

PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT TEACHERS: A RESIDENCY

Elsewhere: 606 South Elm St., Greensboro, NC 27406, June 6-10, 2016

"Let us choose those who teach us by their lives."

- Seneca, *Epistles*, LII.8

"We have always been ... a business civilization. But we have also ... had a range of counterbalancing institutions ... to advance a different set of values.... When the pendulum has swung too far in one direction ... , new institutions or movements have emerged, or old ones have renewed their mission.

- William Deresiewicz, "The Neoliberal Arts"

DESCRIPTION

With the support of Elon University and Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and in collaboration with Elsewhere (a “living museum”), we invite you to a weeklong residency in philosophical art that seeks to challenge and reformulate the way philosophy is currently done. This will be the first in a series of three residencies, with the subsequent events happening at CWRU in June 2017 and “on the road” in June 2018.

INVITATION TO A RESIDENCY

If we were to make a spectrum on the one side of which is the academic discipline – Philosophy – conveyed in a textbook manner in a classroom organized by accredited functionaries of “higher education,” and on the other side of which would be philosophy – that way of life – practiced by the ancient Greco-Roman schools in the lives of citizens and non-citizens alike throughout the course of their lives in society and in solitude, toward which end of the spectrum would your love of wisdom lean? Would you prefer to do philosophy just as a theorist in a research apparatus or as a human being in a way of life inside and outside of school, in the city as much as in the classroom? *Philosophy without teachers* speaks to an ancient impulse in a modern guise. Inspired by socially engaged, conceptual, and performance art, as well as by egalitarian and emancipatory pedagogy, we want to go back to an age before professors acted as academic functionaries organizing the classroom in order to explore the possibilities within each of our lives to do philosophy, whether as a way of life or *in* a way of life. We want to rearticulate what learning and teaching the art of philosophy can be. Our hypothesis is that driving what is clearly an academic tradition back as hard and far as we can into its non-academic or original “*Akedemic*” roots will allow us to work out personally satisfying and professionally exciting answers to two questions: (A) What could be the links, if any, between philosophy and daily life? (B) To what extent is the *form of life* in which philosophy can be practiced – or though which it is shaped – more important for seeking wisdom than the *content of an investigation*? For those of us trained in academic philosophy or who have taken their cue from textbooks and histories of academic philosophy, *Philosophy without teachers* means seeking to discover philosophy beyond or prior to the establishment of the confines of our typical sources and authorities and it means reaffirming the importance of teaching and learning as personal acts. In the spirit of art practice, we call this shared experience a *residency*, and invite you to take part in this challenge to the form of learning philosophy. Over a week of social and solitary time in various experiments and different forms of interaction, we will seek to produce *practice shifts* in our craft and in ourselves. These shifts can take many forms – in the ways we read, talk, walk, read, create, eat, build, perform, engage. Our goal is to produce at least one shift in each of ourselves, and to develop a clear sense of the links between philosophy and life, form and content that are singled out by the shift. This residency has the potential to be career-altering and more importantly philosophically surprising. We thus now send our call to adventurous academics and intellectually challenging artists who want to make room for such a *kairos*.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We envision a residency of 15 individuals, living, eating, and philosophizing together at Elsewhere (<http://www.goelsewhere.org>). This practice of living together – consisting of private sleeping spaces organized around shared eating, lounging, bathroom, reading, and experimentation spaces – will enable genuine philosophical practice to occur *throughout* the residency, rather than simply during designated meeting times. The residency will cultivate a continuum between the practice of philosophy and our practical lives. Elon University, CWRU, and related arts councils will offer financial support, based on a sliding scale, to help cover some travel and accommodation expenses.

SCHOLARSHIPS

We will have two kinds of scholarships available for a limited number of participants. We will fund a good part of the travel expenses and waive most of the weekly room and board fee for up to two graduate students and two artists. We will waive a good part of the weekly room and board fee for up to two non-tenure-track faculty members.

APPLICATIONS

We seek at least two groups of people: (1) academically trained philosophers, from every stage of the academic career (graduate students to senior faculty members); and (2) socially engaged, conceptual, or performance artists interested in philosophy as a way of life. By bringing these two diffuse groups – nonetheless each with their own language games and traditions – into living practice and conversation with each other, we hope to shake loose the art of seeking wisdom, the art of loving it, fools that we are to do so.

To accept our invitation, please send the following to rjohnson50@elon.edu or bendik-keymer@case.edu by March 1, 2016:

- A short essay in which you explain how you might answer question (A) above and what dimensions of your practice – whether artistic or academic – you would like to confront. These will become the origins from which we will convene our residency (500 words or less)
- A curriculum vitae (of no more than two pages)
- A writing sample of your most formally innovative piece of academic philosophy or write-up of your most philosophically original piece of art (around 3,000 words)

CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS

Lynne Huffer	http://wgss.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/Huffer-Lynne.html
Chloe Bass	http://chloebass.com/work/the-book-of-everyday-instruction
George Scheer	http://www.goelsewhere.org/george-scheer-2/
Isak Berbic	http://www.isakberbic.com/
Jeremy Bendik-Keymer	http://philosophy.case.edu/faculty/jeremy-david-bendik-keymer/
Ryan Johnson	https://www.elon.edu/e/directory/profile.html?user=rjohnson50

<http://fritzbooks.tumblr.com/post/134814815642/philosophy-wout-teachers-invitation-to-a>