everybody who was passing by could see this symbol of continuity the ark of course being a symbol of gathering, collecting, safeguarding all kinds of elements of life.

So after Sardinia, Rome and Amsterdam I then did some preliminary explorations, with Sandro in Dakar, in the House of the Slaves built by the Dutch. We knocked on that door of no return and we demanded a new contract between the peoples no longer a contract of buyers and sellers and transporters and in between people, but a contract that would explain the birthright dignity of every human being.

After Dakar adventures then at the end of the 80's and into the 90's we were back in Rome and participating in what for me became the last kind of Plexus event I found myself again playing like a male archetype playing a patriarchal dressed in uniform carrying a

is shaped on the idea of a

gathering of energies coming

together into the Plexus

"artcooperas" from many

different art fields. The Plexus

organizational principle for

Brugman has to be an

architectural strategy, mutually

made, for the gathering of energy

into the box as "artcooperas,"

where many different individuals,

from different fields and

disciplines, in time and space,

follow a poetic storyline. Plexus'

creative environment and

processes create the possibility

for fitting many more individual

expressions into an overall

collaborative work, in an art

coopera. He describes how the

modular construction process has

its roots in the historical avant

garde, through all its

contemporary development, from

De Stijl, to Dada, to surrealism,

<p>transparent globe having a stop watch in terms of time, carrying a compass, knowing the directions of the wind.</p> <p>As an act of juxtaposition in 1989, in Rome, at our performance in which we closed the Black Box, I reopened it because I was looking for a loose end, the loose end that was perhaps already in the box. Because I thought that the story was not finished, the first phase of the development of Plexus had maybe come to an end and I also believed that in any repetitive process however varied its outcomes you have to make on purpose a mistake in order to let the end out. In '89, I felt that there was no time to close the box, the story was incomplete.</p> <p>That many contributions were still lost, they were still at the sea, they had not been delivered yet, in order to close the box the whole body had to be in there and we knew that legs were missing, and bits and pieces of "la macchina corporea," the body machine of Plexus.</p> <p>Modular construction is a design and choreography of energy: it is an organizational principle and it is a strategy, for what I call a design and a choreography of energy.</p> <p>A modular construction, as it happened to take place in the art cooperas, there were so many different individuals coming from many different fields and specialties that had to be organized in time and space, and they had to be organized also in a story telling way so a modular construction is an organizational principle by which every fragment, every subject, every object that takes part in the total generic energy explosion and is guaranteed its own identity.</p> <p>I maybe can only say it in a more poetic or esoteric sense, if a drop of water joins the ocean, it does not lose its characteristics.</p> <p>This is the principal of modular construction whatever effort or excess energy spent in the process will find its constructive expression of possibilities in the overall work.</p> <p>Well, a modular construction is a facilitating process that allows the individual energies to pass through and to gather a purity of energy which maybe can be approached by talking about light.</p> <p>So if I go back to modular construction and make a relationship with Butch Morris - in my</p>	<p>arriving at John Cage and The Living Theater. Brugman</p> <p>explains why he had to reopen "Plexus Black Box" and why its closing in Rome in 1989 was not feasible due to incompleteness of ingredients, depending upon its open identity. He argues that too many legs were missed in the Plexus "bodymachine" to allow the closing of the box. Brugman sees this operating process made by a collaborative work as a "macchina corporea," a Plexus bodymachine made by bodies and minds working naturally together, "allowing, inviting, acknowledging and respecting the contributions that people make." For Brugman, in "Plexus Black Box," liquid forms and fluid energies are involved that cannot be kept separated or kept out of the box, "as drops of water in the sea," as he poetically</p>
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work in New York it must have been in 1985 when we worked at the Wooster Groups Performing Garage and we did *Image of None* – it says it already – could the experience of reality have lead to images of none or nothing. In it, a writer was invited to write a few things and he had some opening lines that explained very well in a poetic way the nature of modular construction.

The lines by Seiku Sondayada – an AfroAmerican writer – said “the ocean must be built from a common law which says that everything goes into the ocean that lines and lines like these swell the sea and grow like sea weed unless you can see the properties of kelp in the tangled modern mass it’s merely dirty water.”

So you can say that modular construction is a law seems to be natural law of allowing, inviting acknowledging and respecting the contributions that people make.

Here I’ll make a quick reference to the writer Franz Kafka who, in his book about America, confronts us with the nature theatre of Oklahoma.

The essence of the nature theatre of Oklahoma is that there is a place for everybody in the nature theatre of Oklahoma – in this concept there is something to be done for everybody.

So you can also say in that way the modular construction is participatory process for everybody.

Well you can say that in theatre in different parts of the world but especially in the non western world, there are still many collective, community- based theatre programs.

It still seems to be a very natural working process. In the west, though, it has disappeared. If you want to have some historical references about that it you can say that perhaps the largest modular construction for a long time was the Living Theater.

The Living Theater turned it around better than talking about theatre is to talk about life. So they were the first ones who really broke out of the restrictions of theatre in its physical space in time and location.

I think that when we go into the history of the 20th Century art, Franz is kind of a specialist in that field. So here we have to think maybe about

describes it. Before using the modular construction process in

1986 in the "artopera" *Eve*,

conducted by Butch Morris,

another "insider" participant of

this study, Brugman and Morris

started to experiment this art

process in 1985 at Wooster

Group Performing Garage. It

was an experience of different

states of reality leading to

poetical images of emptiness.

Brugman argues that the modular

construction process is a natural

form of theatre open to

everybody. A natural concept

which, he argues, Western

culture has almost lost. It is,

however, still present in many

forms of community-based

theater in other parts of the

world. He argues that in the

history of the avant-garde art

movement in the 20th Century,

there was always a tendence to

<p>De Stijl – people who gathered around architecture and design – then maybe we have to zoom on Dada – people who tried to bring in surrealist aspects - so we have to think about the surrealists.</p> <p>We have to think about the area in the beginning of the century by which music , dance and theatre as a music theatre concept came together. We have to make sure that Black Box will tell us after what had happened, what dramatic event had happened up to the point of the present, that life would continue that certain things are and will be preserved.</p>	<p>merge together music, theatre, dance, visual art, and architecture that is the historical background from where Plexus modular construction is coming from as an open multi-arts and multi-forms participatory process for everybody.</p>
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Miguel Algarin

Transcript of the interview made by the researcher in New York, in August of 1995.

It is approved and edited by Miguel Algarin.

<p>Plexus Black Box is an attempt to document many different activities made by Plexus in the mid 80's and in the beginning of the 90's. It is made to document the ultimate statement by artists about this last decade of this millennium when old diseases which have mutated are coming back in new forms.</p> <p>What we are learning is that life in the planet cannot be lived without accepting pain and death as an active part of it. My poetry readings with the Nuyorican Poets Cafe at the Shuttle Theatre, in 1984, dealt with the theme that artists played the role of the elite of the working class.</p> <p>If we do not plant our feet on the sidewalk we will lose our constituency.</p> <p>The rich will buy us, but they will not stand by us. My poem <i>BodyBee Calling from the XXIst Century</i> is a call for the poetic mind and the scientific mind to meet because we create metaphors that the public at large understand. We must create information about our biological body and our universe with clear simple language understood by the general public.</p> <p>The aesthetic image of Plexus is the volume of</p>	<p>Miguel Algarin understands Plexus aesthetic value for the intensity of its artistic process, creating concepts, turning occasions into art events, addressing many artistic, social and life issues related to the last decade of the XX Century. He recalls the first group photo shot of the musicians, poets, other artists performers, and, the local community supporters gathered together in 1984 in the middle of East Sixth Street, between Avenues A and B in front of the Shuttle Theatre. There William Parker performed his jazz</p>
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the artists' free participation in mass events such as the group shots in which a hundred artists gathered together in the middle of East Sixth Street just for a photo.

The occasion in Plexus is the aesthetic sense, making an occasion into a happening and reflecting on that for its historical value.

This is what I saw in Plexus, it plans its own historical value. The art operas were occasions where an enormous amount of work was made to collect a huge quantity of players together and then the event either works or does not work. When it works, we all contribute to an idea which is itself in the making not made but "making."

In that way the value of the aesthetics of Plexus is creating artistic concepts that hit emotions.

Figure 8
BodyBee Calling from the 21st Century
by Miguel Algarin

XXXIII

After transplanting/repairing body organs,
at what point is self still of woman born?
after becoming a beehive of transplants,
grafted parts, after replacements.
is there still a self from woman born?
after biological break down
and up to date repairing,
will self be a patch-work-of-spare-parts?

2019: Synthetic membranes introduced
to repair stomachs, intestines, kidneys.

2021: Fluorocarbon liquids/base for
artificial blood/patented in 2008/
will with synthetic polyvinyl hydrogel replace
natural vitreous liquids.

2034: Chemical muscles: still shunned
by body engineers developing techniques
to force the body into regenerating
its missing or damaged parts.

2045: Techniques for grafts to brain area
controlling physiological processes
are in daily use/all work on cerebral
cognitive thought areas is advanced
though performed selectively.

2050: Alien tissue ruled accessory
graft receiver retains the I original/
foreign tissue subdued and acclimated
by self of woman born still risking to persist.

after body, after repairs, after transplants,
after self, after beehive of organs, after grafts,
after patch-work replaces self of woman born,
after after, after that! What and where?

(54)

statement "*In Order to Survive*,"

and all the others gave their
contributions. As poet as well as

scholar, Algarin speaks

metaphorically about "the

volume" of the free participation

of many artists and people in

Plexus events. The pitch as well

as the resonance of these events

grew over these years,

compressed into a frozen "black

box" since 1989. The pitch of the

intensity of participating people

turned up again the volume of

Plexus in 1996, in Rome, in

occasion of the Plexus art event

From Welfare to Well Being:

Eating Art, Get the Best from

Your Food, Food for All, as a

parallel special event to the FAO

World Food Summit.

There, Algarin performed his

poem *BodyBee Calling from the*

XXIst Century which Willom

Brugman performed in 1987 at

the Plexus International event in

Sardinia. Plexus creates such

strong aesthetic intensity that

Algarin foresaw, as an aesthetic

image, its ability to reflect

collectively on its own historical

significance.

Alfa Diallo

The transcript of the interview made
by the researcher, in New York,
in November of 1994.

It is approved by Alfa Diallo.

<p><i>La Maison des Originals</i> is a place particular in the community of Loisada for selling art works. The idea of <i>One on One</i> was always there in Africa. It is a collective vision. The understanding of this idea is the coming together 2 or more people and this is very important to be understood. The poem <i>One on One</i> was written in early 80's and I performed it, during the <i>In Order to Survive</i> community event, at the Shuttle Theatre, in New York, when Plexus moved there, in the Lower East Side, in 1984. The poem <i>Loisada</i> is about my experience to live in the Lower East Side. There is nothing stopping people to travel, everyday there are boats with people going to Africa. It should make sense if Plexus has a boat of black Americans going back to Africa and if you have a boat of all different people going back to Africa. It is a very important point to be very careful to understand the difficulties of organizing the art slaves boat. In all these years, since 1982, Plexus was a positive experience for me, because it was a celebration of coming together, which by itself is positive. It is not easy to recall so many different events starting from 1982 when in Chelsea Plexus acted as a performance space. In 1987 I became a member of the board of directors of Plexus in New York. My poem <i>The Box</i> was used to close "<i>Plexus Black Box</i>" event, in 1993, at NYU Rosenberg Gallery. The poem <i>Presence Africain</i> in Plexus was used in 1986 as statement of Plexus position. The experience with Plexus is like with New York, a melting pot made by many people which you cannot leave any out. The beauty of Plexus is that we were strong enough to be able to cross all conflicts, beside</p>	<p>Alfa Diallo's poem <i>One on One</i> was performed in 1984 during the <i>In Order to Survive</i> street event in the front to the Shuttle Theatre. "<i>One on One</i>" is a universal African vision of a collective concept that the poem incorporates together with Alfa Diallo's radical memory against all colonialist and racist discriminations. Alfa's poem <i>Loisada</i> was used as opening statement of the New York University Lower East Side Summer Institute of Living Tradition in Art and his poem <i>The Box</i> was instead the opening statement of the last Plexus event</p>
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the fact that we have different origins, the feeling that we have, we were able to do what we had to do without to put in front our confrontations to block all the project and to go together and to move further the project to go on. There was a mystic force behind us to pass through all the economic difficulties and to answer to the question: for whom I am doing this?	under study <i>A Contract to be Negotiated: The Columbus Egg, The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth"</i> in 1993.
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Arturo Lindsay

Transcript of the interview made
by the researcher, in Cagliari,
in December of 1995.

It is approved by Arturo Lindsay.

Plexus for me has been a journey and like in all journeys there are great and challenging moments to be recalled. As my contribution to Plexus, I thought of 3 mayor areas in which I made a contribution: intellectual, administrative and artistic. In the intellectual area I had many brainstorming meetings in committees, in bars and restaurants, by telephone, etc. in which Plexus vision, aesthetically, politically, socially, was hammered out. In the administrative area I was part of the board of directors of the legal Plexus entity in New York. But it failed because of Plexus fluid and dynamic identity which could not stay within too many constraints as they are requested by an administrative legal form. We started with a structure of a community organization in the Lower East Side around 1984-86. I gave my recollection as time 1 of a reflective action. I started with my performances in 1984 at the Shuttle Lab, in the Lower East Side. I like to recall my performance: ' <i>Artist contemplates the fate of whose who speak of freedom, dedicated to Mandela</i> ', at CUANDO in 1985. In 1986, on occasion of the departure of the art slaves ship art opera, at CUANDO, I made one of my first Homage to Ana Mandieta. In Rome in 1987, I buried under ground, in the garden of Gianni Villella, a wood statuette	Arturo Lindsay is the Plexus Ancestral Messenger. His Plexus vision is like a journey through the sea of his experience of so many Plexus events and activities, crossing many different times and spaces. He claims the impossibility for Plexus as a fluid form, free from boundages, to be able to deal with more formal, copact, solid, admistrative or legal constraints. Lindsay's ritual art performances since the time of 1984 left a
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<p>ancestral messenger. I participated in a futuristic art parade in the streets of Trastevere, before taking the ferryboat to go to Sardinia. In Gavoi, Sardinia, where I worked with others artists for 4 days with the art materials we found there or we brought with us. During the construction of my installation, a wood box, the first historical box in the history of Plexus, I secretly buried in a ceremony with Lorenzo Pace and Miguel Algarin, the second statuette, in bronze, of the ancestral messenger. The wood box with the signatures of all the artists was burned in a ritual performance. On this fire Sandro Dernini burned his clothes. The ashes of the ritual ceremony were, from the ferryboat coming back to Rome, spread out into the Mediterranean watersea. My work, which I am still doing, was inspired to the notion of ancestry and of messangers. In 1989 my participation was related against the celebration issue in 1992 of Columbus's landing in the Americas. This controversial issue let began a period of dialogues, confrontations, arguments and debates, among all us in Plexus, about how to recognize the historical anniversary without celebrating it with a Plexus event in 1992. The issue of reconciliation raised up from their strong beliefs against a Columbus's celebration and the Christopher Columbus Consortium as well as the Well Being Consortium grew up from this reconciliation Plexus claim which is the direction on which Plexus is moving now. Some of the originals ideas of Plexus Black Box are ideas which have been pursued since the beginning of Plexus like environment and now well-being, health, food, etc., which came out of some creative thoughts we were exploring in New York. My role in Plexus has been the ancestral messenger since when he became a founder member of the original Plexus group. Plexus Black Box is build upon the recording and documenting processes and activities of Plexus in the past 12 years. Many activities of what is happening today in the postmodern art world can be view as an expansion of the vary ideas of multiculturalism, radical democracy, ethical issues and cultural diversity in thoughts and ideas, that we, first, explored before in the mid 80's, as positive terms of reference in a broader open context, which was also the reason why we could not put too</p>	<p>series of marks in the history of Plexus. Starting from his performance on the sidewalk on the street of the Shuttle Theatre to his burial performance in Rome in 1987. The researcher as artist participated in 1988 with the retrival of the statuette, "Ancestral Messanger" It was then buried in the island of Goree by a group of Plexus participants, including, Willem Brugam, Franco Meloni, Assane M'Baye, Youssouph Traore, Zulu M'Baye and myself. Lindsay's statuette became the symbolic "geografic" coordinate for the landing in Goree of Plexus art freedom journey. His ancestral art boxes were the first Plexus boxes made to keep alive Plexus memory. His white box staged at Nada School in the Lower East Side in 1989 performed the ritual repatriation of art and of Plexus</p>
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<p>much efforts in the organizative structure of Plexus. This brings back also the claim that democracy is chaos. Plexus has operated a lot with chaos from where many creative art works came out. That kind of chaotic driving force brings us together today but the difference with the past it is that it seems that we are more experts, after so many years and so many mistakes, to pull up together all these diversities with the respect of the diversity of opinions. Columbus issue was a good training for all of us to grow up. Plexus Black Box has not a defined definition. It does not work in definition terms. It is a fluid thought which grows, changes, moves differently for each of us. It is made to not be framed. For my definition it is a fluid idea, with a lot concerns, it is a radical democracy, it is chaos.</p>	<p>into the Community. Lindsay's disagreement on the original celebrative departure of the Christopher Columbus Consortium changed the route correction of Plexus towards the idea of "reconciliation".</p> <p>Lindsay claims for Plexus the credit to be one of the first postmodern movements that in the early '80s started to explore and to deal with the multicultural issue of radical democracy, social chaos, and cultural diversity.</p> <p>Lindsay argues that for its own internal diversity and fluid nature, "Plexus Black Box" cannot be defined by aesthetic theories.</p>
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Butch Morris

<p>Transcript of the interview made the researcher in New York, in November of 1994. It is approved by Butch Morris.</p> <p>My contribution to Plexus came from composing improvisation and conducting improvisation which deal with a community of improvisers and which lead to my definition of Plexus Black Box as a multidisciplinary way for</p>	<p>Butch Morris conceives an improvised conduction as a collective multiform improvised art process that makes possible for many artists to work together</p>
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<p>vary kind of artforms to work together and for different artists to collaborate together. My first performing association with Plexus was with <i>Goya's Time</i> in 1985 and during this process came out the theory of the art opera which characterized Plexus collaboration. It was characterized by multiplex levels of perspectives of the event and its particular surroundings open to be followed in all possible direction by the audience.</p> <p>The result became a cooperative art product of a collective imagination. Plexus artform was truly about understanding a particular moment in time and history. What was new in this artform is a significant individual collective art expression of different vision of the same idea as it was <i>in Goya's Time</i> presented by 23 visual artists. The artists working with each other was the big new artform in Plexus at the significant level of what they produced. If this collective artcoopera model should be understood as a community based art project and performed experimentally as such in schools, it could produce significant collaborative results.</p>	<p>with different experiences and visions.</p> <p>This improvised conduction lead together with the modular construction process to the creation of Plexus "artopera" merging all artforms together in a libretto as espression of a collective immagination. Morris claims for "<i>Plexus Black Box</i>" the function of understanding the particular historical time in which is placed, with its surroundings and to provide access for the participants to this historical coontext.</p>
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Figure 9

Plexus Black Box Ritual Group Shot Example



Ridotto del Colosseo Theatre, Rome, 1990, photo by V. Ibanez

Figure 10

Plexus Community-Based Art Event Example



D. Boyle and R. Politi, Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985, photo by A. DiMartino.

David Boyle

Transcript from the interview made

by the researcher in New York, in November

of 1994. It is approved and edited by David Boyle.

<p><i>Plexus Black Box</i> is a recent theoretical development, made by a group of Plexus members in order to find some closure for Plexus. I started to get involved with Plexus at the time of the Shuttle Theater, in 1984, in the Lower East Side of New York, when it was located in 6th street in the basement of a Homesteader building run by one of my favorite mentors, Sarah Farley. She was a founder of a group called L.A.N.D. (Local Action for Neighborhood Development). She pointed out that Plexus should be supported in the community, and I went with it. Her support was a result of the community oriented nature of Plexus. When I met for the first time Sandro Dernini I was impressed by the way in which art was presented as a nutritional element in our life and in our community. Contact with art and cultural events of all sorts enhanced the well being of the person by reducing stress and making the mechanism for the metabolization of food run smoother. I realized that Plexus created a momentum for many local artists to move toward large mass events as community groups actions, that we called the CUANDO's period. The beauty of these community actions was that they were organized with no advance preparation but only with an open call sent out from person to person and friend to friend only few days before. You had to live in the community to know about it. The event was so short, like one hour or few hours, that it was over before all the people were in. Plexus did for the first time the instant art event. if you didn't know about it before it started it was over before you could get there. The artists used anything that they could find to make art for these events which never stayed up for longer than a few hours. One of these mass community art events was made in 1986 at CUANDO, it was called <i>The Purgatorio</i></p>	<p>Boyle, as a local community militant in the Lower East Side Community, describes his insider experience from a community homesteader perspective which offers an emic understanding of "Plexus" and of "Plexus Black Box" as a community-based art project. He presents Plexus CUANDO's period as a collective effort against the gentrification process in the Lower East Side. How the information was spread out, during the Plexus CUANDO large mass events described by Boyle is a clear understanding of how Plexus was planted in the Community, as part of the local underground art network. Underground art networks</p>
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Show, for the departure of the metaphoric art slave ship. Here a large quantity of artists, 220, had to deal creatively with the use of a limited space, 4x4sq. ft., for each, the configuration of the spaces forming upon the floor the shape of the ship.

On that occasion the artist Gianfranco Mantegna used a tall ladder to expand in vertical his art piece dedicated to Joseph Beuys. He attached anchors into the ceiling and hung over his art space in a parachute harness. The doors of the entrance were made by a bronze sculpture piece by Eve Vaterlaus. My homesteaders organization offered the security of the show and we were dressed with warriors costumes that we were given from the Costume Collection. There were Roman centurions, Vikings and we did not allow any people from the audience to go inside where all artists, with their helpers (more than 350 participant persons) were preparing the show. When the audience came in, they found all the room full of people and smoke from a theatre smoke machine, colored lights and sound from a 14 piece jazz orchestra. 6 or 7 camerapersons were moving in the crowd documenting the event. It was the first time that the documentation in Plexus took visibility more than just as a video documentation and started to become a form of art in and of itself. The video cameras moved through the drifting smoke with their little red lights blinking in schools like fish. Plexus as an art movement contributed to the integration of different uses of art media in new art forms, actively extending the point where documentation stops and art begins. As in the case of the Plexus tradition to make photos called group shots which turned into an art form. It was Leonard Horowitz who pioneered this Plexus compressionist use of the photo of the photo. In each event, Plexus members assembled together for large photos, like family picnic photos. Groups of Plexus artists answering the open call were photographed together. These "group shots" became bigger and bigger. By 1988 Plexus artists were intentionally holding up the photos of the previous group shots while creating new group shots. These photos were then brought to subsequent group shots achieving the effect a group of people holding a group shot which was

historically have played an important role in the avant-garde culture, as refuge for the genesis of new ideas and artforms. He describes the Plexus compressionist process as coherent with the compression and the freezing of Plexus into a box, together with its history, relics and records. These documents were able to be not obsolete because they were appointed as art works. They were used as a community source of knowledge, as a recursive art device for memory and for the survival of Plexus. Boyle's emic account describes in the particular how a Plexus CUANDO event looked like, giving in this way an insight understanding why "Plexus Black Box" was so full of records and relics. Boyle points out how this documentation turned to be the

holding a group shot and so on. Producing the effect of compressing into one photo content with a lens could be amplified again. The community was part of it and this was why Sarah Farley supported Plexus. During my participation in Plexus, I met many Plexus members and I discovered that there were many different interpretations about what was Plexus. What was interesting for me that each definition of Plexus did not exclude other definitions and I felt that this multiplicity was a positive sign of openness. In Plexus I felt there was an insider theoretical framework for a community intelligentsia for the support of Plexus concepts like compressionism by Horowitz or modular construction by Willem Brugman, who came up to build different Plexus art operas with no rehearsals, on the concept that it was not time to know in advance all what was going on stage but to know only some modules of the productions, technical modules, acting modules, lights modules, music modules. Without the need to go together in time and space before the show, going in conversation without knowing what the others modules were doing, until when they were all together on stage. In reference of *Plexus Black Box* I suggested the freezing of Plexus into a time capsule concept as it was *Plexus Black Box* because we felt in that time, 1989, there was a diminished interest in maintaining Plexus movement and it had an impasse which could compromise its future. Knowing from history that art movements that art movements have tendencies to collapse, instead to wait for it I propose to freeze it in a conceptual art form as it was conceived *Plexus Black Box* until when the conditions were not improved.

first survival step of Plexus to grow by allowing participants to share it as part of a common art experience, within an open social environment. Boyle was the "insider" who participated in conceiving the "freezing" of Plexus in 1989 in Rome and made one of the two boxes (the squared wood brown light one) that was one of the two boxes of "*The Living Plexus Black Box*" event at the Rosenberg Gallery in 1993 which ended with Boyle performing with his truck the repatriation of "*The Living Box*" into the community. Later he flight with "the Box" in Sardinia, in 1994, for the art event: *Art and Science Today: The Role of Imagination*, organized by Franco Meloni and others at the University of Cagliari. This is part of another Plexus study to be made: "*Plexus Black Box: From*

	1993 to the Present Time".
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Eve Vaterlaus

Written recollection made

by the artist, in New City, N.Y., in 1994.

<p>I recollect contributing, as an artist, to three of the Plexus events. The first was <i>Goya Time</i>, during which a large group of artists worked from a model who presented herself as Goya's Clothed Maja. The event was open to the public, who strolled among the working artists as they drew, sculpted, painted, photographed, etc. I drew the nude Maja on paper I had silkscreened with a photo of the surface of Lake Michigan. The second Plexus event was <i>The Night of No Moon</i>, a memorial to Ralston Farina. This was a huge exhibition with hundreds of artists who entirely filled a big old school building, known as CUANDO, overflowing out into the roof, and filling every space with art & performance. I worked in the large old empty swimming pool, where I installed my Diver's Tomb, five huge photo blueprints of divers and swimmers installed on the white tile walls around the pool. The diver plunging from air to water is an obvious and old symbol for the migration the soul makes in death. This piece was technically difficult, if simple in concept. The photo blueprints were so large that they had to be exposed in the dark at a great distance for very long periods of time in order to print. I had to completely darken my entire loft for about a week and live with the ongoing exposures of my images, which supplied the only light. Then, when it came time to install the images, printed on fragile blueprint paper, in the pool I found that the walls were continually damp from condensation and it was difficult to stick them up, but I did find a solution. This piece was very satisfying in every way, beginning with shooting the photos, through solving the execution, the final look of the piece, and it was completely new work for me.</p> <p>The third Plexus event in which I took part, <i>Eve</i>, also pushed me into form of work I had never</p>	<p>Eve Vaterlaus performed "<i>Eve</i>" at the Plexus <i>Eve</i> artopera, in CUANDO, in 1986, leading the escape of the art slave ship from the New York Artworld.</p> <p>Eve describes accurately her difficulties as an artist dealing with an eclectic complex of problems raised from the creation, execution, and installment of artworks related to three Plexus events performed at CUANDO. She offers a complete emic understanding of her qualitative artistic process in the solution of problems. Her "insider" insight provides a clear model of the "problem-solution-problem continuum" of the artistic process as was claimed by David W. Ecker in "The Artistic Process as Qualitative Problem Solving" (285). By applying his stock of knowledge at hand, the researcher from the large quantity of records of "Plexus Black Box" identified the following two</p>
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done before. I made *The Gates of Paradise* for the entrance to *Eve*, an Art Opera. The gates were two doors made of 16 relief panels, like old bronze cathedral doors. The panels showed Adam & Eve in the Garden, the expulsion from the garden, and, on the outside, how a life difficulty gave rise to human culture, art, literature, war, & etcetera, which was not necessary or possible in paradise. For the night of the performance of *Eve*, all of the contributing artists were exhibited with their work. I took advantage of the occasion to present myself in a figleaf, which I had always wanted to try, but had never gotten around to before. Thus, my experiences with Plexus always demanded growth and change and new achievements in my work, as well as growth through meeting and working with large gangs of artists I would not have otherwise met. I am a painter and sculptor. I graduate from art school, R.I.S.D., and then travelled widely by land and sea. After my travel & a very brief marriage I lived and worked in Brooklyn for about 11 years. I work in many media because for me different ideas demand different forms. I am also stimulated by the process of finding solutions to difficult technical problems and I enjoy researching for the work as well as making it. The type of idea that most often inspires me is personal and subconscious, subjective, yet immersed in natural phenomena: water, plant life, animal & mineral.

"bifurcated" photos of artworks by Eve Vaterlaus, which can complete this double reading chapter. In the first, the image of Eve, in a figleaf, performing Eve at *Eve*, at the community cultural center CUANDO, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in 1986. In the second one, there is the image of her artwork "*Homonculus*", which was exhibited as the "*Living Plexus Black Box*" at the closing event under study, *A Contract to be Negotiated, Columbus Egg: The Living Plexus Black Box of "The Voyage of the Elisabeth*, held at the Rosenbeg Gallery in 1993. These "bifurcated" images by Eve are offered by the researcher to open new insight of understanding of artists' growth, change and global achievements in life.

Figure 11

Plexus Artopera Bifurcated Reading Example



E. Vaterlaus performing Eve in Eve, with
J. Strand, at C.U.A.N.D.O., New York,
1986, photo by J. Day.

Figure 12

Homonculus by E. Vaterlaus

