

Public Faculty no.1
project by Jeanne van Heeswijk and
commissioned by press to exit project space
Skopje City Park, 1-5 October 2008



“Public Faculty no. 1” by prominent Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk is a special commissioned public project in the framework of the *Visiting Curatorial Initiative* programme of **press to exit** project space.

This work questions the function of public space in a contemporary city and the notion of the increasing regulations and limitations that imply a disabled form of social interaction.

In her statement van Heeswijk states: *“As we see more and more people being left out of what is often perceived as a clinical understanding of public domain, we often seem to forget that public domain is not evident. It is a source of conflict between residents, developers and government. In the centre of these processes, and especially those where in the city life twists, cultural interventions are often the only manner in which we can actively create a public domain. Therefore, what needs to be done is to create an understanding of a given place and its dynamics and identify certain questions capable of creating a ‘performative action’.”*

“Public Faculty no. 1” took place on the recognizable “Shkolka” (Shell) Stage in the Skopje City Park during 5 days in October from the 1st until the 5th each day from 12:00 -17:00 o’clock. During the designated hours, lessons, discussions and workshops were staged. All the activities were open to the public and helped in defining the local notions of “publicness”, its presence or non-presence in local, regional and wider European context, and its identity as a site for action and conflict.

“Shkolka” (Shell) Stage functioned as a “white board” where each day a new specific theme have been discussed and lectured about.



“Public Faculty no. 1” makes historical reference to Joseph Beuys’ seminal work *Richtkräfte* (*Directive forces*) that includes an installation of 100 blackboards created from public discussions held at the Institute for Contemporary Art, London between 1974 -1977. Using Steiner’s concept of ‘thought drawings’ Beuys used chalk on blackboard to communicate to his audience the basic principles of his theory of ‘social sculpture’ – freedom, direct democracy and sustainable economic forms – clearly reflecting the influence Steiner had on him. Just as Steiner taught his philosophy by drawing diagrams in chalk on sheets of black paper pinned to the wall at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland (1919-1924), Beuys used a blackboard to illustrate his “anthropologic construct” for a better world.

Jeanne van Heeswijk is one of the most recognized contemporary Dutch artists whose work has provoked heated discussions among public audiences and recipients as well as art critics and institutions. Her highly acclaimed practice generates inter spaces, contexts and crossovers within which new relations and connections can be established between groups of people, institutions and conceptual frameworks that are always different. She herself has coined the term “urban curating” for her interventions. In regard to van Heeswijk’s art, curator Mirijam Westen has famously noted: “In the sedate Dutch art world in which all taboos appear to have been broken, her work – uniquely – arouses fierce controversy. Often, this is linked to the question of whether her interventions belong to the realm of art and how she stretches and shapes her art practice / artistic strategy and positions her seemingly idealistic approach in an era which considers itself liberated from both ideology and idealism.” Her most recent exhibitions include the 7th Shanghai Biennial (2008) and the 11th Venice Architectural Biennial (2008).