

Artist-Run as Utopian Engine

A Proposal for exhibition by members of the Utopian Megapraxis Collective

Born of the question: What is the endgame of Civilization? The Utopian Megapraxis is a non-situated community of artists, curators, writers, educators and thinkers invested in the process of envisioning a global Utopia. A theoretical megaproject with architects spread across time zones and disciplines, this work is imaginative, speculative, and future-oriented, but with the goal of moving towards equitable reality in the present.

Artist-Run as Utopian Engine is a narrative structural framework for site-specific exhibitions by members of the Utopian Megapraxis. It is an umbrella, or artistic/curatorial conceit for connecting artworks and galleries/artists and curators through the processes and exercises of futurity, futurability, utopianism and utopian worldbuilding. As a series, *Artist-Run as Utopian Engine* will consist of installations, exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, and print media, bound together to explore the multi-faceted and incredibly complex undertaking of defining, imagining, and birthing a global utopia.

Artist-Run as Utopian Engine views the Artist-Run Gallery as a space for possibility and radical potentiality to build towards utopia(s) within and beyond the so-called Art World. Because these spaces are run by artist-identifying individuals or groups, they can be viewed as ongoing works of art, that create and share space, bring artists into a community in an act of co-creation, and blur the boundaries between artist/curator and spatial/temporal. The experimental, ephemeral, and community-focused spirit of artist-run initiatives, as an alternative to commercial, non-profit, or institutional endeavors, is uniquely suited to form the foundation of a series of interconnected exhibitions seeking to envision and explore the construction of a global Utopian society.

This project is twofold:

Worlding Utopian Imaginaries

This is a work for the creation of possibilities.

Individual exhibitions will site-specifically problematize needs and conflicts arising in the here and now as the gallery space is simultaneously viewed from local, regional, and global perspectives. The overarching framework will foster the creation of a larger community by

decentralizing the artists' tools and methodologies, imagining how those creative strategies can be focused to the creation of a better future beyond the confines of the gallery by inspiring multiple lenses of utopic-potential in the viewer.

The power of an artwork is in its ability to exist beyond its physical boundaries, not only in conversation with the works around it, within the room that it is installed, but within the mind of the viewer. Its ability to linger inspires one to rethink the way that their worlds are built, influenced, and understood – and with that, recognize their ability to transform the world around them. Envisioning a perfect world, a Utopian Imaginary, not only questions the present, but provides an end goal which can be backward engineered into existence.

Bringing Together and Highlighting Artist-Run Communities

The importance of the Artist-Run community is often overshadowed, seen as “less than” the larger institutions and commercial spaces of the central Art World and larger metropolitan areas. However, not only do Artist-Run spaces offer the testing ground, the space for experimentation which births the ideas for these larger institutional works to prosper, they are often bringing artists back to rural and regional communities which have long been divested of their creative energy and artistic capital. Through the connective curatorial framework, *Artist-Run as Utopian Engine* is about promoting the essential role that the Artist-Run space plays in the development of a more robust, equitable and democratic art world, while simultaneously drawing attention to its flourishing community embeddedness along diverse lines of economic, racial, and geographic makeup.

The choice of Artist-Run is deliberate. This project views the Artist-Run Gallery, not as a single entity, but as an expression of a much larger desire for the art world to divorce itself from larger structures of power. We view an exhibition, not as a stand-alone experience in a vacuum, but one among many, each sharing a narrative purpose. *Artist-Run as Utopian Engine* is about the destruction of these preconceived boundaries of who art is for, and its performative function. Through the employment of this connective narrative structure, the works can and should be viewed from the position within a conversation; exhibitions can and should be viewed as building upon or building towards a larger understanding; galleries can and should be viewed as encompassing a possible/potential worldview. By exhibiting these works in Artist-Run spaces, we are highlighting how these spaces are already embracing and moving towards utopian ideals; how these initiatives are leading by an easily replicated example.