

We Polter! – What it means



If we were to strip the polter initiative down to its very core – in a non-essentialist, non-reductionist kind of way – what we would be left with is an attempt to develop, assemble, or construct collaboratively a critical practice or ‘praxis’ that sits at the *intersection* of art/culture and politics, and therefore, as a practice or praxis, is something everyone can learn or do, not only academy-trained artists, even if some artists will be particularly well placed to take a lead due to their skill/mind set, knowledge and experience.

We call this praxis *poltering*, which is German and roughly translates as making a noise, both literally and metaphorically speaking [NB: in German, there is also *holterdiepolter*, meaning quick, and *polterabend*, the stag night, as well as the internationally recognised *poltergeist*]. Conceived as a critical practice, it is a form of protest or resistance.

At its most basic, it literally is about ‘noising’, as supposed to voicing dissent. Examples include the banging of (waste bin) lids, a common practice in N. Ireland during the troubles, or the use of whistles, used very effectively by opponents of Stuttgart 21 (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuttgart_21). Allegorical or metaphorical poltering is a more complex phenomenon. Recent examples include:

- www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/08/ukip-billboard-poster-international-grey-paint and
- www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/01/banksy-mural-clacton-racist, as well as possibly
- www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/sep/30/karl-lagerfeld-chanel-show-paris-fashion-week

We are not claiming to do or have discovered something radically new, although certain aspects of what we are proposing are new. Poltering, when you think about it, is a long-established cultural practice, it just lacked a name so far. When Hans Haacke dug up the floor of the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1993, he was poltering, so were many of the fluxus artists of the 60s and 70s. What we propose to us builds on these ideas (fluxus, arte povera etc) to address the very real – and very complex – challenges societies across Europe (and beyond) now face.

Poltering is a practice/praxis in the making, so the intention is not to exhaustively define it at the outset. In fact, part of what will drive the initiative is a need for further clarification, definition and referencing, a process made possible by the activities we propose (multi-format events alongside a news-paper-style publication).