Index:

1. Answer to Martin Heynen after the invitation of the workshop series Protest Transpi, which will be shet on 12. November 2024 to 14. January 2025 at the Autonomous School Zurich (ASZ) and at the Migros Museum for Contemporary Art, is part of the exhibition "On the threshold of the museum".

2. Martin Heynen letter to Salmo Suyo

3. The letter requested by the curators: Jeanne van Heeswijk and Sophie Mak-Schram to allow us to present and exhibit the letters and shirts at the museum, which they agreed could be displayed in the museum shop, but not as part of the exhibition.

4. Sophie Mak-Schram to and Jeanne van Heeswijk letter to Salmo Suyo and Martin Heynen

5. T-shirts displayed for three days after the end of the exhibition "On the threshold of the museum". The proceeds from the sale of the shirts were donated to the Autonome Schule Zürich.

November 1, 2024, Zurich

Dear Martin,

Temu activism means drawing attention to Temu, an e-commerce company that sells bulk products. On social media, the word “Temu” is often used to refer to any low-quality product. For example, calling a chocolate “Temu chocolate” implies that it is bad, made of cheap material, perhaps a kind of scam, or simply unattractive. There are very funny memes in Spanish about this. This leads me to the first reflection: do cheap things necessarily have to be bad or unattractive? I think there are exceptions, but when it comes to online shopping, unfortunately, cheap often means bad. The second reflection is: who has access to use/buy these products?

Thank you for inviting me to prepare a workshop. I’m very excited about it. The few conversations we have during the week in the kitchen of our apartment are always stimulating. I think the workshop should focus on how the aesthetics of banners (pamphleteering) or merchandising are connected to the income and resources of those who have the least in this city. From my limited perspective, activism is a social activity tied to the economy of the most marginalized groups in a city. However, in the art scene, these aesthetics are often easily appropriated.
People living in conditions of war, street, or marginalization-BIPOC individuals, legal and undocumented immigrants (sans papier), trans/non-binary people, asylum people, and those who do not speak the local language spend so much energy on legal processes and survival that they barely have time or resources to protest.
In contrast, those of us with certain privileges, such as education or legal status, voluntarily take on the effort to create, participate in, or teach German as volunteer work. These individuals (including myself) have the ability to use public spaces not just for transit but also for activism. As artists, you and I have the responsibility to address these issues directly. Given the challenges I face limited German proficiency, not speaking fluent English, not having a regular job, and being restricted to working only 15 hours a week-your support is crucial. Sharing food with me has significantly alleviated my financial situation, and I sincerely thank you for that. Thanks to this support and university benefits, I am able to sustain myself in this city.

This is why I propose Temu activism. It is a strategy where activism is seamlessly integrated into everyday life, like wearing a shirt. Whether to demand something or express a political stance, this approach ensures that individuals can make their voices heard without interrupting their obligatory work or risking their livelihood. In my view, those who create banners are artists, university students, or people with enough physical and mental health, as well as energy, to pause their activities and join protests.
Museums and educational institutions, whether public or private, should collaborate more. I’m surprised that the Migros Museum hasn’t worked with Autonome Schule Zürich (ASZ) before – I hope I’m wrong. When I first met South Americans in Zurich in 2018, they often said: “You have to study German at ASZ, its free.” Now, in 2024, we have the privilege of addressing social issues, with the resources and networks necessary to create banners and protest. For this reason, I don’t want this workshop to be about making people work or teaching something specific. Instead, I’d like to share a nice few hours with your students, maybe eat together, and distribute the merchandise I’d like to prepare with you a symbolic act, like “handing out a B permit (Aufenthaltsbewilligung B).”

As for me, Salmo, my dream is to obtain a B permit so I can work, apply for art competitions, and have the same opportunities as you.

ASZ students are not tools for museums to showcase the products of our ideas. You and I have taken on the responsibility of building bridges between ASZ and the Migros Museum, facilitating an exchange of knowledge. Beyond that, I cannot imagine another type of workshop. In my opinion, neither ASZ students nor people elsewhere need to learn how to protest. What they deserve is a positive experience and more open access to artistic concerns.
Let’s make stamped t-shirts for the ASZ wall as a way to express our intentions – yours as a Swiss teacher and mine as a Peruvian student.

AUTONOME SCHULE MIGROS MUSEUM
TEMU ACTIVISM
NOVEMBER
19/26
2024

I hope to have enough energy to join your classes soon.
Yours sincerely,

Salmo Suyo

November 8, 2024, Zurich

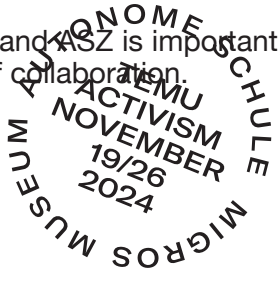
Hi Salmo,

Thank you for the letter. I agree with most of your points. I think it is important to mention that the Museum suggested three possible workshop topics, one of which was making banners. I as a member of Autonome Schule Zürich (ASZ) together with the Museum have chosen the topic: “producing banners” as an initial topic to develop the workshops from there. I am aware that it is clichéd to expect people in vulnerable positions to be politically active. Since we do these workshops, we are free to do anything we want. Exhibiting something in the Museum is optional. We have to write an exhibition proposal to the museum If we want to.
Your idea to break with common practice: don’t make them work / don’t teach them anything - and instead giving them a gift that we worked for makes me laugh, and I really like that. But this is also super artsy - we have to think about how to practically promote a course and motivate people to participate in a course where we don’t do anything. But I understand that for you the discussion with me or the museum is more important than holding the actual workshops. After our discussions, I also agree that a collaboration between a museum and the Autonome Schule should, in some way, address the responsibility of a museum within such a collaboration.
Let’s try the idea with the T-shirts and announce the workshop just in the WhatsApp group and Instagram and see if anyone comes.
With the decision of Autonome Schule to follow their tradition that work for ASZ must be voluntary and the Migros Museum paying ASZ in the form of a one-time donation, I have to think about another way of paying you.

To close I, for my part, also think a collaboration between Migros Museum and ASZ is important, but I’m really at a bit of a loss as to what would be an appropriate format of collaboration.

Kind regards

Martin Heynen



December 9, 2024, Zurich

Dear Reader,

Our proposal to the Museum to share the letter and T-shirts produced for the workshop on November 19 is an outcome of an ongoing process, dialogue, and negotiation between us.
Our intention is to initiate a collaboration between Autonome Schule Zürich and Migros Museum der Gegenwartskunst, with equal benefits for both parties. We aim to foster a responsible and honest dialogue about the complexity of our individual relationships and our (in)direct relationship with these institutions.

Martin Heynen and Salmo Suyo



January 12, 2024, Zürich/London

Dear Salmo and Martin,

We installed the t-shirts together in the museum yesterday. They are already getting attention, and I'm hopeful that we can hang the final t-shirt in the window of the main exhibition hall tomorrow. As our focus shifts to the aftercare of a soon-closing project, I want to reflect in writing on our collaboration and the shadows of institutions that surround it.

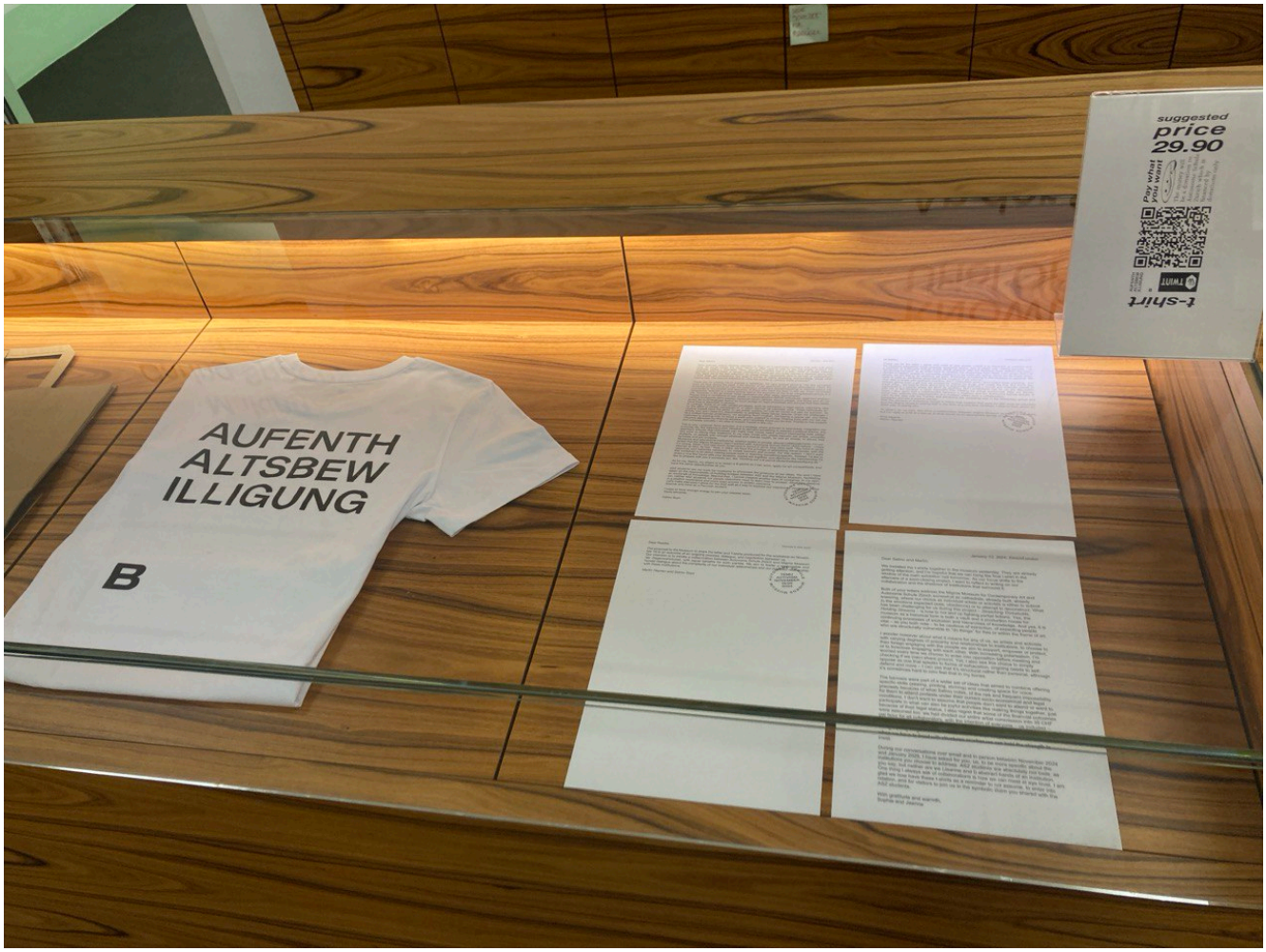
Both of your letters address the Migros Museum for Contemporary Art and Autonome Schule Zürich somewhat as cathedrals; already built, already towering, where our choice as individual artists or activists is either to submit to the emotions expected (awe, obedience) or to attempt to deconstruct. What has been challenging for us during this project – *Stretching Thresholds, Holding Streams* – is how to not end up fighting partial fictions. Yes, the museum as a historical form is both a vault and a production house for continuing processes of exclusion and hierarchies of knowledge. And yes, it is vital – as you both note – to be cautious of extraction, of expecting people who are structurally vulnerable to "do things" for free or within the frame of art.

I wonder however about what it means for any of us, as artists and activists with varying degrees of precarity and relationships to institutions, to choose to then forego engaging with the people we aim to support, empower or protect, or to foreclose engaging with each other. With increasing polarisation, I'm worried every time we choose to enter into opposition before meeting and checking if we (can) share ground. Yet, I also see this choice to simply oppose as one that speaks to forms of exhaustion, ongoing needs to self-defend and more – I can see that it's structural rather than personal, although it's sometimes hard to also feel that in my bones.

The banners were part of a wider set of ideas that aimed to combine offering specific skills (sewing, printing, etching) and creating space for voice, precisely because of what Salmo notes, of the risk and frequent impossibility for them to attend protests under their current socio-economical and legal conditions. I don't want to assume that people don't want to attend or want to participate in what can also be joyful activities like making things together, just because of their legal status. I also regret that some of the financial outcomes were assumed too: we had divided our entire artist commission into 35 CHF per hour for all collaborators, with the intention of everyone – us included – being equally waged. I'm frustrated that this didn't happen, and wonder about when we have to bend with structures or when we can hold the strength to insist.

During our conversations over email and in person between November 2024 and January 2025, I have asked for you, us, to be more specific about the institutions you choose to address. ASZ students are absolutely not tools, as you say, but neither are we (Jeanne and I) abstract hands of an institution. One thing I always ask of collaborations is how we can meet at eye level. I am glad we now have these t-shirts as a reminder to not assume, to enter into relation, and for visitors to join us in the symbolic claim you shared with the ASZ students.

With gratitude and warmth,
Sophie and Jeanne



A. Letters in Migros Museum store.



B. T-shirts in Migros Museum store.