

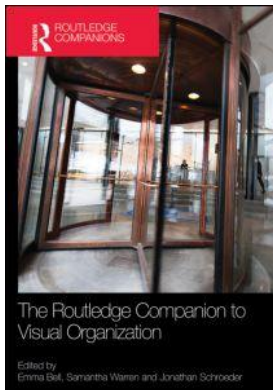
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## **The Routledge Companion to Visual Organization**

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### **Arts-based interventions and organizational development**

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## Part IV

# Visual identities and practices

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# Arts-based interventions and organizational development

## It's what you don't see

*Ariane Berthoin Antal, Steven S. Taylor and Donna Ladkin*

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Recent years have witnessed a flurry of experimentation with processes that bring people, products and practices from the world of the arts into organizations of all kinds around the world (Darsø 2004; Berthoin Antal 2009; Laaksonen 2011; Schiuma 2011). The primary drivers behind these experiments with artistic interventions are a sense that there is an urgent need for new and innovative ways of developing organizations and that, through their ability to engage emotional and aesthetic ways of knowing, the arts can stimulate individual and collective learning and change (Schumpeter 2011; Taylor and Ladkin 2009; Strati 2010). The objective of this chapter is to explore the connections between the values and practices of organizational development<sup>1</sup> (OD), and those characterizing the emerging field of artistic interventions in organizations (sometimes also called arts-based initiatives (Schiuma 2011) or workarts (Barry and Meisiek 2010)). In doing so, the chapter demonstrates that both approaches enable assumptions and values to be revealed and thus worked with in explicit ways. However, the chapter also shows that artistic interventions can run the risk of allowing vital values and assumptions to remain invisible, and thus they may not fully realize their potential power as catalysts for change in organizations.

Our argument begins with a brief explication of the history of OD and the forces that have shaped its practices to set the scene for examining how artistic interventions have come to play a role within organization change initiatives. We then present two specific instances of such interventions in order to illustrate the ways visible and invisible aspects of their design and execution contribute to their eventual impact. Our analysis of the examples positions the visible artefacts as vehicles with which the participants – and we researchers – can gain access to the invisible features that play themselves out at the workplace: the values, diversity of interests and power dynamics. The chapter ends by discussing the implications of these examples for the stakeholders engaged in artistic interventions to more explicitly consider issues of transparency, visibility and invisibility in their design and enactment.

### **The values of OD**

Given the strong similarities in the values that drove the birth of the OD movement and the humanistic values associated with the arts, today's artistic interventions in organizations might

be considered a direct descendant, even a love-child, of OD pioneers. Art Kleiner (1996) characterized the beginnings of the OD movement in the late 1940s and 1950s as 'The Age of Heretics', because the founding generation dared to challenge the dominant views of organization and relations at work. David Jamieson and Christopher Worley summarize the context and the resultant aspirations succinctly:

The practice of OD is more than 50 years old. Before World War II, organizations typically operated on principles of mechanistic and bureaucratic system, including authority and obedience, division of labor, hierarchical supervision, formalized procedures and rules, and impersonality (and many still do). After the war, increasing interest in social change, attitudes about democracy, and self-actualization brought distinctly different values that were a counterforce to the extant organizational values in use. OD grew in popularity by offering a more holistic view of people and organizations, with an emphasis on humanistic and democratic values and the belief that this different perspective was better not only for people but also for organization performance.

(2008: 100)

The theory and practice of OD have not stood still since the inception of the field, spawning new approaches and intense debates about which features to keep or shed in light of changes in the socio-economic context and under the influence of ideas from scholars of human and organizational behaviour (Cummings 2008; Kegan 1971; Quinn and Sonenshein 2008). In 'second generation' OD (French and Bell 1999: 46), there has been a focus on organizational transformation, with interest in such areas as total quality management (TQM) and quality of working life (QWL), organizational culture, organizational learning, systems thinking, visioning and appreciative enquiry (French and Bell 1999: 46–50). One of the characteristics that the newer practices share is that 'instead of attempting to solely leverage techno-structural or human processes for change, they implicitly focus on meaning making, language and "discursive phenomena" as the central medium and target for changing mindsets and consciousness' (Marshak and Grant 2008: S11). In other words, a key informing principle of the OD field overall has been the commitment to render invisible forces within organizations, i.e. 'meaning-making', 'assumptions' and 'values', visible through processes that enable people within organizations to give voice to them. Newton Margulies and Anthony Raia enumerate those values particularly clearly:

1. Providing opportunities for people to function as human beings rather than as resources in the productive process.
2. Providing opportunities for each organization member, as well as for the organization itself, to develop to his full potential.
3. Seeking to increase the effectiveness of the organization in terms of all of its goals.
4. Attempting to create an environment in which it is possible to find exciting and challenging work.
5. Providing opportunities for people in organizations to influence the way in which they relate to work, the organization, and the environment.
6. Treating each human being as a person with a complex set of needs, all of which are important in his work and in his life.

(1972: 3)

In summary, the field of OD has matured and continues to spawn new ways of enabling learning and change in organizations. The humanistic values from the founding generation still inform the aspirations of many practitioners, impacting on how they undertake interventions. However, there are a number of pressures on the field and its ability to adhere to its founding principles. For instance, there is increasing demand for a stronger bottom-line orientation than at its outset. And, of course, there is often a demand for newness – the latest and greatest – which currently may be artistic interventions.

## Artistic interventions in organizations

Large and small companies, as well as public sector and non-governmental organizations, are drawing on all forms of art – visual, performing, literary – as central features of interventions lasting a few hours, a couple of days, several months, or sometimes even years (for overviews, see Berthoin Antal 2009; Biehl-Missal 2011; Darsø 2004; Schnugg 2010). They entail bringing ‘people, practices and products from the world of the arts into the world of organisations’ with a more or less explicit orientation to stimulating collaborative learning processes (Berthoin Antal 2009: 4). In addition to these artistic interventions in organizations, there is also extensive use of the arts for individual training and development (Taylor and Ladkin 2009) as well as corporate art collections (Barry and Meisiek 2010). However, we limit our focus here to artistic interventions that seek to engage the larger organization much in the way OD efforts have.

It is important to point out a key distinction between the drivers of the OD movement and those involved with bringing artistic interventions into organizational settings. The founders of OD were largely academics with a strong interest in practice,<sup>2</sup> whereas a range of people, including artists, managers, intermediaries and policymakers, have been instrumental in bringing arts-based processes into organizations. Each of these different contributors has a particular reasoning and starting point for engaging in this work (Berthoin Antal 2009, 2011, forthcoming). What is interesting for our purposes here is to notice how those different, invisible agendas impact on the visible interventions they bring into organizational contexts.

The most visible interests on the agenda are those of the managers who invite artists into organizations. They have various motives for doing so, particularly developing creativity, communication and leadership skills of employees at various levels of the organization. Some managers may have no particular objective, but rather an open learning approach like ‘let’s see what happens’ (Berthoin Antal 2012).

The artists who engage in artistic interventions do so for many reasons: some see in organizations the material and space with which to create art; others want to offer their skills to develop employees’ creativity and communication skills and by doing so enhance an organization’s capacity for innovation; some artists have socio-political motives and work in organizations in order to influence society more generally (Berthoin Antal 2009).

Of course, employees are intimately involved with the realization of artistic interventions but their interests remain largely invisible, having received little attention from research or from management. They are not positioned as drivers of the field, nor (to our knowledge) asked in advance whether they would like to participate in the process.<sup>3</sup> Their participation in interventions is sometimes mandatory (for example, when an intervention is designed for a specific unit, a whole organization, or a particular level of employees in an organization), and in other cases participation is (at least officially) voluntary. Depending on the art form and the method chosen by the artist and/or the provider, employees are sometimes involved in co-designing and

running an intervention that management has chosen, and they are typically, but not always, asked after the fact how they felt about the experience.

Another set of actors with visible interests are the intermediaries, whose business it is to link the world of the arts with the world of organizations (such as TILLT in Sweden, Conexiones improbables in Spain and Interact in the UK (see Berthoin Antal 2011, 2012)), as well as the consulting companies that are enriching their services by involving artists in their change projects (such as KGD Kronberg in Germany and Ashridge Consulting in the UK).

An increasingly active stakeholder in the field are policymakers, who are discovering artistic interventions in organizations as potential sources of stimulation for innovation and competitiveness at the local, national and European level. They are pressing intermediaries to provide evidence of the effectiveness of artistic interventions, with the aim of persuading more managers to use them and to legitimize the use of public funds to support them.

We now turn to two specific artistic interventions in organizations to show some of the differences in values that this diversity of stakeholders and interests produces. In particular, we attend to the way invisible values become more visible through the way in which interventions unfold in practice. The first is the case of a theatre company hired for half a day by a CEO to work with employees on how the organization could better live its values. The second is a year-long ‘artist-in-residence’<sup>4</sup> project in a manufacturing company, accompanied by an intermediary organization. Neither of the two cases was explicitly positioned as an OD project, although both could have made that claim.

## A theatrical intervention

The CEO of a medium-sized French company in a knowledge-based industry wanted to address how the members of the organization could better live their values around diversity. He contacted a theatre company that specializes in artistic interventions, and, after briefing the director, provided him with the names and phone numbers of ten employees to call about their experiences in the organization. The way in which their responses would be used was not disclosed to those interviewed, in fact they were (mis)led to believe the interviews would be used for marketing purposes. He also arranged with the works council to use two-thirds of a day during an off-site event. Members of the theatre company developed scripts that encapsulated the preferred ways of enacting a more tolerant handling of diversity issues within the company, for which they drew on their knowledge of the subject in general, the outcomes of their interviews with employees, and additional input from the CEO. All the employees were required to attend the off-site event, but none knew what was planned for the day. The idea was to surprise the employees with an engaging way of addressing the serious matter of diversity in the workplace.

The off-site day opened with a brief introduction by the CEO, who then handed over the floor to the ‘experts in diversity’. The employees soon realized that the speakers were actors and they started recognizing details about their own organization in the scene, which they found surprising and amusing. The introductory session was followed by a series of exercises that the actors led in small mixed groups, which the CEO had designated. The employees talked about their experiences at work with various aspects of diversity (gender, age, profession, class, country, etc.), from which they created sketches under the guidance of the actors. After lunch, the groups performed their sketches for the plenary. Not everybody had to play a role, but those who did act had to take a role that was unlike their normal position in the organization (e.g. the CEO played a secretary). At the end of the afternoon, the artists left and the CEO and the director of the supervisory board spoke to the employees. The CEO presented the

organization's values in a new format and gave every employee a personally engraved wooden box with the values in a little booklet. He illustrated what he meant by living the values with examples of situations in which he had recently acted inappropriately and situations in which employees had behaved in keeping with the values.

It is interesting to note the number of 'invisible' aspects of the organization that were rendered 'visible' through this intervention. First, the desired way of dealing with diversity issues was given a physical, visible form that people could observe. Its power was perhaps accentuated by its genesis from their own (until that moment) organizationally hidden viewpoints. The CEO's disclosures provided a material touchstone by which employees could compare their own behaviours with his. Finally, the small wooden box engraved with the company's values provided a material artefact upon which employees could reflect on an ongoing basis.

Interviews with the CEO, the director of the theatre company, and with numerous employees from different departments over the course of the following months revealed diverse thoughts and feelings about the experience as a learning event.<sup>5</sup> Most employees in the first round of interviews (several weeks after the event) were very enthusiastic: they had learned a lot about different ways their colleagues experienced things in the organization, the acting was daunting for some, but fun for others, and many mentioned how impressed they were with the untapped acting skills they had discovered among their colleagues. Many specifically mentioned how positively surprised they had been by the CEO participating alongside them and playing the role of secretary, which showed a human side they had not yet seen in him. Most people said that the speeches at the end of the day had been clear and they remembered the values. Only a few critical voices emerged in the first round of interviews, mostly around the perceived risk of acting in front of everyone in the organization, particularly in front of management, because acting engages the entire body, revealing the whole person.

Over the following months, repeated rounds of interviews with employees, sometimes including people from earlier rounds, revealed a gradual shift towards more critical perspectives on the experience. Nevertheless, positive responses dominated. A year later, employees remembered the fun and innovative aspects of the event. The little wooden boxes were visible in many people's offices. Employees still referred to the surprisingly human participation of the CEO in the role play. The CEO reflected that the shared experience of that off-site event had probably been a significant factor in the ability of the organization to collectively deal emotionally with a very serious accident that occurred during the year. Employees commented that his response to that event had been very caring.

Let us contrast this example of a short theatre-based artistic intervention with a longer intervention, in which interactions between the 'visible' and the 'invisible' are apparent and play important roles in the way in which the event was experienced.

### Artist-in-residence<sup>6</sup>

The head of human resources for Scandinavia in a company that produces insulation materials was quite sceptical when he first heard about TILLT's year-long programme bringing an artist to work on an organization's challenges with employees.<sup>7</sup> But the presentation by the director of TILLT (a former dancer) was infectiously enthusiastic, and the very fact that it was an unusual method triggered him to take the idea seriously. Together with the other members of the board, and with the agreement of the unions, he formulated the objectives for the residency:

- increase knowledge and pride in being in an environmental company;
- increase pride in own work;



- increase cooperation across the board in the company;
- facilitate organizational and leadership development;
- increase innovation.

The employees were initially as sceptical about the idea of working with an artist as the human resource manager had been when he first heard about it. One of the employees who became a leader of the project remembered having been so irritated and bored by the idea that he had fallen asleep during the management's presentation of the project. However, he was struck that, when the artist entered the meeting, her energy changed the space and alerted people to the sense that something new and different could happen.

The artist started off in April by visiting all departments and all shifts. The project team put up special noticeboards for the project and idea boxes all around the factory. The project group then decided which to deal with. Among the proposed projects that they got off the ground before the summer were a documentation of work at the factory with photographs of employees, recording sounds in the factory, a competition for photography, short stories and poems.

After the summer vacation, there were kickoff events in a special tent. The idea was to bring people together from different parts of the plant not only to learn about the objectives and the action plan but also to engage with each other in new ways, initiated by the artist. One of the key problems facing this site was how to encourage employees from two different companies to work together after they had been merged as part of an acquisition. Employees who had competed against each other for generations were now expected to work together. Resentment dominated as employees from the two former companies refused to interact together at work, let alone cooperate.

The kickoff exercises involved a lot of physical contact – the artist felt it was important to break the ice and to get people to have fun at work. Everyone in the company participated in these kickoff events in groups of 40. Employees reported that the impact was powerful. 'Imagine, some had not even shaken hands in over 30 years, but you can't walk past anyone any more in the company and pretend they are not there after you have been cheek to cheek with them!'

The human resource manager and the employees interviewed agreed that this project got conversations going between the two plants on the site that had not been possible beforehand – 'people can now address issues that had not been discussable before' – including sharing shift work.

What was the role of the artist? An employee remembered that the artist had presented herself as a 'cultural project catalyst'. Most of the ideas for activities in the project came from the employees, but they all stressed that 'she was the energy'. One of them explained: 'We've been here for many years, we know the routines. We know how the collective mind works. We needed someone to open the box, even throw the box away.' The artist in this case, as in most other TILLT projects, does not create art in the process, she 'brings in my artistic way of working and my artistic energy'. One way of thinking about what the artist contributed is that, through her very way of being, she demonstrated the possibility of acting differently – with enthusiasm and vitality. As an intermediary person from TILLT explained, 'I see the artists as "the sand and oil in the machine" – it is important that they do both, and sometimes I have to push them to be more of the sand.' By her way of being in the world, the artist showed people how to be more of the 'sand' and 'oil'.

Looking back at the process and its outcomes, the artist's ambition to get 55 employees involved had not been completely met. As with any change initiative, there were a variety

of reactions in assessing its impact. Some members of the project team felt that top management had not exhibited a degree of visibility that would have indicated the project to be of high priority. Others, however, felt that the fact the project had started top-down had impeded buy-in from other employees, particularly because there were other top-down projects running at the same time.

In retrospect, the employees saw that it had been helpful for the organization, but at the time they had not felt that it made their work easier in the change process. Overall, they agreed with the human resource manager that a significant cultural shift had happened on the site over the course of the year. A forklift operator was particularly eloquent in expressing what the artistic intervention project had offered the organization: ‘Culture is what we do as humans that enriches our lives. We come to work to get the salary that allows us to lead our lives. We do our work, we take pride in it – why not enrich our lives at work too? We wanted to mix the worlds of work, which is cold, structured, in which we spend our days and the world of culture in which we spend our free time, which is human.’

Employees had plans to continue developing some of the creative projects that had been launched during the artistic intervention, and the company was looking into initiating projects in more sites in future.

The human resource manager was reluctant to attribute organizational effects directly to the artistic intervention, pointing out that many other activities had been undertaken during the same year. But he had been struck by the fact that the auditors had reported a significant shift in the way employees responded to their visit on site, showing much more interest and willingness to talk about their work than they had before the artistic intervention. Also, an increase of 24 per cent in efficiency in production had been recorded in this period. Lastly, he mentioned that the project had generated quite a bit of media interest in the company, which had not been an objective but that feedback had served to encourage people that they were doing something interesting.

In summary, this artistic intervention was intended to support a complex organizational change process on a production site, into which the artist brought energy that stimulated new ways of thinking and behaving. This intervention was effective at revealing and releasing pent-up, ‘invisible’ resentments, which had had a detrimental effect on people’s working relationships, thus allowing them to work more collaboratively. The arts-based approach offers an additional dimension that reaches beyond traditional OD interventions: the artist’s energy itself made visible an alternative approach to engaging with difficult issues within the company, providing material evidence that a different way was indeed possible. This energetic enactment seemed to create a lasting impression on employees at the company, as they remembered the way in which she seemed to catalyse them into a different way of engaging with their work and one another.

## Discussion of the cases

These two examples are very different and thereby are characteristic of the field of artistic interventions in the sense that there are no ‘typical’ interventions. In the first case, the short intervention was managed by the CEO without the help of an intermediary. The artists left the scene after delivering their services and the transition from the artistic intervention to the presentation by management was seamless. In the second, the artist engaged with the organization over a year-long learning process and was supported by an experienced intermediary (TILLT). The extent to which the humanistic values specified above (Margulies and Raia 1972: 3) were lived up to in the cases differs significantly. In both organizations, the senior management made

great efforts to make the artistic intervention happen and they evidently cared about their employees and their welfare in the organization. However, in one organization, the lack of transparency and of organized reflection on the experience contradicts the key values of OD, whereas the process in the other organization gave employees ample space to shape the intervention according to their needs and interests.

In neither case did management arrange for formal evaluations to assess the impact of the artistic intervention, but, in both cases, significant positive effects were mentioned in subsequent interviews with management and employees. These included unexpected side effects such as the enhanced ability of the CEO and other organizational members to deal with an accident, and the auditors' report of finding employees much more forthcoming in talking about their work in the company. In the first case, the manager seemed unaware of employees' concerns about the process and its effects. In the second case, there was open discussion in which employees expressed both agreement and disagreement with the perspective of management and management appeared to take those views on board. This observation may arise from the different contexts in which each case is set: one a production facility in a relatively egalitarian society; the other a knowledge-based company in a relatively hierarchical culture. In neither case did management, the employees or the artists seek to challenge the organizational power structure. However, in both cases, the employees felt that they had been able to say and do things that were not normally addressed or expected in the organizational culture. Furthermore, in the second case, the artistic intervention stimulated not only employees but also the plant managers from the previously competing companies to meet and talk in ways they had not previously done, thereby dismantling a power blockage that had affected the entire organization.

## Opportunities and challenges ahead

The cases described here illustrate how artistic interventions in organizations can be used for organizational development even without the input of OD specialists in their design or realization. The effectiveness of both cases may lie in the activation of two of the potential advantages of working with the arts that Elliot Eisner has identified: 'through art we come to feel, very often, what we cannot see directly' (2008: 8) and 'images rendered in artistically expressive form often generate a kind of empathy that makes action possible' (ibid.: 11). In both cases, the employees discovered features of their colleagues (creativity, humanity) that they had not seen before, and the experience spurred them on to undertake interactions in the organization that they had not envisaged earlier.

Nevertheless, the cases are not unqualified OD successes and they help to specify some of the challenges in the field of artistic interventions relating specifically to the issues of what is and is not made visible. The theatre example, in particular, is problematic, namely the CEO's secretive approach that the artists colluded with and the lack of reflection in and on the process. There is in the field a naive temptation to assume that, because the arts are 'a way of enriching our awareness and expanding our humanity' (Eisner 2008: 11), artistic interventions will automatically operate in organizations according to the humanistic principles that underpin the field of OD (Margulies and Raia 1972: 3). However, we would argue that, because OD has had its genesis in a relatively coherent body of humanistically based philosophy, the way in which these interventions become embodied, that is, the way in which they take visible form, are more likely to reflect these humanistic principles. The field of OD has matured over decades, with training programmes and publications that have developed a body of thought and expertise in systemic intervention processes and roles. By contrast, there is no coherence among the myriad

of stakeholders engaging in artistic interventions, so a similar set of values cannot be drawn up to guide them. Formulating an explicit shared set of values would, in fact, undermine the potential inherent in the arts because the advantage of bringing in artists lies in their difference from the world of organizations. They have the potential to provide ‘a fresh perspective so that our old habits of mind do not dominate our reactions with stock response ... and new ways with which to perceive and interpret the world, ways that make vivid realities that would otherwise go unknown’ (Eisner 2008: 11).

The challenge for the stakeholders of artistic interventions lies in surfacing and grappling with the tensions between values and interests in organizations in new ways, rather than naively overlooking them or instrumentally suppressing them. This is not easy because one of the desired features of engaging with the arts is a temporary suspension of critical thinking and judgement, in order to enable employees to break free of routine ways of seeing and doing things in the organization and ‘take a ride on the wings that art forms provide: the arts are ways to get a natural high’ (Eisner 2008: 3–4). Suspending judgement and enacting or reflecting conflicting values is in general not a problem for art that is done within the art world. In fact, part of the power of art comes from its ability to make visible and hold seemingly contradictory elements. But the theatrical intervention case illustrates that, when artists move out of their world and into organizations, power and conflicting values may be masked rather than revealed (see also Clark and Mangham 2004). In the absence of an organized process of reflection, the contradiction between working on values of diversity and ending the day with a top-down presentation on a fixed set of organizational values remained unaddressed. Support from an intermediary who could have bridged between the world of the arts and the world of organizations might have made this problem visible and addressable.

The demand for novel approaches to developing organizations appears to be growing. Although artistic interventions are not positioned as OD, there are significant overlaps between the two and those initiating artistic interventions could benefit from the knowledge of the OD field. In particular, an awareness of critical discussion about the humanist values around transparency and engagement inherent to OD might appropriately inform arts-based work. Such an awareness, for instance, might have prompted the theatre company working with the first organization illustrated here to rethink its willingness to obfuscate the purpose of the initial interviews it carried out (or perhaps problematize that aspect of the process in their performance if that was part of their agenda as artists). It is impossible to know if a more transparent approach to how that intervention was established would have made a significant difference to the way in which it was experienced, but OD theory would suggest coherence in such matters is vital.

Transparency and enacting values in the process become even more important when the pressure on organizations to provide evidence of the cost-effectiveness of their activities is high. Obviously – or paradoxically – such pressure may be particularly high in areas that appear ‘soft and fuzzy’ and difficult to assess, such as artistic interventions. OD practitioners have been observing this trend towards a stronger orientation to the bottom line, some welcoming it (e.g. Burke 2008: 19) and others criticizing it (French and Bell 1999). The lack of exposure to the discourse about this issue among the stakeholders of artistic interventions leaves them ill prepared to deal with it. They may unwittingly fall into the trap identified by Mats Alvesson (1982) for OD, namely presenting the objectives of efficiency and humanization as completely compatible rather than making visible where they diverge and where choices need to be made.

Artists running interventions may find it easy to ‘embrace collaborative and generative assumptions about change in human systems’ (Marshak and Grant 2008: S17), thereby masking

problems and issues of power. The danger is real because (unsurprisingly) so much of the practitioner literature describes the artistic interventions in glowing terms that are intended to motivate organizations to engage in them (e.g. VanGundy and Naiman 2003; Zander and Zander 2000). The difficulties encountered in the process remain invisible (although informal conversations are spiced with anecdotes about them), and the potential negative effects for individuals, organizations or artists are not addressed. The absence of rigorous critical studies by academics (with the exception of a few articles such as Clark and Mangham 2004; Meisiek and Barry 2007; Rae 2011) contributes to keeping problems in the shadows and maintaining an unbalanced view of arts-based processes and their inherent risks.

It is striking that, in the field of artistic interventions, the pressure to generate ‘hard evidence’ for business outcomes arises from policymakers wanting to use the data to convince other key stakeholders, while the managers who have experience with artistic interventions seldom conduct formal quantitative assessments of the impact of these processes. Instead, they rely on their – often bodily – observations of the situation in the organization and they point to the multiple factors affecting the situation that make attribution of causality questionable. They can ‘see’ the results, but have trouble communicating what they see to others in organizationally legitimate ways. Bodily ways of knowing are not officially recognized formats for reporting effects in organizations, leaving most people ill equipped to answer the crucial question: ‘how do we know it was worth it?’ Artists are well placed to help managers and employees develop and use multiple ways of knowing by drawing on their aesthetic sensibilities and extended repertoire of expression. Scholars of aesthetics are also experienced in dealing with this challenge. ‘Aesthetics embraces its subjectivity and thus leaves little room for theories of organization that claim generalizable knowledge that can lead to prediction and control of organizational phenomena’ (Taylor and Carboni 2008: 221).

### **It’s what you don’t see**

Despite the issues mentioned above, we see great possibilities in artistic interventions as a form of organizational development. The two cases presented point towards different ways that artistic interventions can support learning and change in organizations. The first intervention used theatre as an unusual tool within a day-long traditional change effort. It was an effective approach in that people remembered it a year later – it was ‘sticky’. It also allowed people within the organization to see each other in ways that they hadn’t before. However, it was used within a top-down process designed to implement management’s agenda for the organization. In contrast, the artist-in-residence intervention had artistic processes as the heart of the change process. They were open-ended, and responsive to agendas other than management’s. Although neither was explicitly an OD effort, the artist-in-residence programme captured more of the values of OD than the theatrical intervention did. In both cases, our focus has not been on the work of art, the visible artefact of the process, but rather on what one does not see – the process, the values, the diversity of interests, the power dynamics.

Artistic interventions may create visible (and audible) artefacts such as the performance in the theatrical intervention or the photographs, short stories, and poems with the artist-in-residence. But these visible artefacts are simply that – artefacts, leftovers that remind the stakeholders what is really important – that which they do not see. Whether it is the memories of the CEO playing the role of a secretary, or the energy of the artist-in-residence, or the embodied knowing of the managers, artistic interventions work with the powerful intangible forces in people and organizations.

## Notes

- 1 The term organizational development first appeared around 1956 and is usually attributed to Robert Blake and his colleagues when they recognized that they were shifting their primary focus from individual development to improving the organization (Kleiner 1996: 53; also French and Bell 1999: 41).
- 2 Key figures included: Kurt Lewin, Edgar Schein, Douglas McGregor, Herbert Shepard, Robert Blake, Jane Mouton, Richard Beckhard, Chris Argyris, Warren Bennis and Eva Schindler-Rainman.
- 3 Depending on the governance of the organization, union or work council representatives may be involved in the decision, particularly if it affects blue-collar workers.
- 4 The term 'artist-in-residence' was initially used by the intermediary TILLT, when it introduced this approach to artistic interventions. The term is presented in quotation marks here, because, unlike traditional artist-in-residence programmes, the objective here does not include the production of a work of art by the artist.
- 5 The interviews about this project were initiated spontaneously by employees when they heard that Ariane Berthoin Antal was conducting research on artistic interventions in organizations. The CEO was willing to be interviewed as well, and he provided access to the director of the theatre company. However, he did not want a formal follow-up study in the company, which he feared might interfere with the process. Subsequent rounds of interviews with employees were therefore conducted informally with people who wanted to talk about the experience.
- 6 This case is based on interviews Ariane Berthoin Antal conducted at the company in Sweden in 2009 with the human resource manager, six blue-collar employees, an artist and members of the intermediary organization, as well as on presentations by the human resource manager and an employee from the project team at a conference in Brussels in December 2009.
- 7 For more information about TILLT's method, see [www.tillt.se](http://www.tillt.se); Berthoin Antal 2011: 21–42; Styhre and Eriksson 2008.

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