

**PRESS RELEASE** (04 August 2009)

***Seized***  
**Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) & Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA)**

**Press Preview:** October 1, 2009, 11am

**Opening:** October 2, 2009, 8pm

**Artist Talk:** October 4, 2009, 4pm

**Exhibition Duration:** 3. October – 15. November 2009, Fr-Su 2-6pm,  
and after appointment

**FilmScreening/ Round Table:** *Strange Culture* (Lynn Hershman Leeson, 2007)/  
incl. a Round Table end of October in a Berlin cinema

ART LABORATORY BERLIN is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibition ***Seized*** by Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) and the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) as the third part of our series *Art and Law*.

The exhibition *Seized* documents the FBI raid on the house of CAE member Prof. Steve Kurtz in May 2004, following the death of his wife Hope. In the weeks prior to the raid Steve and Hope Kurtz had been preparing for an exhibition examining GM agriculture at Mass MoCA. An emergency worker of the fire department responding to Steve Kurtz's 911 call found materials in their house related to the upcoming exhibition suspicious and informed the FBI. The raid, conducted by FBI-officers wearing hazmat suits, and blocking off a half block radius of the home, caused much media attention.

Even though Hope Kurtz's death was found to be of natural causes and none of the materials found at the Kurtz residence were found to have any health threat whatsoever, the US Department of Justice sought to charge Steve Kurtz, first with "bioterrorism", and when that was unsuccessful, with 'Wire and Mail Fraud' for receiving harmless bacteria samples over the internet. After almost four years the charges were dismissed by Federal Judge Richard J. Arcara as being "insufficient on its face," meaning he found that no crime had been committed.

During the raid a number of items pertaining to the Mass MoCA exhibition, as well as other artworks, computers, books, archives and manuscripts were confiscated. The FBI also left behind a substantial amount of garbage – including over 30 empty pizza boxes, several hundred energy drink bottles, hazmat suits, respirator filters, unlabeled biological sample bags, a handwritten checklist culminating in the phrase "sign warrant" and a cigar butt. In the exhibition ***Seized*** these traces of law enforcement have been combined with documentation of the raid and the court case that followed. In addition the show presents artworks and performances by CAE, including those being worked on by Steve and Hope Kurtz before the raid.

In connection with the exhibition the film *Strange Culture* by Lynn Hershman Leeson will be screened in late October in a Berlin cinema, followed by a panel discussion. The film documents the events of May 2004 and their aftermath (more information to follow).

**Critical Art Ensemble (CAE)** is a collective of tactical media practitioners of various specializations including computer graphics, software, wetware, film/video, photography, book art and performance. CAE was founded in 1987 and has produced a wide variety of projects for an international audience at diverse venues ranging from the street, to the museum, to the Internet.

CAE is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2007 *Andy Warhol Foundation Wynn Kramarsky Freedom of Artistic Expression Grant* honoring two decades of distinguished work, and has been invited to exhibit and perform in many of the world's cultural institutions—including the Whitney Museum and the New Museum in NYC, the Corcoran Museum of Art in Washington D.C., the London Museum of Natural History, the ICA London, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, der Volksbühne in Berlin, ZKM Karlsruhe, El Matadero in Madrid, Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Museo de Arte Carrilo Gil in Mexico City and many more.

**The Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA)** was founded in 1998 as an anonymous collective of engineers, designers, artists and activists united by the cause of individual and collective self-determination. Toward this end, the IAA has produced numerous projects under its flagship initiative, *Contestational Robotics*. These include several tele-operated robotic graffiti writers, *I-See*, which gained worldwide media attention as a web-based navigation service to help users avoid surveillance, and *Terminal Air*, an installation and website that visualizes the movements of airplanes believed to have been used in the CIA's "Extraordinary Rendition" program.

The IAA has won numerous awards for its work, including the 2000 *Prix Ars Electronica Award of Distinction* and several *Prix Ars Electronica* Honorable Mentions; and a *Rhizome New Media Fellowship*. The collective's work has been exhibited in museums, galleries, and public spaces internationally, including ZKM Karlsruhe, the World Information Organization in Amsterdam, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, and Mass MoCA among others.

**Strange Culture** documents the surreal nightmare of internationally-acclaimed artist and professor Steve Kurtz which began when his wife Hope died in her sleep of heart failure. Police who responded to Kurtz's 911 call deemed Kurtz's art suspicious and called the FBI. Within hours the artist was detained as a suspected "bioterrorist" as dozens of federal agents in Hazmat suits sifted through his work and impounded his computers, manuscripts, books, his cat, and even his wife's body. The film *Strange Culture* stars Tilda Swinton, Peter Coyote, Thomas Jay Ryan, Josh Kornbluth and Steve Kurtz, and was shown in the 2007 Berlin Film Festival "Biennale".

**Lynn Hershmann Leeson** is a filmmaker and new media artist who has been awarded the *Siemens-Medienkunstpreis* award from the ZKM Karlsruhe, as well as the *Golden Nica Prize* at the 1999 *Ars Electronica*.

**ART LABORATORY BERLIN** was founded as a non-profit organisation in autumn 2006 by an international group of art historians and artists. As a noncommercial art space ART LABORATORY BERLIN was established as a platform for projects concentrating on the border between visual arts and related artistic and scholarly fields on an international level.

The main focus of interest is the exhibition and placement of contemporary visual art that interacts with other creative fields, (former series have included "Art and Music", "Art and Text" and "Art and Science"). Each of these points of interaction are represented by a series of three or four diverse exhibitions. Our goal is to explore

the manifold approaches of interaction and interconnection between these genres. ART LABORATORY BERLIN'S current exhibition series is "Art and Law".

ART LABORATORY BERLIN is also interested in supporting contact between artists and the public as part of our exhibitions. To improve a better understanding of emerging and experimental art, we include public discussions with artists and curators. Additionally our program includes lectures, film screenings and workshops.

The current co-directors of ART LABORATORY BERLIN are: Regine Rapp (art historian, curator) and Christian de Lutz (visual artist, curator) Responsible for press and Public relations is Pamina Gerhardt (art historian).

For more information please contact Pamina Gerhardt:  
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