

BILBAO

## consonni

*The following column is the second in a series dedicated to investigating curatorial collectives in contemporary art.*

*consonni (Franck Larcade and María Mur Dean) is a collective involved in artistic production throughout a wide variety of non-traditional media. Based in Bilbao, it was founded in 1997.*

**Valentina Sansone:** “*consonni factory*” was born ten years ago in a post industrial area, one of the original purposes was to create a contemporary art space. How have your activities changed?

**consonni:** Even though consonni starts from a space, we did not develop any specific relationships with that particular building as we were fully aware of our intentions to work from each artist’s needs, in terms of space, time, economy and communication.

In the last few years, consonni projects have shown a greater capacity to infiltrate reality, to use the tools offered by contemporary living to subvert, criticize or

simply analyze the society. Rather than forming a methodological team of curators, consonni manages a flexible process of interlocution between its own members, with the artist, the art world and the public. We must be ready to change our masks and transform ourselves into whatever is needed (TV producers, music managers, tourist guides, typography experts...) just as in the conception, financing and diffusion succeeds as part of the whole creative process.

**VS:** *The collective is an association dedicated to the production of contemporary art. What about the curating practices in your work?*

**c:** consonni presents its activities as art production. One term that is fortunately not precisely defined in the context of art. Italian sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato has reflected upon the precarious and interesting status of artists in our society where one has to fulfil a specialized function and reproduce one’s own model so as to keep things in order. As producers, artists are the ones able to use different strategies and play different roles.

**VS:** *consonni produces projects dealing with contemporary economy, society, political and media spheres. In 2000, the project called The Great Exchange with Matthieu Laurette featured on local TV (Canal Bizkaia), on a program which included barbers and car-swapping. Is the use of the TV medium a practice in order to increase the response of the public, or is it a*

*criticism of the communications and media system?*

**c:** Our approach to TV went progressively from using it as a wide broadcasting channel, to intervening in the content of the channel. At the time of producing Andrea Fraser’s video *Little Frank and His Carp*, the artist and consonni initiated a long-term collaboration to develop a real TV soap. In the case of *The Great Exchange* the project was camouflaged under a pre-established format but an analysis was made of capitalism and of marketing techniques using a pre-capitalist system such as swapping, in the guise of a contest and as a form of entertainment.

**VS:** *The project realized with Ibon Aranberri in Lemóniz presented complex political issues. What happened?*

**c:** Ibon Aranberri’s project was planned to take place in the year 2000. In 1999, there was the longest cease fire announced by ETA. The social optimism seemed to point to an opportunity to revisit a dark and controversial icon: the Lemóniz Nuclear Plant. The plant was built as part of the Franco energy plan in the late ’70s. The area was finally declared a closed military zone until 1992. *Aranberri* planned to create a moment of virtual calm around the Plant, offering a pyrotechnical spectacle designed specifically for that setting among other displays but the project was not actually carried out.

**VS:** *What is your next project?*

**c:** First, we have commissioned



writer Lutxo Egia to write about the Begoña project (Begoña Muñoz, 2004), using the novel as a different way of diffusing essential concepts on which the art project was based.

Then a new proposal from Ibon Aranberri and finally Luna Park, starting from the top of Artxanda Mountain surrounding Bilbao: an abandoned theme park built right after the Franco period and closed 15 years later.

**VS:** *What is the sense of working as a collective today?*

**c:** Group work implies broadening the limits of authorship and the capacity to develop more complex, multidisciplinary and more ambitious works. But far from any utopian democratic perception of collectiveness, consonni is keen to place the artist in the center of the production display.

Info: [www.consonni.org](http://www.consonni.org).

Above: Andrea Fraser, *Little Frank and His Carp*, 2001. Video; Olaf Breuning, *Blue Brothers (watching you!)*, 2005. Projects produced by Consonni.

