

The statement sent by Christoph Büchel to Geoff Edgers at the Boston Globe in March 2007

Communication to the press would not be necessary had the museum agreed to the terms made by an artist in order to realize his artwork. "Training Camp for Democracy" is a solo exhibition by artist Christoph Büchel at Mass MoCA, which is currently in the midst of being installed, which is in no way to be viewed by anyone until completed.

This press communication is a response to the fact that members of the press were allowed to view a work in progress without the consent or presence of the artist or any of his representatives. The following is an attempt to communicate the difficulties and obstacles that result in the unfinished installation by Christoph Büchel.

Christoph Büchel prohibited the installation "Training Camp for Democracy" from being viewed in its current state. This condition was made verbally stated as well as written to the museum before he left for the Christmas holidays. The museum has led tours of the installation, without notifying the artist or his representatives. Journalists, art critics, art collectors, museum curators -- and even politicians have viewed the in-progress installation. In fact the governor of Massachusetts was led through Building 5 by the museum director himself. Please refer to this article:

http://www.thetranscript.com/headlines/ci_5038345

SUMMARY

The unfortunate reality is that MASS MoCA was unable to adequately prepare the exhibition space of Building 5 – the location for "Training Camp for Democracy". The delay was precipitated by the fact the museum was three weeks late in dismantling the previous exhibition of Carsten Holler. In addition, the museum did not assemble materials and elements that were necessary to begin Büchel's installation. These major logistical errors forced the opening date, originally slated for December 16th to be postponed. The museum proved to be incapable of managing and supporting technically and logistically a production the scale of "Training Camp for Democracy" The museum underes-

timated this exhibition even though the scope and detail of it was clearly defined.

After the show was postponed to March 3rd and in a few days before Christmas the museum confessed that they were out of money. There was no money to pay bills and to continue. There was no money to pay Christoph's three assistants. Christoph was compelled in December to cancel several very important shows (for example a solo show at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, scheduled to open early February) to deal with the Mass MoCA installation as he was committed to finishing the project by the new goal of early March. As it turns out he cancelled these other shows for nothing as the installation remains 50% completed and Christoph is still on standby. Meanwhile Mass MoCA has removed the announcement that states its inability to realize the exhibition in time along with any information regarding Büchel's show from their website. It is removed from their online schedule.

DEVELOPMENT

Last August Christoph Büchel arrived in North Adams for a site visit and immediately set out to work on building a scale model of the gallery in order to finalize the plan he proposed months earlier. Christoph had presented the curator, Nato Thompson and the museum director Joe Thompson a cohesive proposal for his solo exhibition slated to open in Building 5 at Mass MoCA in mid-December.

Everyone was incredibly enthusiastic about "Training Camp for Democracy" and it was agreed that it was a massive installation requiring a significant amount of energy in research, compiling of elements and a labor-intensive build-out. The museum agreed to the proposal and the artist began to map out the installation months before. He left North Adams having given the museum a thorough checklist with all the key items they will need to organize and purchase and a clear plan of action. The scope and scale of the installation was clearly defined. Several lists and instructions were given to the museum in advance so they could be prepared for CB'S visit later that fall

The first and most important demand was that Christoph would not move forward without 3 assistants from Switzerland – who were crucial to the realization of CB's instal-

lation. These are his assistants who had worked on several of his other labor intensive installations and have the most technical and logistical knowledge of the work – as well as able to understand and execute CB’s vision. Originally the museum offered a meager salary to the assistants (1000\$ dollars for one assistant for seven weeks of work, the two others were not to be paid). When the museum finally agreed to pay their proper salaries, they only ended up requesting that the NY gallery front the money. The artist was never notified of this and was only made aware of this when a “confidential budget” was finally released in early January to his European gallerist, after the show was postponed.

The museum had no intention of paying the salaries of these assistants – who ended up working 45 days straight – at least 10 hours a day.

Secondly, in order to realize an exhibition the scale and scope of “Training Camp for Democracy”, a serious schedule had to be prepared and adhered to. This is where Mass MoCA failed in everyway. The deinstallation of the Carsten Holler show was delayed by three weeks. Seriously pushing back the start date of CB’s construction. The museum failed to have several key elements ready by the time the artist arrived ready to work. The museum delayed the purchase of key items that CB had approved and selected – thereby losing some of these elements.

The schedule was plagued by the delay of the deinstallation of the Holler show, which caused a chain reaction of delays. The museum decided to add a large gate that would be installed in Building 5 to facilitate the movement of works into the space. It was agreed that this was a cost absorbed by the museum as it is something they would use in the future due to the ambitious nature of the artworks installed in Building 5, but later the cost for the gate (\$45,000) was listed in the “confidential budget” – adding its cost to the overall production of CB’s installation. The gate’s installation was extremely delayed – preventing the large-scale elements to be moved in a timely fashion. And then there were the holiday delays. Thanksgiving interrupted the workflow significantly. At this point Christoph alerted the museum and began discussing postponing the exhibition. The museum proved time and time again, that they could not finish in time, yet they

were pressing ahead with the original opening date of December 16.

The cinema, that the museum technicians were building – took longer then expected to construct and dismantle from its original site to be moved and reinstalled into Büchel’s exhibition– as the museum ignored the artists instructions which would have saved time and money. Before the proposed opening date (Dec 16) the cinema was nowhere complete in its reinstallation. And even today the cinema component of the installation is not finished – three months after the original opening date. Additionally there are several key structural elements that have not even been organized.

By December 16th – the original opening date of the show, the house, a major element of the installation was not even moved into Building 5. Needless to say that the house, which was cut into four parts in order to enter the building, needed a significant amount of time and labor in being appropriately reassembled and the interior dressed. Here is another example where the museum did not listen to Christoph’s concerns of advice. Firstly, this is not the house that Christoph selected. North Adams is littered with abandoned homes, which are condemned and could have been donated to the museum or acquired cheaply way ahead of Christoph’s arrival. Indeed Christoph selected from the two housing options he was offered after he had to pressure the museum into finding this important element. The one house was free and had even a whole interior, which could have being used, but the museum insisted that they would not be able to move it into the museum – yet Christoph had a cheap and realistic solution to this. This house was smaller and easier to reassemble then the house that Mass MoCA bought including the lot for \$63,000 – with transport and rigging the price of the house was augmented to 98,000. This final price of course does not include the addition of sprinklers and dressing the interior. The purchase of this house gauged a significant part of Büchel’s budget without any concern to Christoph’s protest. And even still the contractors who dismantled house (that Mass MoCA spent precious budget money on) still managed to ignore Christoph’s instructions, cutting the house incorrectly resulting in a more labor-intensive re-installation.

The museum, repeatedly ignored Christoph's expertise and advice on several issues, which ended up costing the museum valuable time as well as money – thereby affecting the budget significantly. In most cases the work that the museum technicians made had to be redone several times. For example, the technique used to build the end wall of the cinema (a cinder block wall measuring 53 feet across) had to be negotiated several times resulting in the moving of a huge scaffolding four times. In addition the museum spent money on brand new security doors for the cinema, which were already dismantled from the old cinema for free. These free doors would have been fine and would have saved thousands of dollars.

Certain elements, for example, a mobile home Christoph had selected was not purchased. The museum ended up saving a few hundred dollars on a purchasing a cheaper option of mobile home that was not approved by the artist. The museum technicians spent energy and monies dismantling the structure, only to end up rendering the mobile home unusable for the installation. This mobile home ended up being sent back, since it did not even fit through the museum's recently constructed gate. No one had bothered to measure this mobile home to see if it would even fit into the museum. In the end the original mobile home the artist selected was then purchased – only after time, money and energy had been exhausted. This is one example of several as to how the museum proved to ignore the artist and mismanage a budget.

The budget for "Training Camp for Democracy" was never clear. The museum only mentioned after the installation was fully underway the costs of adding sprinklers – that would deduct from an already diminished budget. The budget issues at an early stage threaten to jeopardize the completion of the project. Early on the artist alerted the museum that they had to fundraise more and gave useful solutions to save money and even suggested how to incorporate transport subsidies into production costs. The museum had not really fundraised for a project that they were well aware was costly, not only in materials but more so in labor. They did not approach the installation resourcefully, as they had not looked for cheaper alternatives, and seek more free options for many of the materials.

Christoph, who has been making exhibitions since 1988, has made several of these labor-intensive sprawling installations, – he has the knowledge of how it works and how one is able to find and purchase many materials inexpensively and in most cases for free. The museum had employed its curator and one curatorial assistant to find and purchase materials – they proved to be unable to be organized and systematic, thereby assembling items that could not be used. They paid no attention to the detail and instructions the artist carefully assigned.

The project was only given a project manager at the last minute on December 15th – in fact, after the original opening date of December 16 was postponed. It is impossible to organize and realize an exhibition such as this without a foreman or one person in charge. A project manager would have controlled the situation and kept up with the daily punch-lists and overseen the schedule. The museum was so poorly equipped that in the beginning of the exhibition's installation the job of project manager was assigned to the curator, Nato Thompson. As he proved ill equipped at this task, Joe Thompson, the director of the museum assumed this role. All CB needed was one person, full-time dedicated to this job – not a curator or museum director who could only partially supervise due to their other responsibilities in the museum.

The institution proved not to be capable – neither logistically, neither schedule- nor budget-wise to manage the project. The biggest disappointment was that the curator director and head technician did not understand the work or believed enough in the artist to allow him to manage his own installation. The artist had to constantly negotiate over every detail. The museum treated the project as though it was the artist's wish list for Christmas, eliminating necessary and key elements that were always listed as part of the artwork from the beginning. The museum acted, as they knew more about the artist's vision than the artist himself. This is indeed ironic since neither the curator of the exhibition or museum director ever saw his exhibition in London, which was on view from six months – opening in September and closing recently. This exhibition was the closest in scale to Mass MoCA's proposed installation – has the museum responsible seen this exhibition, they would have been more familiar with the way in which the artist works – and his attention to detail. It was

as though the curator and director knew nothing of the artist's work.

Christoph left for the Christmas holidays after he and his assistants worked for more than 45 days frustrated and defeated by a contentious situation in which the museum technicians and Christoph were not working harmoniously and a museum that was not supporting the realization of a major installation – not just in scope and scale but conceptually, politically and art historically. Before the artist left it was agreed that the exhibition would be postponed until the 3rd of March thereby compelling the artist to cancel a major solo show at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in order to focus on Mass MoCA.

The director made this agreement knowing full well but not admitting that there were not enough funds left to continue the project and open by the March deadline. As it turns out now CB could have done the show in Paris with his assistants – and he would of at least completed an exhibition as the status of "Training Camp..." remains in limbo.