

***INTERVIEW
WITH
TROY PIEPER,
TIFF HOCKIN
AND ARIEL PATE,
FOUNDERS AND
EDITORS OF ART
REVIEW AND
PREVIEW (ARP!),
MINNEAPOLIS,
MN, USA***



Art Review and Preview (ARP!) was an independent arts newspaper that published 12 issues (11 newspapers and one book), in Minneapolis, USA from 2007-2010.

ARP! sought to re-examine what a local art scene is, and could be, and fostered the growth of community through its open submissions process and compassionately stern editorial approach, with a quarterly distribution of 5,000 copies.

*J.C.D.
A.B.*

What do you think about the title “I can do anything badly”?

**Ariel
Pate**

I like it!

**Tiff
Hockin**

On first read, I wasn't that into it as, in the context of DIY culture, it suggests that things are done “badly”. And often times they are. But “bad” is just a relative starting point; with experience, tasks which were at once performed poorly eventually become jobs well done. But for someone who wants all things to be done well, it's really difficult to let go of pride and perfection in the name of doing something you believe in. When we were in the

beginning stages of forming ARP!, there was a group of established art and journalism professionals who met regularly as VACUM, Visual Arts Critics Union of Minnesota. It was rumored that members of VACUM had been “threatening to start an art journal for years,” as one gallerist put it. But they never managed to get around to it. We liked to joke that it was because VACUM sucked... but I suspect part of the reason was that they got hung up on logistics and professionalism: Who’s going to design it? Who will get what title? Who will be the Publisher, the Managing Editor? When we began ARP!, we were 23. In other words, we were clever, ambitious and intelligent, but also young and naive — and sometimes stupid — enough to do what it took to get ARP! out into the world. We had little to lose. The older I get and the more I learn, the harder it is to imagine doing such a project again; I would want to do it well, and I now know what that means.

J.C.D.
A.B.

How can you define the ARP!? When and where did the project take place? How and why did you start it?

Tiff
Hockin

“the ARP!” is what one of our wacky interns called ARP!.

Ariel
Pate

ARP! was a quarterly newsprint publication based in the Twin Cities devoted to ideas and writing about art. It took place from 2007-2010, and consisted of 12 issues. The ARP! origin story that we end up telling people is that Tiff and I started ARP! because we were moving back to Minneapolis after going to school in Kansas City, and wanted to “do something”. After doing a series of interviews to figure out what that something would be (we had originally thought about it being an artist’s residency called “Artneutopia”, thankfully that never came to pass), we concluded that what people needed was a place for meaningful arts criticism in print. Thus ARP! was born.

J.C.D.
A.B.

Do you relate its publishing to this method of “do anything Badly” and/or “Do it Yourself”?
How is the ARP! related to “Do it Yourself”?

Troy Pieper I think the only way to make ARP! a reality was to do it ourselves, from ad sales to conceptualizing each issue to editing and writing to distributing the edition.

Ariel Pate Yeah, and it was often doing it without knowing about the “real way” that something should be done. Just doing it, and figuring out how as we went. Occasionally it meant that we ended up reinventing the wheel...

J.C.D.
A.B.

What need was ARP! responding to? Is it contesting something?

Ariel Pate It was responding to the need we perceived in the Twin Cities art community. In hindsight, that “need” was actually the nostalgia of a few people for a bygone era of Twin Cities art, when publications like Artpaper were flourishing — they associated print journalism with a time when the local art market was booming.

Troy Pieper I think the publication, at least at its most ambitious, was a response to what we saw might be lacking

in the local landscape of artistic endeavors: documentation of what was going on in galleries and museums and communities of artists and a way to sort of bring those things to a wider audience, like an interpreter of culture, in a sense. The only source of arts criticism or documentation in the Twin Cities was the single art critic at a daily newspaper in town and a few blogs. ARP! had a print edition and loads of arts coverage, plus writing about things you simply couldn't find elsewhere.

Ariel Pate Being in print was cool — especially at this time, just before blogs/ the internet totally took over everything, print added a shine of legitimacy to whatever we were doing.

J.C.D.
A.B.

You often describe ARP! as being not only a newspaper about art, but a work of art in itself. Could you elaborate on this?

Tiff Hockin

We do?

Ariel Pate

As it went on, we realized because it was DIY, we actually didn't need to uphold the standards of the press, and could basically do whatever we

wanted with it. Which was when ARP! became looser, and more interested in collaboration. Whether or not it was a work of art in itself is debatable.

Troy Pieper A ton of thought went into each issue, both on the editorial side and the design side. We had 3 months between issues, so even though it was a volunteer effort, we had time to be very deliberate, and the result in the case of most issues, was really a collectible object.

Tiff Hockin ... I don't know if I'd call it a work of art in itself. That implies a preciousness that I don't think we ever felt about any of the objects that make up the body of ARP!. Each issue was definitely unique in its treatment of content — both editorially and visually, but we've all wrapped our dishes in the pages of ARP!. Though I enjoy going to people's houses and seeing ARP!'s pull-out posters on the wall, I also really enjoyed seeing ARP! ground into the snowy sidewalk, or wrinkled up on a table at a cafe, because it meant someone had picked it up, and maybe read it.

*J.C.D.
A.B.*

The release parties that you held for the release of each issue of the paper were quite raucous and carried a very strong sense of community. Could you reflect on what the experience of these events was like for you, and what you saw/see as the value of social events, or social practice, in the context of ARP!?

Troy Pieper They were a way to raise the public profile the paper, to expose more people to it, and a way for us to show that ARP! wanted to be a part of an artistic community. Each party had a theme congruent with the theme of the issue we were releasing, so the parties were also an artistic act in themselves, whether it was performative or some kind of installation.

Ariel Pate We were usually totally sleep-deprived from putting the paper together when the parties came around, so they were also kind of a release/reward for all that work. Though of course, it was a lot of work to organize a party on top of putting out a paper! In hindsight, why didn't we wait a week?

Tiff
Hockin

Good question... We set a lot of arbitrary deadlines for ourselves. I think setting a date for the release party was a way of ensuring the paper would get done.

J.C.D.
A.B.

To what extent was/ is ARP! autonomous? In what ways have you (beyond ARP!) achieved autonomy, and in what ways are you still searching for it (from a larger mode of mass production and distribution of objects and knowledges)?

Ariel
Pate

From my POV today, ARP! was not at all about autonomy. It was about community, and trying to actively form and sustain that community. Maybe it was about supporting the Twin Cities art scene as an autonomous space? Providing an alternative to the NYC/ LA/Art Capitals of the World-centric thinking that seemed to be going on in the Twin Cities at that time. Which is certainly its own hegemonic structure. And Minneapolis, inevitably, was dealing with an inferiority complex.

Troy
Pieper

Agreed. It seemed a better idea to assert our artistic community as the midwestern outpost of culture that it is, rather than venture to compare it to anywhere else (I see the same inferiority issues at play in Chicago, the 3rd largest city in the country). The truth was and is still that if you want to be a successful working artist, there are only a few places you can go to do that in the world and the brain drain Minneapolis was experiencing didn't seem to affect the vitality of the community of artists.

Ariel
Pate

I think some people deal with this by readjusting their idea of "successful working artist"...

J.C.D.
A.B.

Where do the techniques of collection and organization of text, objects and contributions in ARP! come from? What methods of classifications did you adopt? How would you define creativity in this context? How do you compare the creativity of editing vs. writing in this context?

Ariel Pate What's left out here is the creativity of design, which Tiff took really seriously (in a fun way). I think the purposeful relation between the design and the content was an important part of what ARP! was.

J.C.D.
A.B. It's true that design was left out of this question — I was more trying to get at the fact that you all shared editing responsibilities, as well as writing whole articles. So I was trying to get at those specific differences/similarities, as well as the question of: what is it like to edit each others' work?

Ariel Pate Editing was one of the fun parts of doing ARP!, no matter whose article I was editing. Writing articles, for me, fell by the wayside in the midst of managing the content and doing the stuff needed to keep the paper running. I don't know if there is "creativity in editing" — to me its much more about thinking about what the needs of the piece are, and what's appropriate to it. In a way, it's about having empathy with the piece in question.

J.C.D.
A.B. What do you see as the relationship between Do It Yourself ethos and the community, activities, and objects that gave form to the ARP!? What are your thoughts on the relation between individuality and community in the context of research and sharing knowledge more broadly?

Troy Pieper Could this question please be more esoteric?

Ariel Pate Yeah, it's kind of a thesis unto itself... Sounds like this is the theme of the whole ICDAB book, in question form...

Troy Pieper There was both a sense of ownership of knowledge (and a little bit of privilege in the form of street cred) but also of acting as custodian in a way. We included very few negative reviews, because that just wasn't our interest. Highlighting what we or our writers thought had little value didn't seem to nurture the development of the Twin Cities' art scene or communities.

Ariel Pate But I don't think we avoided passing judgement.

Troy Pieper Yeah, but not about the stuff without any value, right?

Ariel Pate Uh, once in a while we were pretty flippant about shitty art. There was our whole "I saw yous" section, which was basically our chance to quickly pass judgement on the shows that hadn't merited a review (or shows no-one volunteered to write a review of) but needed to be addressed in some public space.

Tiff Hockin In my mind, providing a space for criticism — be it negative or constructive — was part of why ARP! was created in the first place. There was a sense, at the time, that Minneapolis lacked a venue for such.

J.E.D.
A.B. How is knowledge and experience transmitted among the group that created ARP!? In terms of "the group" as a social concept as well as the group that shaped and maintained ARP!. Is the concept of "the group" important?

Ariel Pate Yes, especially after the 3rd issue, when Troy joined Tiff & I. Then it was less of a her-and-I thing and more of triangle. I guess we were a group... The three of us...Of course, there were a ton of other people involved, who "drifted in and out of the editorial offices" as the apocryphal BS of the future will have it, who also were really important to ARP! Niki, for example!!!

Troy Pieper The group was a very important part of the experience for me. I was thrilled to be invited to contribute what I could, and I learned more about collaboration and about what I like and don't like aesthetically than I ever could have otherwise. The experience shaped a lot of what I've gone on to do.

Ariel Pate Also, I think that Tiff & Troy's experiences with collectives (Seward Cafe & Hard Times Cafe, respectively) gave our working together a different aspect. One I didn't find at my job at the time, which was quite corporate.

J.C.D.
A.B.

How would you describe your strategies of “making knowledge available” through ARP!?

Which strategies do you use to create modes of circulation of knowledge that do not depend on the general order of mass production and mass distribution of objects? Do you consider your practice to be independent from an existing order that you refuse/protest/object to? What is your relation to hierarchy in this project? What types of hierarchies (in this or other contexts) make you feel either constrained or motivated?

Ariel
Pate

In the context of the larger art scene, I think we played with hierarchies because we were “in print”, a state of being with a history of authority, yet we were not authoritative, and rarely tried to be.

J.C.D.
A.B.

What is your personal strategy for sustaining your practice of publishing from an economical point of view, in a long-term perspective?

Would you ever make something like ARP! again under a different form, or was it a one-time-only experience?

Ariel
Pate

Yes, I definitely would, with one difference: money. Getting paid for work like that is important. Not only because it allows one to take the time to do the work, but because the symbol of money is a confirmation of the importance and/or success of such an endeavor. a reality where one would be paid for working on something like ARP! is a better reality, in my opinion.

J.C.D.
A.B.

What were the difficulties you encountered in sustaining the publishing of ARP!? Did anyone ever feel threatened by your activities? How did/would you respond to this?

Ariel
Pate

I think that at first, the fact that Tiff and I were young females was good “cover” for our activities. Its a much-told tale, but we were often mistaken for our own interns. Eventually the cuteness wore off, and I think some (male) artists from the older generations ended up being frustrated that the story we were telling

about the Twin Cities art scene was not the story they were necessarily involved in. Other difficulties included money, time, and stress. But those are really inevitable in (almost) any project.

J.C.D.
A.B.

Do you think your methods could be extended on a large scale, if they are not already? To what extent or for how long do you think they would keep their autonomy without being standardized into more efficient modes of mass-production or distribution? How would your methods need to change in order to be mass producible?

Ariel
Pate

If one was to see ARP! as an "artist's project", then it falls into the long line of artists re-creating the institutional structures they simultaneously need and loathe. And in that case, it wouldn't need to be "mass produced", since it already exists in the imitated form (i.e. Artforum, the Kansas City-based Review, others?) If one sees it as a DIY project, then it's a bit of a one-off. On the other hand, some people in Minneapolis are now starting

"The Third Rail", which is somehow affiliated with The Brooklyn Rail and The Miami Rail, so I guess it's possible to spin this shit off.

Troy
Pieper

Second that! Our methods were inherently unsustainable, as is the nature of a project. ARP! was not a job. Or rather, a business. That means, to me, that it could only have been extended in any way through development as a business. It's too tiresome to indict anymore the systems that make this the case, but I believe at least a little bit of autonomy is always sacrificed on the altar of commerce. My self working on ARP! would hate me for saying this, as may my former colleagues, but now I think you gotta break a few eggs...

J.C.D.
A.B.

What are each of you doing now, and where are you living? How has your experience with ARP! impacted who you are today, personally and professionally? What advice do you have for other people who may want to do something "ARP! — like" in their communities?

Troy Pieper ARP! and a few other collective endeavors over several years made me see them all as projects, things one does only for a while and only at a certain point in one's life. Eventually, you want to be able to buy a fucking set of dishes, or something. But in Chicago at an art school with an arts journalism masters program, I often think about where else I'd be if it were not for Art Review and Preview, and what I'll think of any ARP!-influenced decisions after graduation and a job search. Also, I recommend keeping in mind that personality types matter a great deal in any ARP!-like venture.

Ariel Pate After ARP! was over (or we decided that it needed to be over, because we were really exhausted), I went to grad school in Frankfurt for "Curatorial and Critical Studies". Which was kind of a reality check, because the only US city that matters there is New York City. And since I hadn't done something in New York City, but in Minneapolis (whose name recognition stretches only as far as the Walker Art Center), it didn't really seem to matter to anyone. Of course, it matters to me a great deal, and the experience of doing it was "formative" on every level. If someone wanted to do something like ARP! in a sustainable way,

then I think the answer is money. Figuring out funding. What I learned in Germany was that state-funded art/research is possible and very successful. I hope we can get back to something like that in the US someday. Other advice: just do the project. Don't spend too much time theorizing and speculating. Do it, and try to do it well. That seemed to work for us.



