

**From *The Politics of Small Gestures – Chances and Challenges for Contemporary Art*
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Chapter 1. Introduction

It's kind of a funny thing. We increasingly find ourselves in a peculiar, weird situation in which contemporary art seems to attract attention and interest for almost everything but its content. There is more and more talk, more and more buzz and hype about its market value, social hipness and entrepreneurial cleverness, not to forget the image it offers of flexible and oh-so-nomadic individual identity. What so very often goes missing are the content and the issues that contemporary art deals with and confronts. You know, themes like identity, sexuality, love, death, and, not to forget, gardening.

This book is an attempt to close the gap between the hype and the substance, between superficial interests and “goods internal to a practice”. (MacIntyre 1985, 219). It is an effort to see and articulate certain works and actions of contemporary art as vehicles for thought. Not as products, not as spectacles, and not as authentic expressions of something called reality, but as, well, something different, something else. And yes, that something else is the politics of the small gesture.

I will argue for a version of contemporary art that is a part of our everyday experience. I want to see art as a partner in crime. A crime of passion, that is: participating in the processes of shaping and making the content of concepts and symbols. A web of processes that aims at generating sustainable conditions for knowledge production. It is a version of involvement in contemporary art that focuses on what it has to say to us about our lives. It is not high up there somewhere, and neither is it down there anywhere. It is near, within sight, so close it tickles our imaginations. It is about meetings. Clashes and collisions. Careful caressings and wildly swaying wunderbaums.

The starting point for our journey is the necessity of positioning ourselves within the broader framework of contemporary art. My value-laden proposition is to see contemporary art as a field within contemporary society that wants to be and is part of the whole fabric of which a given context is made. It is not in the vanguard, it is not conservative, and it is not nostalgic. It is active, right here, right now. It consists of acts and gestures that are available, accessible, self-reflective and self-critical. They are also, not to forget, highly enjoyable as challenges to our ways of understanding who we are and where we are the way we are. When some of these notions, or more precisely, when enough of them are combined, they provide a way of stealing back the momentum for content-driven choices and acts within this field.

What I am talking about is the politics of small gestures. A small gesture is a political act that is either visible or embedded in works of art. It is these significant, distinct acts that I will be walking with and talking with throughout this book. They are gestures that are not the work of art in itself and are not the issue or theme of the work in question. What I am fascinated by are these embedded, significant gestures and choices that make the given work what it is; i.e.

what makes it tick, and what turns it into something special. They are gestures that make the work become possible. Gestures as goods that are internal to a practice and which are found embedded in the work, in how it was made, communicated or, for example, mounted in an exhibition. They are acts through which these works become specific singularities in the process of being experienced by someone in a particular site and situation.

Small gestures are by no means happening solely in contemporary art and visual culture. They obviously have anecdotal cousins outside the sphere of contemporary art. Acts such as we all remember, or acts that are more marginal in their overall significance. Acts such as the German Chancellor Brandt kneeling at the Warsaw War Memorial in 1971, in the depths of the Cold War. An act like the speech made by the Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim in 2004, when receiving the prestigious Wolf Award in the Israel parliament, the Knesset, by simply reading out the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, which guarantees all its citizens the same social and political rights, regardless of differences of race, religion and gender. Or the very specific, but not so well-known or appreciated act by the Finnish ice hockey player Esa Tikkanen, who used to drive the players on the opposing NHL team crazy by talking non-stop in a strange and unintelligible mix of Finnish, Swedish, English and made-up words. They even found a name for it: Tiki-talk. Or the act, and now we slip back into the domain of contemporary art, of the Norwegian painter A.K. Dolven in noticing that a great many of the people who bought her paintings – extremely subtle, delicate works painted with overlapping layers of grey on grey that you only can sense and perceive in direct contact, not via photographs – tend to place them in their bedrooms.

In a word, they are acts that make a difference. An act as a small gesture that generates enough room of its own for it to survive and to avoid falling into the safe havens provided by dichotomous juxtapositions of us and them, and inside and outside. It is not just a matter of numbers, and it is not just a matter of deciding *a priori* what is allowed and what is not – referring here to the current trend for returning to simple, minimal modes of expressions, often combined with a desire to stem the flood of annoying cross-medium experiments.

It is, thus, a small gesture that becomes something of its own – challenging, cherishable and enjoyable – in the constant tension between contemporary art as a fully commodified product and contemporary art as a conservative tool for high-brow cultural politics that seeks to juxtapose and separate good and bad, us and them. (For a recent example, see the Danish Cultural Canon project at www.kum.dk.) Instead of pre-set hierarchies, a small gesture stands for a plurality of means of expression, a plurality of competing life worlds, but at the same time it emphasizes that both of these are only possible if there is enough room for something called reasonable disagreement and loving conflict. In one significant way, I want to deny the often-used excuse that claims there are no alternatives. Instead, it is and it always will be about how we can both articulate and push those alternatives forwards – and back again.

How this is potentially possible within contemporary art and visual culture is something that

causes a couple of nervous laughs, and even more cynical sneers. It is a task that purposely goes against the mainstream, and yet at the same a time a task that believes it can find enough elements in the practices of contemporary art and visual culture that might actually pull it all together. The four core elements are availability, accessibility, self-reflection and self-criticism.

With availability I want to address the notion that contemporary art is not taking place behind closed doors. It is brought into the public sphere, in fact, with a dedication to co-constructing those open spaces. Availability also indicates that it is a means of expression that quite strikingly emphasizes content over medium specificity, even if in each case the tools of the trade have to be mastered and known. Thus, contemporary art can – as we have all witnessed so many times – take almost any form, from things on a wall to walks in a park, and back to serving tea to the unemployed. It seems that ultimately contemporary art can be anything it wants to be or can imagine itself becoming. The point to remember is: Everything that is possible is not necessary meaningful in itself.

The kind of contemporary art that I am after and referring to is accessible because it does not predominantly refer to itself, to art history or art theory, but to our everyday experiences. It is everyday experiences, not as some glorified magical excursion into the depth of our souls, but as wary, tacky instances of how we perceive and comprehend who we are, where we are, who we are with, and how we relate to ourselves and our surroundings. But accessibility also has a demanding side. For anything to be meaningful and comprehensible, accessibility requires a site and a context. They have a history, a present tense and a future horizon that should be kept as open and flexible as possible. This is a process of shaping and making a context that happens simultaneously on the level of physical activity and discursive action.

Contemporary art is self-reflective because it certainly does not claim to be innocent. It is perfectly aware that every act is a part of a continuous series of acts. Acts that do not happen in a vacuum or a neutral zone. They are acts that claim something, deny something else, and stand still, leaving room for something worthwhile to emerge. Self-reflection is about the awareness of being part of the game, part of the problem. Through self-reflective acts we recognize both how we constantly have an effect on the outside world and how that outside world has an effect on us.

Finally, the self-critical attitude spells out the necessity of understanding that whatever it is that we claim is meaningful and important today will not necessarily be so tomorrow. This also means that our claims are versions from within multiple seas and deserts of versions – often competing and conflicting with one another. Self-criticality underscores the necessity of being open to criticism from both inside and outside, and also the responsibility to participate in critical discourses.

With availability, accessibility, self-reflection and self-criticality we have a broad background for the main chances and challenges that contemporary art provides. What

follow in the individual chapters here – with the helping hand of numerous examples of artistic practice – are reflections on the following themes: What is a small gesture?; How are context and locality to be defined?; What is required by committed participation?; and Why can the MORE LOGO idea be seen as an alternative way of shaping a critical position?

However, before getting into the main chapters, let me sketch an outline of the changes that have made the immediate presence of contemporary art possible. There is a certain ‘thisness’ characterized by its vulnerability that allows it to be perplexed and questioned, but not to give itself over to passive surrender and docility. This is a presence characterized by its ability to be open to challenges that question its own ways of being and perceiving. A certain particular kind of presence, a kind that creates the chances for a specific singularity, chances that rely on being exposed to influences and challenges, but facing them constructively and head on, not passively with ultimate resignation, or merely waiting and whining about them.

We are talking about a phenomenon that touches every part of our lives. Changes that are bound to have serious effects on almost every human activity, contemporary art included. In short, what is different today from, say, the mid-1980’s is a set of alterations that come together in one word: communication. The world we live in is a different, not necessarily at all a better, place, because across the broad spectrum of possibilities the quantity of communication has both increased and become dramatically cheaper. By communication I am not only referring to sending oh-so-smart SMS’s around and around the globe, explaining in immaculate detail to people who don’t want to know it what you had to drink in the bar next door.

An increased volume of communication spells significantly cheaper travel, faster and more accessible internet infrastructure and networks, and a growth in international collaborations. Communication is the reality of fewer hurdles before and rules against the movement of ideas, capital, materials and people across the borders of nation states. We all know this, but precisely because it is so mundane a fact it has to be stressed. Things move and go around faster and cheaper. As ever, information is about power and power structures – and about how to use and abuse them. But information is not solely a captive of certain visible or invisible power players. It is as an opportunity, a raw material that is available around you much more than before. If you want or desire examples, please click yourself into the Wikipedia’s websites, or simply enjoy the sound bite from the head of what is perhaps the most successful recent reorganizer of people’s ways of travelling by plane: “Ryanair’s chief executive, Michael O’Leary, said he hoped to introduce gambling facilities on flights by 2007. The European low-cost airline thinks the move might generate so much revenue that it wouldn’t have to charge passengers for airfares.” (*The Economist* 5.11.2005)

The crucial point now is how to connect quantity with the question of quality. And here we get closer to the idea of politics as politicization, not as party politics or as politicking, but as something that questions and throws off balance the habits of our hearts and that makes us

create and imagine alternatives. In the words of Michel Foucault, what we are talking about is the means available for eventualization. (2002, 200) We will return to the idea of eventualization in detail later on, in Chapter 5. It is about shaping the agenda instead of just standing to one side and watching it being shaped. And yes, it is asking, again and again, before you start running and acting, why do you do what you do? In other words: What is it that you want and desire to do?

It is very evident to most of us that there is obviously enough quantity, but not enough quality in all kinds of cultural production and intervention. The dilemma of quality is, of course, a truly honest dilemma without any clear-cut solutions. It is a process towards which one has to strive. A complex, demanding process that is guided by certain ideas and attitudes. The most important, and simultaneously the most difficult, is the problem of time. In other words, when striving for quality of participation within the public sphere, speed kills. And it really kills amazingly effectively. Speed kills in terms of not enough attention to detail, not enough time reserved for the activity itself, and not enough scrutiny of how it is to be presented and communicated further.

The fact that speed kills might be the first and most dangerous obstacle. And it has a couple of close cousins that must be acknowledged. Available, accessible, self-reflective and self-critical contemporary art opposes conservative tendencies, full blown commodification, excessive focusing on the financial aspects, the society of the spectacle, and instrumentalization of our life worlds. It is suspicious of nostalgia, mysticism, appropriation and pastiche. It strongly opposes nationalism, chauvinism, essentialism and racism.

Thus, it is rather clear what the version of contemporary art that we are pushing to the fore here is against. It is equally crystal clear that being against this or that, no matter how despised these thises and thats are, is not enough. It is not enough as a credible intellectual effort and it is not enough as an act of trying to make and maintain a chance for critical positioning and participation. What is required is a vision that guides these activities. A vision that is passionate, playful, but very serious. It is grounded and committed, situated and self-mocking. It is a means of being able to laugh at ourselves and with ourselves.

An act that has a certain impossibility inscribed into it, a certain productive failure. A certain specific and singular presence that does not strive for a predetermined goal. An act such as the following: an act as an act within the contemporary field of art, but not an act as a work of art. An act that was carried out a couple of years ago by a very young artist, and an act directed, with compliments, at a couple of internationally prominent curators. An act that is very strongly linked with its context and location as a relative periphery.

An act that consists of presenting valuable gifts to the visiting curators. Gifts that, on this occasion, came in the form of the artificial stones commonly used in window decorations. A gift the size of a remarkable chunk of stone, but as light as a handkerchief. A gift given to professional people making lots of professional visits on that same day. A gift that you could

not put into a bag, and a gift that you could not just throw away unintentionally, because you could not hide it or push it into a trash can. A gift given with a warm-hearted wish and with a nasty twist. A gift from a north-country boy from a north-country land that is so proud of its pure, authentic nature. A gift that spelled out with such sarcastic accuracy the whole potential minefield of confusion between where we come from and how we are represented, by whom, for what – and why.

Chapter 2. What's So Funny About a Small Gesture

Size matters, right. The bigger the better, or is it the other way around? Is less really more? Or is less just a bore? How do we navigate between belief in expansion and the deep-seated desire for minimalism? What kind of a gesture is a small gesture? And why would that be such an important, significant notion in acts of contemporary art and visual culture?

Our task here starts with big versus small. The definition of a small gesture is not comprehensible without its counterpart, which is obviously that of a big gesture. However, the content of a small gesture cannot only be articulated vis-à-vis something else. It needs a substance of its own that goes beyond where it starts from. We will soon be returning to this task of going beyond.

But for now, pressing hard, with the pressure rising, big versus small. Here the comparison is not so much about the quantity, but about the quality of the gestures. That said, there can also be a distinction between the quantities, but that in itself does not help us get much further. The vital difference is about what these acts are aimed at, whether they appear to be big or small in size. The difference here depends on what kind of effect is wished for.

Therefore, the basic structural difference is that characteristically a big gesture wants to have a superb, everlasting, universal effect. It strives to make a difference on a fundamental scale. At the point of comparison, this is exactly what a small gesture does not seek to do. Instead, a small gesture comes out of a worldview according to which there are no meaningful, clear-cut answers or fundamental decisions. It is all about the process of striving towards a certain goal. A goal that we will never fully achieve, but a goal that we want to move towards in small, significant steps. Not only does a small gesture doubt the chances of these great acts made by the big gesture, it argues that they are aggressive, dangerous and often highly counter-productive.

A big gesture wants to make sure that everyone sees it, feels it, and hears it. It goes for the absolute maximum effect with a concentrated, orchestrated act. It wants to settle a score, make an essential change, in which the small gesture is very happy if and when it is sometimes able to make a smallish dent in our ways of comprehending and perceiving ourselves in our surroundings; who we are, where we are, with whom we are and what kind of relationships we have with our surroundings and also with ourselves. A big gesture does not tolerate other big gestures that well. It tends to be very jealous about the territory that it has or is trying to achieve for itself and its vision. The small gesture, on the other hand,

survives only along with the series of other small gestures that precede it, happen at the same time, and will materialize in the future. While a big gesture is a single act, a small gesture is characteristically a process that gains its momentum through the specific development of that particular case – and a development and an effect that continues to make waves after the initial act has taken place. A meaningful small gesture presupposes a network of small gestures. It is a network, but of a kind in which the connections are not constantly active, but nevertheless available and accessible within a common, shared horizon.

Development, yes, a word that also allows us to pinpoint the differences. For a big gesture, the act is an end in itself. It is the final stage of a long, committed development that is now completed.

For a small gesture, development is never about closure. Development is a description of a current situation that is nothing more and nothing less than that: a glimpse into an ongoing effort that recognizes both the need to be aware of one's achievements and aims, but also to be aware of the never-ending character of the search and research.

It is obvious that a small gesture is partly parasitic on a big gesture. We can find other labels for a gesture here. A big gesture in macro terms is the current name of the game. It is the parameters that have been forced on everyone in the game. A big gesture, for example, is the current market-force-driven belief that financial concerns are the only relevant ideology that makes sense. And that this neo-liberal doctrine makes sense not only in the realm of financial transactions and the production of goods, but also in every other field that exists in any given society, ranging from children's education to health care for the elderly. A typical big gesture is the trendy belief that something that might work in the private sector is bound to be the one and only answer in other areas of society. Thus, it is the big gesture that is characteristically guided in fundamentalist fashion by hard-core, one-sided logic. It allows no other views or options.

And here we see the main David & Goliath opposition between the big and the small gesture. The small gesture confronts the big gesture. The small gesture is in the margins, and the big gesture rules the centre, and the centres. The small gesture is there to follow its own particular logic. A logic that goes against the tendencies and rationales for the instrumentalization of our life-worlds, against the objectification of human experience, and against vulgar scientific dogmatism. It often enough willingly borrows ways and means from the big gesture, but it uses them for a completely different purpose. A small gesture lives for the chance to be able to create alternative ways of being – whether that is being alone, together, in a creepy and persistent conflict or in a janitor's waiting room. These are alternative ways of figuring out who we are, how we are to act in a supermarket supersale, and why we say yes when we know we should have the courage to say no to things that go against our intuitions as human beings.

A small gesture is political in its potential. But in itself, like no other thing in itself, it is not

political. It can become political. In fact, the question is *how* in each of several given singular, but mutually connected specific situations a small gesture becomes possible.

A small gesture generates opportunities to think, feel and hear alternatives – and then to learn how to implement and to maintain them. Not in a full-scale solution for the big gesture, but in a mundane, day-to-day act of trying to make everyday life a little more worthwhile. It is about the beauty of ordinary acts. A process that is filled with trials and errors, and with amazingly few successes. But a practice that is what it is all about: trusting an experience that is happening near enough to you (referring especially to emotional nearness, but not excluding physical nearness), in your situatedness, the feeling of being thrown into the flames of conflict. It also means that we have to trust, to learn to trust, the opportunities for sharing these experiences with others.

A small gesture is being political when it makes something politicized, questioned and no longer taken for granted. It is a process that we recognize from both micro and macro-level phenomena. A micro-level activity, for example, of a kind that breaks our hearts in its simplicity and naiveté. It is about actually taking the time to surprise your wife with an unexpected hug, to open the door for that man in your local library who never bothers to acknowledge your hollow hellos, and to leave that toilet in that semi-dirty train at least as usable as it was before you went in.

On the macro level of politicization we can focus on two examples. One refers to the structures of almost any so-called democratic government. This is a phenomenon that did not exist before the end of the 1960's, but which nowadays seems to be a part of our normality that we cannot imagine living without. Less than four decades ago there was no institution called the ministry of the environment or its administrative functions. Now there is, and this is now also showing its limitations. The fact that we have an awareness of environmental issues is not in itself a successful big gesture that will save the planet from freak weather and pollution. It is about how that awareness negotiates with other aims and values within a given society and its chosen ways of dealing with issues that are common to all of us.

The other macro-level example also takes us to the tumults of the 1960's. It is often served up in slogan form as 'the personal is political'. A slogan that is so terribly misused and misunderstood that it definitely begs to be taken seriously. The small gesture is about personal matters being important. And it is about the personal being potentially political, with the crucial difference being that this potentiality has to be argued for, and not just believed in.

2.4 A Political Gesture – Phil Collins's *The World Won't Listen*

Phil Collins's video installation *The World Won't Listen* is arguably one of the most

fascinating works of contemporary art since the fall of the Soviet bloc. And believe me or not, this is not an outrageous overstatement. The scale of the comparison is purposely as huge as it gets. This is a comparison that is simultaneously serious and ironic. The point being that Collins' piece is not just in itself a magnificent example of good, meaningful contemporary art. It is also possible to see it as a symbol of the contemporary art of our times.

Let us begin with the broader framework in which Collins' work might turn out to be a significant symbol for our times. But before that we have to recall what the work revolves around, what goes on inside it. The background is a 'best of' album by a British pop group from the 1980's called The Smiths. A group that since its break-up almost 20 years ago has lost very little of its impact and ingeniousness. The second main step towards the video installation seen in the Deniz Palas location at the Istanbul Biennial was a three-day Smiths karaoke event that Collins arranged in an Istanbul club. He had previously put on similar events in other cities, for example, in Cork, Ireland, Vilnius, Lithuania, and Bogotá, Colombia, where he also re-recorded all the backing tracks for the karaoke DVD.

The result is something that can be labelled 'the Bermudas triangle of experiencing art'. And yes, that is exactly why it is almost inevitable that we see it both as a symptom and a symbol of the contemporary. Art that is accessible, enjoyable and challenging – and all of these in a heartbreakingly generous way. Art that does not refer to art history, is not based on narcissistic self-references to contemporary art, but which takes and shapes its contexts and contents from the everyday realities in which we struggle and survive. It is reflective and it re-activates our ways of seeing with and thinking with – not to forget feeling with and experiencing with.

It is accessible to all viewers because what we confront and what we see in the karaoke songs and presentations is something that we can very quickly and easily relate to. If you are familiar with the original songs, it is obviously a much smoother road to follow, but nonetheless, even without any knowledge of The Smiths phenomenon, *The World Won't Listen* is there, inviting you into its domain with arms wide open. In other words, it is almost impossible to find a person who has no connection to at least one of these areas of contemporary life: pop music; karaoke; drinking alcohol; or melancholy.

It is enjoyable because it makes you laugh. And it really does this with a finesse that comes along so rarely. It is a very very funny work. Not funny as in a hahahaha reaction in which you look down at someone, but funny as in a reaction that you feel about something. Something you can see on the screen and something you feel within yourself. It is also enjoyable because you do not need to know anything about any art theories whatsoever. The work is there. For you to be part of. Engaging with it, engaging in it.

Last but not least, the work is challenging because it manages to do everything it sets out to do so seemingly effortlessly. It seems almost too perfect to be true. The challenge connects

us with another part of the idea of the work being a telling sign of the times. The challenge is to wonder whether Collins is taking a slightly too easy route? I mean, come on, isn't it all so shallow? The combination of a failure-proof remake of a pop-classic, a bunch of teenager losers that are all too ready to taste at least a little bit of simulated stardom, and a work that nobody can have anything against?

There are two ways to answer these questions. One is take a look at the process of making the work, and the other is to focus on the inherent quality of the feelings raised to the surface in the work. Elements that together say why Collins' work is not an affirmative act that plays by the rules of the music industry, but, in fact, is political in a very meaningful way. It is political as in making things possible.

When looking at the history of the project, the presumed 'easiness' and 'effortlessness' of Collins' work gets a new and realistic dimension. There is a certain important shadow in his smile. A smile made and shaped by deep-seated personal needs and desires, obsessions and embedded situatedness. In simple terms, he is doing things that he himself would really like to do and to enjoy. Things that say something about our lives right now, and right here. Not by pointing a finger, not by rocking on your heels, but by opening a door through which we have the chance and challenge to see something else.

Considering the pure technicalities of the project, the workload is incredible, even for the critic equipped with the most insistent protestant work ethic. It took them three months to record the backing tracks. You can imagine the emotional investment Collins himself made in order to meet the performers and make them feel that they are being respected and valued. And then, in the end, there is the time spent editing the final version so that it looks as if it had been done in an afternoon, whereas it took weeks to accomplish.

The workload invested in the video installation is closely connected with the sentiment inherent in the work. Again, the funniness is just one layer. It would be a rather uninteresting work if it only consisted of making cheap fun of Smiths fans for the audience's voyeuristic pleasure. What I am after is something that slowly, but surely comes across while watching the work. Song by song, and performance by performance, the 'fun' part of it slips more and more to the sidelines. What takes its place is the motivation for both Collins and the performers. We smell a certain desperation. A certain unbelievably strong longing to be someone – somewhere somehow. We feel their need to be accepted, to be part of something. We feel the sadness of being alone, with nobody to talk to.

In other words, Collins' work contains an element without which his actions would indeed be shallow and lame. It contains the element of cruelty. And that cruelty is shown to have at least three significant sides. The first is the one you feel while watching the work. With every laugh you sense the pain. With every joyous gesture you immediately recognize how it is based on being hurt. And with every song the whole range of emotions adds up to and accumulates into a groove that is so sad, but so very true.

Besides the cruelty of the notion that what you are seeing and sensing is not out there somewhere, but definitely lurking inside yourself, there is another aspect of cruelty at stake here. And that is the cruel stroke in-built into any act of generosity. There is no way out of the dilemma. I might invite you for tea, but there is always something I want back from you. It might not be anything sinister or any more demanding than just a pleasant chat, but nevertheless, the person who gives wants something back. The third type of cruelty present here is the motion that takes place when Collins's teases out the discrepancies between the ideal world and the not-so-ideal reality. There is bound to be a cruel kind of upset when a bedroom fantasy gets a chance to be lived for real. It is a revelation, and a disillusionment. A kind of a wake-up call that is not necessarily all that kind.

But how is Phil Collins' work political? This brings us back to *how* the work has been made, and especially to *how* the karaoke sessions were arranged. I do not claim that the work in itself is political, or that re-visiting the political legacy of The Smiths' lyrics makes Collins' work political. What I am confident about is that something else in the work is political. And that is the act by which he made it possible for the shy, unsure and not always so practiced performers to give all that they can give. An act and a political gesture that comes in the form of a rule.

While doing the karaoke evenings, every performer had 30 minutes to do whatever they wanted. The main house rule, which was non-negotiable, was: nobody laughs. A couple of times Collins had to stop the music and throw out people who were laughing. "Nobody laughs" became a political act. It is a political gesture because it made something that was not there before not only possible, but also attainable. It is political because it produced an alternative way of 'being with' – with oneself and with one's surroundings.

Through this act, a collective act, that is, something very specific and singular is created and generated. We can smell the dangers of singing "We are the world, we are the children", but we still ought to have the courage to recognize what is being made and taking shape – becoming a place. What is becoming is a version of social hope. Not as a solution, but as a kind of imaginary lighthouse guiding our activities. A lighthouse that has the tendency to alter its coordinates all the time, but a lighthouse that is always there – somewhere. A social hope that we need to find, and that is what I find in the work of Phil Collins, but a type of social hope that we most vehemently need to unleash. We have to lose sight of it, to lose it, but simply in order to be able to find it again and again.