



Princess Margriet Award



Jury motivation

18 March 2014

Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear laureates.

Tonight we honour the work of Teatro Valle Occupato and Teodor Celakoski. Their cultural activism – always experimental, always dynamic – emanate from their critical views on the most urgent social and political aspects of our contemporary life. Their work vividly asserts that the public space is about much more than making publicity and excessive profits. It draws us towards an exciting new horizon for democracy and what is called ‘the commons’ – that is the way of coming together to co-create and co-produce the world we want to see.

Both of this year’s laureates show us how shared forms of action – from within and beyond the sphere of culture – can inspire us all to become more directly involved in the political decisionmaking that shape our lives. And in a wider context of European crisis and austerity, they show us how culture can animate the public sphere.

Teatro Valle Occupato saved Italy’s oldest theatre from an uncertain future by occupying it. The combined intellectual and creative energy of the performers, directors, technicians and citizens has transformed the space into one of Europe’s most ground-breaking cultural venues. The group focuses on keeping this theatre in the heart of Rome alive and open to all. It does so by running this theater by using non-

hierarchical decision-making to ensure greater democratic participation. Its example, which is inspiring similar (cultural) initiatives across Europe, demonstrates that the production and sharing of culture is a right and can be a resource accessible to all. The jury has chosen to award the European Cultural Foundation Princess Margriet Award to Teatro Valle Occupato in recognition of its vital and far-reaching efforts in making culture a space for all, where culture becomes a (democratic) process that produces new values and forms of social life.

Guided by the idea that culture can be an agent for socio-political transformation, Zagreb-based **Teodor Celakoski** has mobilised a broad range of citizens to explore new forms of public action around common political and cultural concerns. For Teodor, culture isn't some alternative scene that operates on the margins of society; rather, it is capable of changing social landscape, when it commits itself to long, complex, multilayered and often performative processes of building public life with not only artists or cultural workers, but also all citizens empowered to think that no one else can claim, make and be the public but them. Among Teodor's key initiatives are the Multimedia Institute with its cultural center MaMa as a junction of various communities focusing on digital culture, human rights and critical theory; Clubture, a collaborative platform which connects independent cultural organisations in Croatia; and Right to the City (Pravo na Grad), an alliance which engages citizens and communities in fighting against the privatisation of common and public goods. Always working alongside his equally devoted peers, Celakoski stands out as a nodal figure in shaping Croatia's independent cultural scene – someone who, in the art of building networks, platforms and connections, shows us how civic action really does matter.

These times of austerity emphasise what is scarce, yet the possibilities of creation are abundant. Teatro Valle Occupato and Teodor Celakoski have brought new political imagination creatively to the fore in a way

that enables artistic and community life to flourish. Here in Europe, where the conditions of creative labour are becoming ever more precarious, they create room to manoeuvre, a space in which to have dialogue to question of the dominant regimes of thought and power.

And to conclude, fellow Jury member Chris Dercon cannot be with us today, and therefore we would like to share with you his added reflection:

The term cultural participation is related to cultivation, which expresses directly the idea of improving what is currently there. In countries and cities where cultural participation is the highest, citizens are the happiest and healthiest. Indeed, cultural goods are not just things, but social processes depending on local situations: expressing how we are together, in the sense of "I care". Cultural goods are therefore exceptional and easy to distinguish from other goods, because of the intricate conversations that make them cultural goods. The cultural participation and the cultural goods that Teatro Valle Occupato and Teodor Celakoski stand for are exactly that: without culture we have even less!