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Public Space With A Roof
Amsterdam

Merry Christmas, KIASMA!

artist: In this respect, to what extent, do you think, the budget plays a role?

restlessincorporated: No role at all – it's not about the money, honey!
But not having any at all can be quite problematic.

We were abused last December by
NIFCA [the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art]
and Kiasma [Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, in Helsinki]
during "Institution 2", which was organized by Jens Hoffmann.

They distribute justice with their public funds.

An Online Conversation between Vasif Kortun and Serkan Ozkaya, 2003¹

November 7, 2007 HELSINKI, Finland (CNN) - An 18-year-old authorities say shot eight people inside his high school in southern Finland, before turning the gun on himself, has died, police said. The shooting appeared to have been planned out in graphic videos posted on Internet file-sharing site YouTube.²

In the beginning, we did not have a conscious decision of going to Finland and blowing up Kiasma. We were just invited to do a project in their Studio K, a first project to be executed in the space outside of our own project space in Amsterdam. What we felt were high expectations, excitement, and responsibility.

The woman that presented herself as their chief curator visited us in the early spring of 2007 and wanted us in the museum since we always had institutional critique in the background of our projects. Maareta wanted us to do something she was not able to do on her position of a chief curator: she wanted us to stir up certain things in this hard-core institution. We thanked, visited the space in Helsinki and since June worked hard on our first *grande* project. The opening was scheduled for the end of January 2008. Enough time, we thought, and we presumed enough money since we were dealing with one of the most famous institutions of the rich North.

What followed were several months of hard work, inclusion of more people to help us out with making of the model of our future installation, and working out the conceptual background of the whole project. It was going to be a big installation, with several other artists participating, we

¹ Printed in: MJ – Manifesta Journal, journal of contemporary curatorship, N.2, Winter 2003/Spring 2004, Biennials (pp.64)

² "Although I choose the school as target, my motives for the attack are political and much much deeper and therefore I don't want this to be called only as "school shooting". Pekka Eric – Auvinen in his Manifesto, <http://oddculture.com/2007/11/07/the-pekka-eric-auvinen-manifesto/>

would organize lectures, film screenings, public debate, and make a publication with our designers. We wanted everything to be for free and asked Kiasma people to see how that would be possible in the institutional setting. We never charge people for our events and projects.

In the early autumn, everything was ready and we had proudly sent the final proposal. In the meantime, the chief curator introduced us with another guy by email; he will be the one helping us out from their side. She really liked our proposal and said it will be the best project this museum ever hosted. Nevertheless, the new guy Jari-Pekka did not think that way; he rejected our proposal saying it's exceeding their human and material resources.

We still did not understand what was going on since he promised to create a budget once he received our proposal. At that moment, we are desperately trying to schedule a meeting with them and go to Helsinki. We just want to explain things and see how it can be downsized without destroying the core idea of the project that is testing the possibility of new approaches to exhibition spaces and exhibiting the artworks. Long silence, no emails, nobody picks up the phone. Finally, Jari-Pekka replies and says he has no time; he is busy with another project and might be able to meet in a month. We agree although we know that might be too late. We still do not know what our budget is.

Letters to all of them, letter to the director, everybody just ignores our questions. When the time has come for us to travel and meet and discuss the options, Jari-Pekka cancels and says there is no time left to meet. He gives us the budget – it's 15.000 EUR coming from another institution, from another country: it's the money we received from Mondriaan. Meaning Kiasma wants to get things for free. Plus they say we already spent 4.000 during our first 5-days visit, although we stayed there for free, ate whatever; but the curators probably had to be paid for their job. We are stunned. Adi has violent dreams about chopping Jari-Pekka's head off; in her dream, he is dark blond and fat.

More truth came out: Maareta does not work anymore as a chief curator; she knew this for months and did not tell us, and she is happily traveling to Oslo to start her new job. Jari-Pekka laughs at us after we sent our new proposal based on the budget they finally told us and says – "It's months too late!"

It's Christmas and I am furious; I bike through Amsterdam and a text of a future letter which I want to send to some important Finish newspapers pops out in my head. I already had a title: "Merry Christmas, KIASMA!" Never wrote a word, never sent anything and everybody thought we should use some other way to get this respectable institution pay at least for the material costs we had during our preparation phase. Not to mention other people we are supposed to pay. Some friends said we

might have some legal rights and a chance in Finish court to protect our artists' and human rights. Everything seems too complicated and due to the lack of energy, we do nothing. The time ate our anger and we are left with sadness, disappointment, impotence and a good lesson to learn. After all, it's not about the money, honey!

That's why I have no desire or idea how to translate this raping experience into a nice theoretical reflection on today's possibilities of institutional critique. Things have already developed in a horrifying direction and there is no sign of possible collective action from the side of the artists. We will be reading each others examples of how some institution, some curator, some director abused some of us. Besides being a nice entry in the archive on the ways late capitalistic art institutions control and censor art, I see their no other value. Activism has been turned into rhetoric and rhetoric is now turned into confession. Not a nice way to start a century.