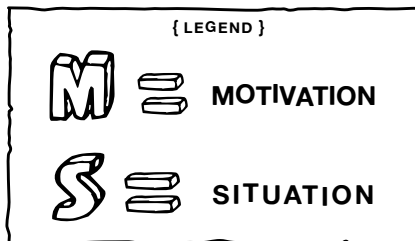


GROWING RADISHES WITH 30 FAMILIES

Tried & tested in Kyoto in spring 2009 by Markuz Wernli Saitô



How to Create the Situation: About This Zine

By Jennifer Delos Reyes and Kerri-Lynn Reeves

The Create The Situation series of artist zines brings to mind the Yippie slogan “Create the condition you describe”. Inspired by that popular saying, these zines have been instigated to encourage acts of creative activism in daily life.

Create the Situation cultivates creative activism and a sense of community spirit through a series of short run publications that invite artists to re-think how they interact with their city and invite readers to do the same. These publications ask readers to go out and engage with the city and it’s inhabitants in potentially unexpected ways.

These zines will list ideas for how to engage with not only one’s neighbors, but with the institutions and infrastructures of the city in unexpected ways. Suggestions include ways to use your local library, music stores, art galleries, and parks as well as ways to engage with people in your community.

Create the Situation is intended to inspire people to take these actions into their own hands, to create not only engaged artists, activists and other creative types, but ultimately to create engaged citizens.



Create The Situation is organized by Jen Delos Reyes and Kerri-Lynn Reeves.

For more issues of Create the Situation or to become a contributor please visit www.createthesituation.org



Working with existing resources means to grow radishes with people and materials already present and bring them into a playful experiment.



Initially I wanted to grow my own food while overcoming the lack of space for any type of gardening at my house.



Together with two friends of mine I asked 50 persons in town to grow radish seeds for me while providing all necessary support: 30 families signed on.



Crucial for finding and retaining radish adopters was to make the project enticing (by miracle of growing a plant) while clarifying the accompanying responsibility and commitment upfront.



M: I wondered if and how participants would keep a promise and on what level they would commit themselves to this project.

S: The gift of radish seeds came attached with three simple rules: grow them at your house, provide them with moderate water and sunlight, and allow me visit them once a week (for support).



More often than not, the growing of radishes turned into a family affair where every member of the adopter's household got engaged in one way or another.



It is fairly exceptional to be invited into a home in Japan where there is usually a rigid distinction between one's public and private sphere.



My weekly house visits nurtured the consciousness among the participants of being part of something bigger that reaches beyond their everyday life.



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people from teacher to textile dyer were bound to the same, networked venture: growing five radishes from seed to pickled vegetable.



M: I feel alive when bringing very different people from various walks of life into the same activity who otherwise aren't likely to meet each other.

S: With friends of mine I went to the park, the waterfront and a shopping zone to approach people who represent the diversity of the city.



Collectively-homegrown, UV-sensitive, pickled radishes were shown in an illuminated installation of jars between dusk and dawn in front of the artist's house.



M: Every group activity gains more meaning when the closed, participatory circuit is opened up to the public.

S: We arranged jars filled with radish pickles and photographs with christmas lights and invited foodies, farmers, friends and media folk – and all they came.



Sharing food never tasted better than with homegrown radishes flavored by the mastered challenges and personal anecdotes of small-scale, urban farming.



M: By utilizing pre-existing resources I am interested in the cycle of exchanges that derives from and dissolves into this nothingness which is full of potential.

S: At the final pickle eating party, participants met for the first time to indulge in their homegrown produce (over whole-wheat bread and butter) and share their experiences.



FOR
NUMBER
LOVERS:



Over the project's seven week period, the artist made 182 home visits with the radish growers and spent a total of about 80 hours (for continued gardening support). Logistically this necessitated roughly 850 bicycle miles to reach them. The radish adopters spent approximately 400 hours (or 15 min. per day) to help raise a total of 200 seeds. During the course of the project 4 seeds allegedly ended up in a bird's stomach while most of the insectized-free radish leaves became part of the food chain for lice, slugs or belt maggots. During the project, two radish growers moved together with the adopted crop to a new home.

CONTRIBUTORS BIOGRAPHY: Markuz Wernli Saitô is an artist without studio and a curator without gallery. As the initiator of *Garbage Men's Appreciation Day*, the *Annual Payphone Memorial* or city-wide *Canal Walking Tours*, he works in social mechanics and is experimenting with free-form, engaging processes in the public sphere. Markuz was born in Switzerland where he didn't become an alpine micro farmer (which could have been a great career choice he believes) and currently lives alternatively in Kyoto and Berlin where he aims to increase agricultural and artistic self-sufficiency.

Markuz is grateful for his fantastic support team including Mie Matsuoka, Makiko Hori, Yuka Saitô and Tagaki-san who helped find shelter for homeless radishes with the 30 incredibly dedicated Kyoto citizens.

