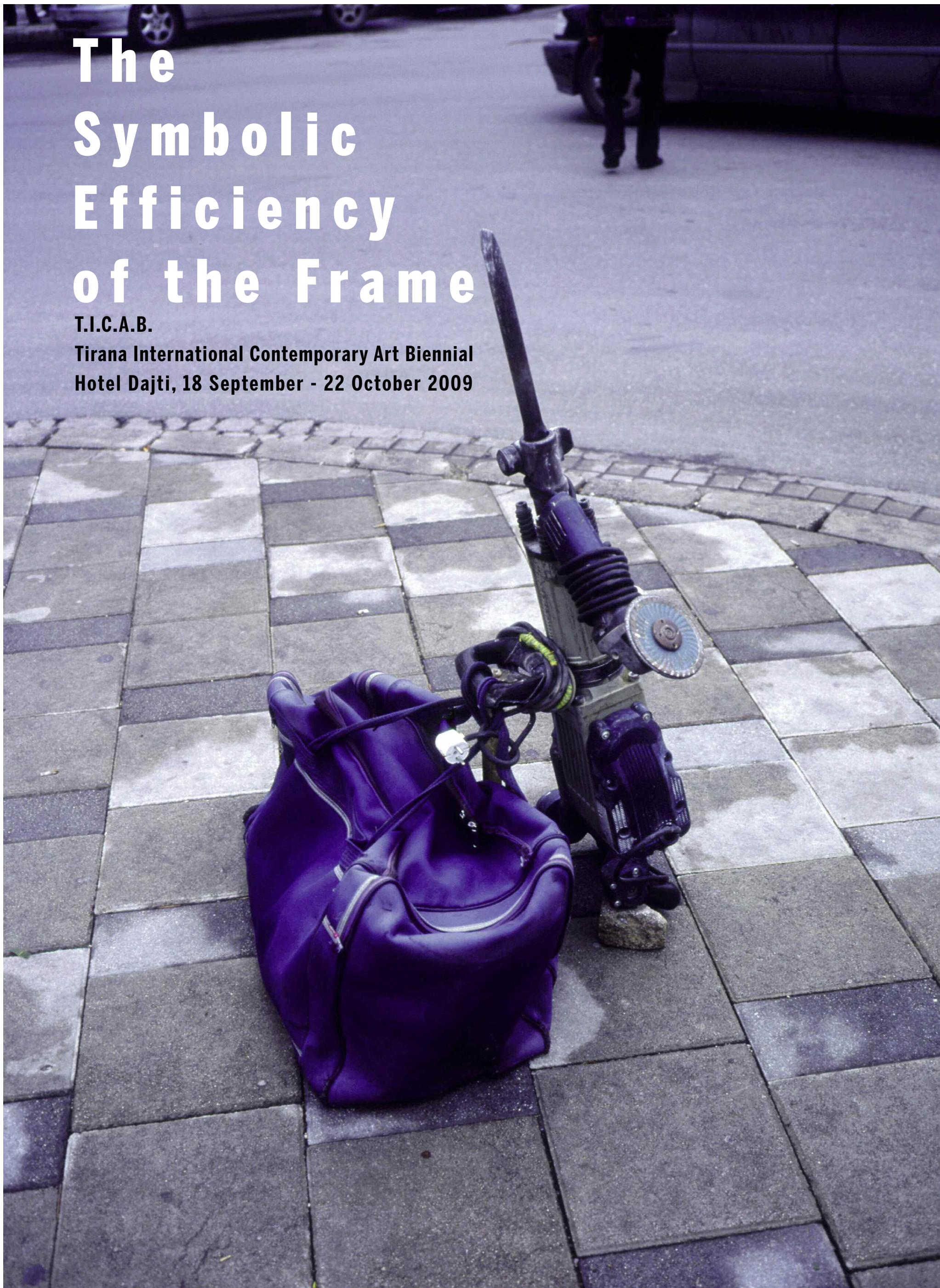


The Symbolic Efficiency of the Frame

T.I.C.A.B.

**Tirana International Contemporary Art Biennial
Hotel Dajti, 18 September - 22 October 2009**





The Symbolic Efficiency of the Frame

Edi Muka & Joa Ljungberg

Co-directors of T.I.C.A.B. 2009 | curators of Episode 1

We take this notion as a starting point to enter a discussion about the complex and manifold nature of “the real” and its many “appearances”, and the various ways how we perceive reality and relate to our history. Independently from which angle we look or what methodology we employ – be it scientific, aesthetic, or philosophical – what interest us are the inherent gaps that manifest themselves in this constantly shifting process of perception. A “frame” or its notion is something we use in order to define, discern or cut off in order to highlight. In other words, a frame or the process of enframing is our way to relate to the ungraspable essence of the reality that surrounds us. The frame thus is not merely a physical construction, but most of all a mental one, a way that helps (or hinders) our perception of the world and the society.

When talking about the reality and its appearance in his book “The Parallax View”, Slavoj ŽIŽEK mentions the example of the theatre-like structure built in the South Korean border, where a large screen-like window opens out onto the North Korean part, and he asks: “Is this not a pure case of the symbolic efficiency of the frame as such? A barren zone is given a fantasmatic status, elevated into a spectacle, solely by being enframed. Nothing substantially changes here – it is merely that, viewed through the frame, reality turns into its own appearance.” He continues further down by saying that: “...it is not enough to display the mechanism behind the frame, the stage effect within the frame acquires an autonomy of its own.”

How are we then to read our overall current condition and recent past? Are we to believe the jolly promise of a forthcoming “consensual world”, depicted by many as the unavoidable future of a post-political world, or should we reluctantly try to “re-frame” the picture put in front of us? How far can cognitive sciences take us in such processes as knowing of the self, identity formation and other ontological problems? What possible “frames” can we use to enable a more multilayered reading of reality?

As a physical departure point informing our endeavor we shall take the empty, vandalized building of the former Hotel DAJTI. Located in the Tirana city centre the once grandiose Hotel DAJTI lies in decay waiting for its eventual future transformation. A historical and architectural landmark, a silent but vivid witness of ideologies and power structures that built it and used it during the years, Hotel DAJTI with its ravaged walls and floors presents a perfect “symbolic frame”. Inviting the artists to interact with it, we aim at interrupting the linear flow of time to which DAJTI has succumbed. This interaction we hope, will create the necessary gaps through which we'll be able to step out of a one dimensional reading of history, opening up to critique and analysis of our historical past and seemingly non-ideological present, encouraging imagination and aiming for a deeper understanding of our contemporary condition.



Paradise hotel

Oskar Mörnerud

In 1926, my grandmother takes a photo of a group of people around the altar of Nora Missionary Church in mid-Sweden. Above the picture in the album it says: “From the Great Revival, 1926”. This is a historic relic from the emergence of the Free Church Movement in Sweden at the time. A Christian popular movement that went hand in hand with the labour movement and teetotalism, and was involved in formulating the idea of a new, more modern way of life, beyond the muddy fields and unprofitable small farmsteads in Sweden.

My grandmother’s album contains several similar group photos of people standing in and in front of mission halls and chapels. Often, they are in their Sunday best, and symmetrically flanked by some sort of potted palm trees. In the beginning of the album, grandmother is the only participating photographer, and when the man who is later to be my grandfather appears in a group photo, he is marked with an X on his chest, and above the picture it says in big letters: “THAGE MED” (THAGE JOINED). Obviously, this moment was important to grandmother that THAGE chose to join. Perhaps this was even a condition for their love, that Thage “joined” the movement and shared her belief in Jesus and the afterlife.

Football teams, group tours and MPs all line up in approximately the same way for photos. They share the same aspirations or ideas – to win the match, or a faith in democracy. My grandparents shared a faith in Jesus and the life eternal, but also a dream of another, more modern, urban life, working for one of Alfred NOBEL’s nearby arms factories – a mixture of hopes aroused by the revivalist movement, and the labour movements’ ideas on an ideal and impending life in paradise.

The dream of paradise is probably enhanced by the exotic palms in the group photo, but also by my grandparents’ love story. The writing above the photo and grandmother’s desire to get grandfather to “join” reminds me of the myth of Adam and Eve in Paradise.

As we know, Adam and Eve ate the apple from the tree of knowledge – and so did grandfather and grandmother. “Knowledge for better or for worse” became part of their bodies and identities via the digestive system, and suddenly remarkable phenomena became noticeable, such as embarrassing hairiness and the potential for owning things. Assimilating though the eating of “knowledge for better or for worse” affected their entire world view and made everything appear in a different light. Meanwhile, according to the myth, a new distance and detachment was established to the world and to God.

I have a feeling that words, the instrument we use to convey our knowledge, contain the same mystical contradiction and, as such, are a kind of bites from the apple. Just as a word can say exactly what is intended, it can also be totally inept. By defining and pinpointing an object with one word, it becomes manageable to me, but it can also limit my ability to see the object and make it inaccessible. When grandmother clicks the camera and the harsh flash illuminates the chapel, it is as though the mechanism of the myth is repeated – like a bite from the apple. Something, a moment, is captured but is, at the same time, elusive. The moment she wishes to capture is grandfather’s manifestation of a comprehensive outlook on the world. An outlook that makes the world decipherable, but can also create a distance and narrow my field of vision.

The capacity and incapacity of words to reveal what meets my eyes would appear to be both necessary and inevitable. If it is as I assume, that words are like bites from the apple (or whatever fruit it was), this would mean that all my communication is like a perpetual biting and swallowing of the apple. This, in turn, would involve perpetually putting my vision at risk.

A risk-taking that, if it resembles Adam’s and Eve’s biting of the apple, would involve oscillating in complete uncertainty between the possibility of “death” or “becoming as Gods” and obtaining total knowledge.

It may seem a bit drastic that every uttered word should involve an oscillation between these two extreme positions but, as it stands, it further clarifies what also emerges after ingesting knowledge, namely that my vision is not only influenced by my reason and what I can think, but also by my body.

Consequently, in my attempts to see and understand, when I put my outlook on the world at peril, it is not enough to imperil it on the reason-level; I must also step out of myself and my body in order to see from another angle. In other words, I must seek the “bite”, the dividing line between what I see and my formulations, and try to pronounce the words from there.

The Pollination of the Flower

Mimoza Ahmeti

It was a small child like the light
with eyes like the night
all like a star.

Stayed surprised
above my cliffs and shouted:
Madam, you are falling off!

I know, my look whispered
and with my arms I grabbed
his milky kiss just as his sex.
that was all he could offer to save me.

All day he was pollinating flowers
and in the evening, when stars pinched him,
he would run screaming:
Madam! You are dieing, You are falling!

And again a milky kiss.
We were both exhausted:
Promised snake kisses
and wolf hugs to each other
we couldn't do.

They were kisses with whining snakes
that a day later would become healing.
In front of the cliff I felt the speed of the bullet
unreachable from the shell...

Go my little baby; don't add to my loneliness
your efforts to save me,
look how the feeble are licking their lips from envy.
I know that you will revenge me
even though there is no need;
I know you will cry with heart-felt tears
and will use your sex as a hook
to put in the tummy of those that laugh of the effort.

And in my falling I will see as in a dream the flower's pollination.
And I will be the most beautiful of heaven for you
just as I was the most beautiful of hell.

Note : Mimoza AHMETI is a poetess who lives and works in Tirana.



Franz Ackerman

“The Albanian Plateau” 2009

wall painting
6 x 6.20 meters

“Mental Map – The New Tunnel” 2009

Mixed media on paper, 13 x 19cm

“Mental Map - The Flower Bowl” 2009

Mixed media on paper
13 x 19cm

Courtesy the artist

Franz ACKERMANN's vibrant paintings and installations centre on themes of travel, tourism, globalisation and urbanism. Since the early 90s, ACKERMANN has evolved a set of Situationist-inspired visual practices investigating the "psychogeographical" aspects of travel as embodied in the figure of the tourist.

The "Albanian Plateau" was made entirely during the artist's stay in Albania, just prior to the opening of T.I.C.A.B. The shape of Albania is suspended in a seemingly infinite space, connected — or perhaps captured — by a myriad of organic lines, associative as much of roads, connections of influence, as of nerves, veins and organic tissue. Partly cracking lose from the confinement of Albania's silhouette, an architectural form — a plateau — is seemingly raising from underneath. It is a plateau cleansed of past ideologies but also of future promises. It is an image of the many architectural foundations of ideological monuments left bare. Past heroes have been removed, only to leave an empty space for go-cart, commercials, lotteries and betting places .

Superimposed on the graphically strong, emblematic mural are two Mental Maps, smaller scale, much softer and emotionally running watercolors. Made on busses and hotel rooms while travelling through Albania, the Mental Maps fuses fragments of the traditional street maps with the artist's perception of passing through its reality.

Franz ACKERMANN was born in 1963 in Neumarkt St Veit, Germany, he currently lives and works in Berlin and Karlsruhe, Germany.



Silva Agostini

“Wet Setting”
2006
“Varnish and Curtain”
2005

Lambda print on aluminum dibond
160 x 102 cm

Courtesy Galerie Isabella Czarnowska, Berlin

Both photographs show the very same courtyard. A theater-like backdrop constructed in concrete. The shots are at the same time similar and different. The pictures make a twist of the real. They create confusion in the beholder. Nothing is planned or set in the scene. It's simply observed during the time span of one year.

“Vertical Rotation” 2005

Film installation, 16 mm
10', loop

Courtesy Galerie Isabella Czarnowska, Berlin

An original idea of film is that it lies somewhere between fiction and reality. What's to be given primacy? The film perspective lives from setting and camera motion. I am interested in these filmic elements. In fact the work consists of turning these individual vectors around. The resulting shift of the axis causes distraction in the common perception.

Silva AGOSTINI was born in 1979 in Tirana. She lives and works in Berlin.



Jane Alexander

From the series “HOTEL
DAJTI”, 2009

”Hotel Dajti (search)”
“Room 111, Hotel Dajti”
“Ghost, Room 116, Hotel Dajti”
“Grand Salon, Hotel Dajti”
“Bar with lamb, Hotel Dajti”

Photomontages, pigment on cotton rag
45 x 67,5 cm each

Background photographs by Bevis FUSHA
Courtesy the artist.

The work of Jane ALEXANDER is populated by eerie creatures that evoke ambiguous responses as they can appear guilty, shamed, deceiving and dangerous, but also curious, innocent and fragile. As hybrid beings – human bodies with animal heads – they represent human thought and action. Their animal physiognomies embody the psychic state, the *conditio humana*, of a traumatized multicultural society. Most of ALEXANDER's works make reference directly or indirectly with the situation in post-apartheid South Africa, but offers strong metaphors also on a global level. For her participation in T.I.C.A.B., Jane ALEXANDER has developed a new series of photo montages in which her figures inhabit the abandoned rooms and salons of Hotel Dajti. Here they interact with the layer of history lived by this building and appear both as ghosts from a bygone pasts and as the embodied interests and powers forming its future.

Jane ALEXANDER was born in 1959 in Johannesburg. She lives and works in Cape Town.



Yael Bartana

“Mary Koszmary”
2007

One-channel video projection
10' 30", loop

*Courtesy Annete Gelink, Amsterdam and
FOKSAL Gallery Foundation, Warsaw*

Mary KOSZMARY (Nightmares) explores a complicated set of social and political relationships among Jews, Poles, and other Europeans in the age of globalization. Using the structure and sensibility of a World War II propaganda film, “Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)” addresses contemporary anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Poland, the longing for the Jewish past among liberal Polish intellectuals and the desire among a new generation of Poles to be fully accepted as Europeans.

In the film we see Slawomir SIERAKOWSKI, a Polish leftist intellectual, entering into Warsaw's dilapidated Olympic Stadium. While the cinematography alludes to the ideology and aesthetic strategies of Leni RIEFENSTAHL, SIERAKOWSKI's vibrant speech declares that in order for Poland to be fully accepted by other Europeans, the country must embrace multiculturalism and welcome back its Jews. In her work, BARTANA stresses the commonalities between contemporary Israel and Poland. She states that in both countries “there are a small percentage of intellectuals and a small Left. Both we and they are nations living with the trauma of the past and constantly struggling with the search for identity and definition.”

Yael BARTANA was born in 1970 in Israel. She lives and works in Tel Aviv and Amsterdam.



Kimberly Clark

“Swansong (give her enough to shake your world)”
2007

Polyester (doll), Heineken crates, life size
(installed in red light)
175 x 160 x 45 cm

*Courtesy of the artist and Diana Stigter,
Amsterdam, Bugada/Cargnel, Paris*

The work of the artist group Kimberly CLARK presents hedonistic images of an exaggerated nightlife, on the border to excess. Representations of blissfulness, provocation, glamour, desolation and boredom are combined with remains of a nightlong euphoria. Jumbled together with cosmetics, empty Marlboro packets, bottles and cans of beer, they compose a kind of portraits with signs of psychological fluctuation. At the centre is always the female figure, trendy attractive, narcissistic and, at the same time, a live-size simulacrum. While highly urban and contemporary in their appearance, the work of Kimberly CLARK often have historical and mythological connotations. The title of this work, "swan song" refers to an ancient belief that the Mute Swan (Cygnus olor) is completely mute during its lifetime until the moment just before it dies, when it sings one beautiful song.

Kimberly CLARK was founded in 2005 in Rotterdam and consists of the artists Iris VAN DONGEN, Josepha DE JONG and Ellemieke SCHOENMAKER born in the Netherlands, currently based in Berlin, Germany.



Gazmend Ejupi

“Frauen Killer”
“Eight Thousand”
“The Collector”
“The Assassin”
“Love under Siege”
“The Affair”
2009

Acrylic on canvas
92 x 122.4 cm

Courtesy the artist

At first glance Gazmend EJUPI's cinema paintings remind us of an age of innocence, the so-called golden era of Hollywood, where movies fostered dreams, nurtured passions and fomented romance. At a second look, a completely different scenario emerges. The woman starring in The Affair, is not just a cigarette-puffing seductive starlet; it's Christine KEELER, former model and mistress of John PROFUMO, the British politician forced to resign in disgrace for lying to the house about his involvement with the woman during a time when she was also seeing the Soviet diplomatic Yevgeny IVANOV. The two lovers passionately kissing in Love under Siege are Julius and Ethel ROSENBERG, members of the atomic bomb spy ring who President EISENHOWER had executed in 1951 amid a lot of controversies. And the vaguely lost man portrayed in The Assassin is Gavrilo PRINCIP, the killer of Archduke Franz FERDINAND of Austria – an action that according to many set the ball rolling for a chain of episodes eventually leading to World War 1. By converting his characters into media-celebrities, Gazmend EJUPI not only revisits our past, but reframes it according to the media logics of the spectacle, removing yet another layer of the already very thin line that separates reality from fiction.

Gazmend EJUPI was born in 1973 in Prishtina. He lives and works in London.



Cao Fei

“Whose Utopia”
2006

DVD, 20'

*Courtesy of the artist and
Vitamin Creative Space*

Whose Utopia is a 20 minutes video work, for which the artist stayed for 6 months at OSRAM China Lighting Ltd., Foshan. The area where the factory is located is called Pearl River Delta Region, and has been drastically changed as one of the strongholds of Chinese economic activities. Whose Utopia? documents the conditions faced by an increasing number of workers, as factories like Osram move their production to China, further integrating the country into the global economy. The repetitive work is contrasted with dreamlike episodes in which the workers act out their private dreams. The work is lyrical in its portrayal of subjective dreams within a working context, and of individual subjectivity in a rapidly mechanized world, in which individuality has traditionally been subordinated to class or other abstract and generic groupings.

Cao Fei was born 1978, Guangzhou, (Ch). He lives and works in Beijing.



Yang Fudong

“East of Que Village”
2007

Multi-channel DVD video
20' 50", loop

Courtesy of Shanghart Gallery

With the East of Que Village installation, the Chinese artist Yang FUDONG renders contemporary rural China and the day-to-day battle to survive in the midst of encroaching merciless urbanization. The work consists of a six channel video installation where we follow a group of stray dogs fighting to survive. The landscape, somewhere in the north of China, is desolate and inhospitable and forms the backdrop to a ruthless life-and-death struggle. Humans are sporadically present in Fudong's installation and become a reflection of the fight between the dogs. Central to the artist's concern is the role of the individual in a society that does not seem to take the individual into account. The work serves as a metaphor for the feeling of isolation and desertion that the artist detects in contemporary society.

*Yang Fudong was born in 1971 in Beijing.
He lives and works in Shanghai.*



Shilpa Gupta

“Untitled”
2008

photograph printed on
adhesive paper,
mounted on billboard.

200 x 410 x 3 cm

*Courtesy the artist and
Yvon Lambert Gallery, Paris.*

GUPTA has consistently been posing questions such as social inequality or power politics in the present day of globalization. Using multimedia such as video and the Internet, which all sorts of people can access, she completes her works by building an interactive relationship with more viewers. Amidst the Indian art world, on account of her bold concept and novel approach, Gupta is regarded one of the most promising young artists.

Born 1976 in Mumbai. Lives and works in Mumbai.



Thomas Hirschhorn

“Ur-Collage” B XIX
2008

Cardboard, prints, clear tape
50 x 41,5 cm

*Courtesy Thomas Hirschhorn and
Susanna Kulli Gallery, Zürich*

An «Ur-Collage» is a simple, primitive, prehistoric collage. The obvious feature of an «Ur-Collage» consists in its creating a new world from only two elements of the existing world. These two elements or images are printed matter, and it is that which associates the two images, namely, that they are printed matter. One of the elements of printed matter is a double-page advertisement, and the other element is an image printed out on a home printer. I don't say that this latter image, the picture of a dead, destroyed person, comes from the internet as if it came from another world, because this image is also of this world. The one image is not accused, and the other is not accusing; rather, I want to connect the two images with one another, to bring them together; I want to glue them together into a new worldview. An «Ur-Collage» is not information, not journalism, not commentary. An «Ur-Collage» creates a truth and I am concerned with giving a form to this truth. (Shortened version of the artist's statement).

*Thomas HIRSCHHORN was born 1957 in Bern.
He lives and works in Paris.*



Ardian Isufi

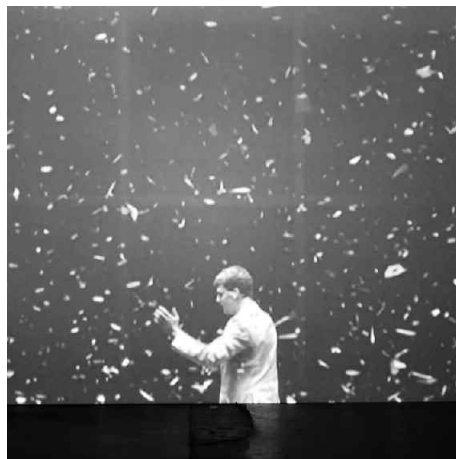
“Relics”
2009

Mixed media (acrylic, ink, oil pencil)
260 x 200 cm

Courtesy the artist

... pieces of history and identity...objects that reflect over periods and events...the phantasmagoric monument of the myth...butaforic relics of communist paradoxes that situates yet paradoxically with archeological remaining that speak and tell about bygone times as valuable signs of representation...

Ardian Isufi lives and works in Tirana.



Adam Leech

“Speech Bubble”
2008

DVD video
loop, 5'

Courtesy of Hoet-Bekaert Gallery and Argos

In *Speech Bubble* we encounter a salesman, seemingly existing in an indefinable, infinite space. The thin membrane that once defined his reality and made it graspable, has burst. What remains are small particles and fragments whirling around. We hear two voices, the voice of the man and the voice of a woman. The two speak to each other, against each other and past each other. Words and phrases seem to generate other words and phrases; through questions and answers but also through rhyme, rhythm and the unpredictable association-flows of the subconscious. The human presence becomes elusive. Uncanny connections and gaps arise and the character of the film becomes half-human and half-synthetic.

Speech Bubble began as an investigation into the bankruptcy of Lernout & Hauspie – a Belgian high-tech company specialising in speech recognition. Similar to other multinational IT companies, Lernout & Hauspie experienced spectacular success during the second half of the 90s. However, a collective over-confidence in high-tech future utopias and a cultification of a daring entrepreneurial spirit together contributed to the creation of a financial bubble. A bubble that suddenly burst in 2001. And history repeats itself. As an omen about our contemporary time, *Speech Bubble* was produced in 2008, just before the bursting of yet another financial bubble. A bubble with worldwide consequences, causing many of us to reflect on the seemingly omnipotent but elusive spirit of global capitalism.

Adam LEECH works in video, performance and painting. In his videos he often performs as a trickster or shape-shifter, characters that serve as vehicles for social commentary and parody. His films are characterised by an elegant and reduced aesthetic and are imbued with both humour and sincerity.

Adam LEECH was born in 1973 in Chicago and now lives in Brussels.



Ursula Mayer

“The Lunch in Fur/Le Déjeuner en Fourrure”,
2008

16mm film
7'30"/ loop

“The Crystal Gaze”
2007

16 mm Film
8'; loop

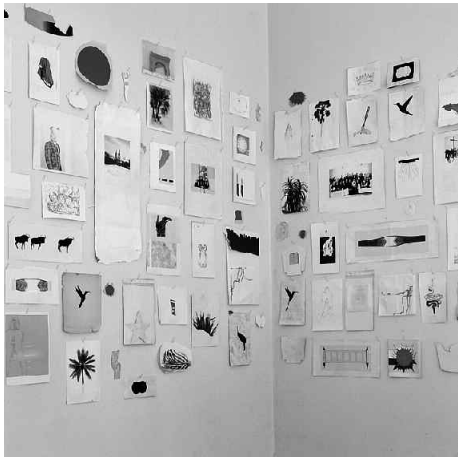
Courtesy of Ursula Mayer, LUX London, Monitor Gallery, Rome

MAYER's recent body of film works reflect upon and dismantle elements of cinematic narrative. The film works enact a superimposition in which historical figures and spaces coincide, without ever resolving into a simple or fictional contemporaneity. Infused with references of the early avant-garde and architecture, the films explore the possibilities of performative staging to create a rich web of non-fixed storylines of history as retrospective, subjective and intrinsically fictitious.

In *Le Déjeuner en Fourrure*, *The Lunch in Fur*, (2008), viewers witness an imagined encounter of artist Meret OPPENHEIM, photographer Dora MAAR, and dancer Josephine BAKER in a modernist living room that seems haunted by memories of the avant-garde: PICASSO's portrait of MAAR, OPPENHEIM's fur-covered cup, a chessboard of Surrealist forms, and a tape recorder, all present on the set, become figures in an enigmatic play about the nature of memory.

The film *The Crystal Gaze* (2007) extends these issues of identity and architecture. In *The Crystal Gaze* three women occupy a lavish setting of an Art Deco palace as background for a dislocated and complex script. In seductive distortions of film, the frequent shifts in the dialogue from "I" to "us" accentuate these gaps and hint at a shared history that binds the film's elusive characters together.

Ursula MAYER was born in 1970 in Austria. She lives and works in London.



Oskar Mörnerud

“Janssons frestelse”
 (“Jansson's temptation”)
 2009

Painting installation including acrylic paintings on paper, scribbles, pieces of junk, wooded desk, stack of folders

Courtesy the artist

With his painting installations, Oskar MÖRNERUD examines the possibilities and limitations of our human perception, while exploring our understanding of reality and the dynamics of our decision making processes. For his new piece — a web of images, scribbles and junk — the artist has used his grandmother's photo album as a point of departure. It is an album that not only hold family memories, but that also describes the birth of the revivalist movement in the Swedish countryside of the 1930s. This provincial fragment of history meets and communicates in Tirana with other historical fragments, reflected in the ravaged walls of Hotel Dajti, built around the same period of time. A coming together of these two worlds not only encourages reflection on our tendency to construct ideals, but also evoke questions about our need to imagine paradise and our different ways to relate to this need.

*Oskar MÖRNERUD was born in 1976 in Örebro (S).
 He lives and works in Malmö (S).*



Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba

“The Ground, the Root
 and the Air: The Passing
 of the Bodhi Tree”
 2004-2007

Digital video on HD reproducer
 14' 30"

*Courtesy of The Quiet in the Land, Laos
 Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo
 Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York.*

Best known for his films shot underwater, Jun NGUYEN-HATSUSHIBA examines the impact of globalization through the lens of Southeast Asia. In the film *The Ground, the Root, and the Air: The Passing of the Bodhi Tree* he looks at the Laos region's various youth cultures as they try to achieve contemporary definitions of success without losing the essential roots of their heritage. The film observes ambition for individual achievement as traditional values and customs are shifting in the minds of the youth. It becomes apparent that these shifts cannot be ignored in order to become a competitive society and the film attempts to capture this turbulent evolution. *The Ground* depicts a group of determined joggers running on a circular track in an open-air stadium. In the interlude, entitled *The Root*, we see illusory images of traditional lanterns, featuring during the annual Festival of Light in Luang Prabang, while the final chapter, *The Air*, depicts a group of students drifting down the Mekong River amid the passing landscape. The site of the Bodhi Tree, a symbol of Buddhism, causes some to abandon their boats, a gesture indicative of these cultural controversies.

Jun NGUYEN-HATSUSHIBA was born in 1968 in Tokyo, Japan. Currently lives in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.



Erik Olofsen

“Drives”
 2006-2007

3 channel video installation
 25' 19", loop

Courtesy the artist

Cars pass by in slow motion on three large video projections. Razor-sharp everyday images are blown up to fluid tableaux. They glide in a dreamlike tempo, where time extends so that split seconds seem to last forever. People sit in their cars – in small metal cocoons – protected from the outside world, and ignorant of the fact that they are at this moment being viewed by the camera's all-seeing eye. Erik OLOFSEN has employed a high-speed camera, which shoots many frames per second. He filmed the cars whilst he was overtaking them, so the feeling that they are still moving forward is maintained, even though the film is actually played in reverse. As a consequence of using this technique, time appears as if in another dimension. It is expanded, details are enlarged, and the movements almost grind to a halt. Time is not frozen, as in a photographic snapshot, but it is stretched out and elongated. Real time is drawn out in the same way as happens when one is involved in an accident, where adrenalin facilitates the brain so it can take in more details – see more frames, so to speak – so a second can feel like an eternity.

*Erik OLOFSEN was born in 1970.
 He lives and works in Amsterdam.*



Adrian Paci

“Per Speculum”
2006

Film projection
DVD
6' 5", loop

*Courtesy of Francesca Kaufmann Gallery,
Milan, Peter Kilchmann Gallery, Zurich,
Peter Blum Gallery, New York*

Adrian PACI's film *Per Speculum* takes place in an idyllic landscape, more reminiscent of a fairy tale than reality. The camera pans over the billowing landscape, but soon focuses on a group of children dressed in timeless clothes. The image zooms out and it is revealed that this image of the children is enclosed within the frame of a large mirror. There they are caught in the eye of the camera and in the reflection from the mirror. A boy picks up a catapult and releases a shot that shatters the glass of the mirror and the picture it has created. The landscape expands behind the mirror and shows that the children, like a picture in the picture, are captured in a representation of reality.

*Adrian PACI was born 1969 in Shkodër (Al).
He lives and works in Milano.*



Anila Rubiku

“I would love some”
“Do Lo Res on Arad City”
“A short story on Tokujin's
Bouquet”
“A man on the potty”
“Oh man sighhhhhhhh”
“Like a Cactus”
2009

Dry point on cooper, etching on paper
56 x 48 cm

“Even today it's so
contemporary”
2009

Steel, cotton thread, wood
29 x 113 x 20,5 cm

*Courtesy Anila Rubik and
Galleria Alessandro Bagnai, Firenze*

Anila RUBIKU's work is permeated by philosophical aspects of travel or mind-journeys. Present is a desire to be elsewhere, fluctuating expectations and hopes and the subjective perception of faraway places and people. This comes as a natural consequence of RUBIKU's nomadic life-style and her need to create sense of new places or fulfil a homing instinct. There is an ongoing dialogue between inside and outside with an investigation into the relationship between the body, architecture and the home. Her work also reflects on industrialization, modernization and the design for living, while addressing issues of gender and sexuality in connection to urban domestic life. This series, of black and white erotic cactus etchings, was developed during the artist's residency in Arizona and are intentionally framed in kitsch elaborate gold frames with floral mounts. The cactus that grows prolifically in Arizona has phallic connotations through its bizarre expansion and contraction with the climate. Also the local Mexicans consider the cactus to be a potent aphrodisiac and carry cactus symbols as fertility charms. RUBIKU here employs the sexual symbolism of the cactus to comment on the dynamics of a rapidly transforming urban development and ever increasing populations.

*Anila RUBIKU was born in 1970 in Durrës, (Al).
She lives and works in Milano.*



Alexander Vaindorf

“Detour. One Particular
Sunday”
2006-2008

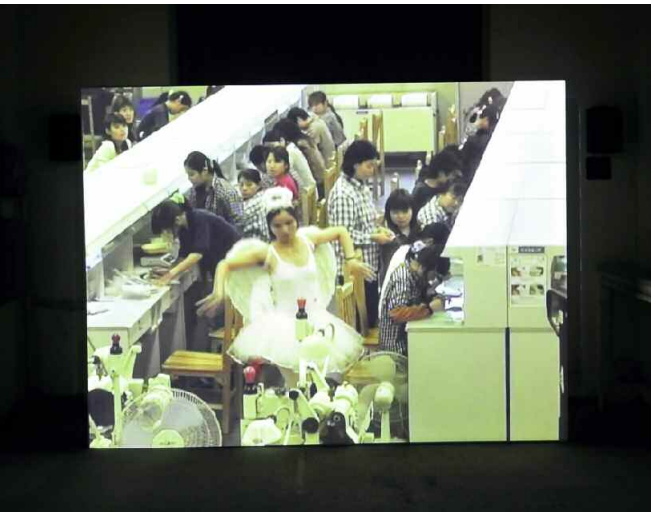
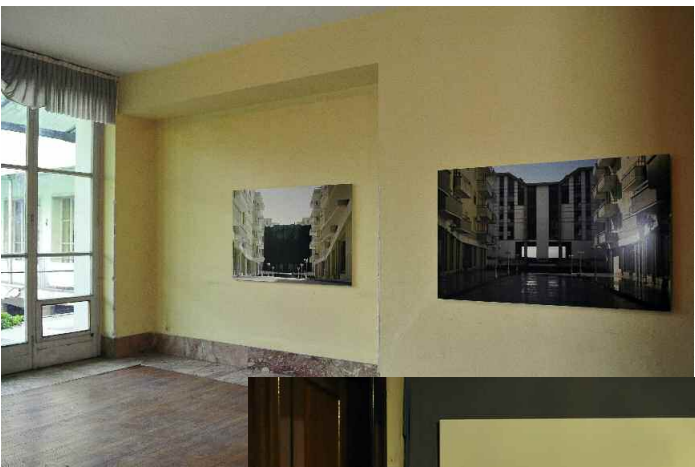
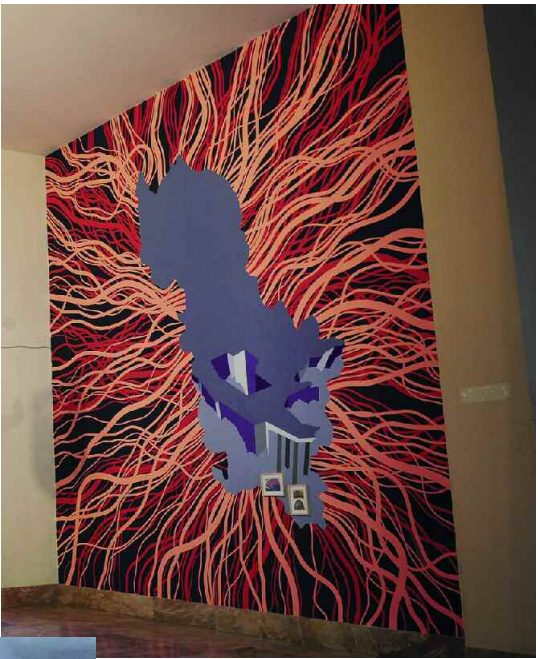
3 channel video installation
DVD
60'

Courtesy the artist

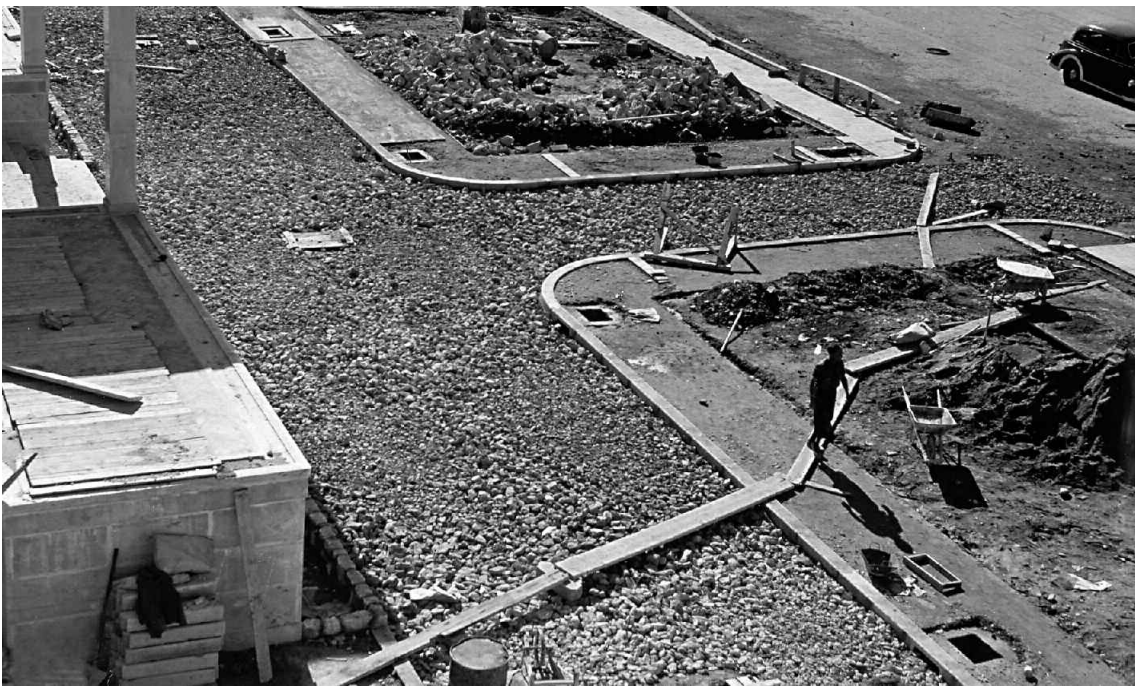
After Perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet industrial system, a large number of the former Soviet Union citizens migrated to Italy in search for work. Around 300.000 Ukrainians, mostly women from industrial towns, now live in Rome and support their families back home by taking care of old people. Locked up in Italian homes and invisible during the week, they come out on Sundays, their only day off and take over particular sites, such as “Park of Resistance”.

Detour. One Particular Sunday examines the effects elsewhere, the “echo” of the resent developments in Eastern Europe — illegal migration, issues of double identity and the formation of informal communities and economies. This three-channel film concentrates on individuals who involuntarily become part of these processes. It grasps a time fragment in the current history of “unified Europe” where a considerable number of people are not only excluded, but also subjected to contemporary forms of slavery.

*Alexander VAINDORF was born 1965 in Odessa.
He lives and works in Stockholm.*







Episode 2

Ana Dzokic & Marc Neelen

STEALTH.unlimited | curators of Episode 2

Arriving as an outsider to Tirana, it is easy to get carried away by the frantic energy that pushes, drives, chews, digests and certainly invents and reinvents this city in such a massive way. It seems to be possessed by an individual energy and crude optimism that is hard to find in most European societies. At the very same time, it is equally easy to get stuck in the effects that such a harsh individualism has on the city, its urban life and the culture of all living it. Intuitively, amidst the astonishment one can have for the speed and scale of developments in Tirana, it is not difficult to feel the upcoming crash of such a society into its own achievements – however we appreciate or fear its real character. Is this crash immanent? And moreover – will it give birth to a different, possibly more inventive way of living a city like this?

In an attempt to critically respond to the current development of Tirana — through ‘wild’ urbanization, fast capital investment and set within the horizon of a neoliberal context – T.I.C.A.B. – Tirana International Contemporary Art Biannual – this year expands beyond the field of visual arts, into the domain of architecture and processes of urbanization. By involving architects, artists, cultural workers, activists and journalists from the Western Balkans region and the wider global context, Episode 2 examines the deficiencies resulting from the highly individual and profit driven development of contemporary cities — and points at alternatives that emerge from these cracks, opening the

horizon to different contributions and involvement of citizen’s to what the future of our cities could be.

To reflect where Tirana stands today and speculate where it could possibly be heading to, in terms of discrepancies and potentials, a number of issues have been framed in 11 rooms of the mezzanine floor of Hotel Dajti. It is a selection of cases brought together and interrelated in order to bring an urban narrative of the recent development of cities – with Tirana always on the horizon of what we encounter.

[11 cases]

Which are the dominant processes that transform cities today? First of all, the literal weight of urbanisation – in terms of the amount of buildings being produced today, their impact on the environment and power that construction brings along. It is surprising that in today’s world, with the focus of production gradually shifting from material to more immaterial (light, interactive, exchangeable) forms, the amounting of stone, sand, concrete and metal still gives confidence to many of us. [room 0, “Estate”]

Such confidence – still very strong in Albanian society, where the ownership of house and ground are one of the most important achievements – in today’s societies is tricky, to say the least. Or plain naive. The decline of Detroit

shows the perverse effect of the real-estate market and urban development schemes. In Detroit it is possible to buy an abandoned house right in the city center for a mere 100 Dollars. As the value of real-estate has crashed over the years, home and land owners are faced with impossible economies, that make it more attractive to set houses on fire and claim the insurance compensation than to try renting or selling their property. [room 1, “Homes in Hamtramck, Detroit”] Naturally, investment-schemes, (over)production of real-estate and the attraction of large development are not limited to the United States or experiences from decades ago. Right now, just outside of Madrid, some of the most perfect ghost towns are being finished. Who wanders around through them thinks the population has packed and left the place – but in reality, the inhabitants have never arrived. [room 1, “Ghostown (Valdeluz)”]

On the other hand, if inhabitants do arrive, especially in a massive amounts, the effects may be as challenging. The example of the vast number of expats arriving to Dubai, attracted (till very recently) by the fever of its economic promises, its coastal development and the possibility to upgrade lifestyle by simply moving to another context brings to attention the pressure such an influx puts on society. Comparable to Tirana, Dubai’s current urban population consists of a vast majority of new arrivals over the last two decades. Not only did they bring their own culture, but also

they put in the mix their different expectations, and the subsequent impossibility to smoothly transit into a joint future. This future has to be reinvented. It is tempting to see Dubai’s waterfront development reflected in Durrës recent coastal developments, especially if we see the quite ironic proposal of Kartun Development Group [room 2, “Waterfront”] for an continuous concrete slab along the coast practically being realised in the seamless aligning of apartment blocks just 40 km from Tirana.

Similarly, the rapid expansion of some cities, by taking over rural areas and almost literally rolling out the urban mass over the countryside reminds of the impact that the growth of Tirana has on its surrounding territories. It seems, although, that the speed of developments around Tirana leaves little space for daydreaming. [room 2, “Rural Masses, 6 stories of daydreaming”]

Urban (re)development puts an enormous stress on the existing city, its urban society – but as well on the position of the citizen that finds his or herself amidst the powers of real-estate, identity-building and rapidly changing realities. In these situations the power of gentrification is far larger than the reach of the citizen, which is painfully demonstrated by the personal tale of Zhang JINLI in the onset to Beijing’s Olympic Games [room 3, “The Da Zha Lan Project”] or the struggle of a whole neighbourhood against the arrival of an eco-tower to Milan. [room 3, “Isola, a neo-liberal Italian tale”]

A development that seems surprisingly unquestionable in many cities is the reception of shopping malls as the newly arriving future. Hundreds of thousands of square meters are currently under development throughout Albania and its neighbouring countries. In contrast to this, in the pioneering grounds of the mall, the United States, shopping malls are less of a promise. Currently, in the United States, around 4000 shopping malls are ‘dead’ — standing empty, awaiting demolition or new uses. What is often overlooked is the fact that upon its arrival, the mall takes over the social networks in place – and upon its departure, leaves the social fabric

devastated. It pressures to think ahead what the real next future of the mall can bring us. [room 4, DeadMalls, and “In the Meantime, Life with Landbanking”]

The social effects related to the demise of a mall take another perspective in the light of the privatisation of many of the former state companies in Albania and its wider regional context. The particular example of the Boska department store in Banja Luka, Bosnia (a late 1970’s socialist interpretation of the true American Mall) brings forward the cold chill of privatisation awaiting an entire community of workers – and in this case former co-owners of this landmark store. The ambiguous situation around who benefits and who suffers from the commercialisation of this collectively built up (economic and social) capital puts a light on the mostly unfair processes of privatisation, on the vertical alliances and the clientalism among political functionaries and investors – and their effects on urban society. [room 5, “5th December 1978”]

The question of how to build a new communality in the aftermath of the shakes that privatisation brings to society are in an intimate, but exemplary way highlighted through the fate of former collective apartment buildings as found throughout Albania and around. Former – in the sense that these buildings were collectively owned and managed, and in the 1990s hastily have been privatised without much care for the economic and social structure that keeps these buildings functioning. Is it possible to reactivate some of the mechanisms and structures that have been in place before the 1990s to gives these apartment blocks a sustainable future? And what keeps inhabitants of these blocks linked as a society? [room 6, “Our Building”]

In moving from previous models of ownership to possible contemporary ones that keep a collective structure possible, it is important to pay attention to the mechanisms that make such collectives (im)possible. Who would think that exactly the urban regulations, the urban zoning principles, the plot divisions and the credit mechanisms can be those that make it extremely difficult to give urban land a collective function?

And who would think that redefining exactly those urban regulations, zoning schemes etc. would become the main work of an architect in opening up the future potential for affordable collective investments? [room 7, “Radicalizing the Local: Post Bubble Urban Strategies”, **work 33** and “Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations”, **work 34**]

Redefining social housing not only as a sustainable co-investment but equally as a model of empowerment and engagement can be a matter of the elegant coming together of a simple economic formula and a direct engagement with the future users of a building. In the case of the Quinta Monroy neighbourhood in Chile, a careful distinction between the capacity of the investment and the capabilities of the inhabitants delivers an architecture that can be greatly enhanced with very minimal means. The architect simply designs the most difficult and costly part and leaves the fill-in to the inhabitants. [room 8, “Quinta Monroy project”]

Devising the minimal structure that is necessary to live sustainably together is an increasing challenge in societies that cater more and more towards the individual. In rapidly and informally developing urban areas, the issue of infrastructure (roads, water, electricity, sewer) is generally dealt with post-factum. Is it possible, once the buildings have been made, to imagine, or even implement such collective facilities like a sewer system? [room 9, “Flux Beneath Us”, and “City Made by People”]. And on the other hand, if the mechanism of informal expansion is a known fact; can we anticipate it and devise smarter and more inclusive infrastructures even before the construction takes place? [room 9, “Lessons From Bogota”]

This links back to the issue of public infrastructure on the larger scale. In Albania’s wider region, infrastructure development is both neglected and embraced. Investment in infrastructure balances on the risk of corruption, fast returns on investment, incompetence of governmental authorities – but it equally carries the potential for new spaces and new collectivities, as some of the breathtaking

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An Introduction to the Urbanization of Shock Therapy: From Latin America to Eastern Europe

Miguel Robles-Duran

Through history, the process of urbanization has always been a direct image of the needs and wants of the economic regimes that have mandated the specific forms of surplus accumulation, market expansion, territorial control and social subjugation. This article is an attempt to introduce the urbanization of shock therapy in such terms, the very same terms defined by the capitalist logic of urbanization. Any urbanist without the understanding of capital processes is simply just an urban decorator, or worst, a headless instrument of an invisible hand. In this case, the invisible hand is the devastating neoliberal agenda.

The urban impact of early neoliberalism

Since the 1979 shocking consolidation of neoliberalism as the new economic orthodoxy regulating public policy and therefore urbanization in the advanced capitalist world, two very distinct general forms of urbanization have dominated socio-spatial development in almost every major city of the globe. Strategies of inter-urban competition, surplus absorption and poly-central concentration have been the driving force behind the development agenda of advanced capitalist cities, affecting not only the obvious global cities like Paris, London, and Tokyo, but mostly secondary and tertiary cities like Melbourne, Lille, Cincinnati and Yokohama.

Whereas in the third world, with the illusionary desire to join the standards of the developed world, the urban development strategies on one hand have been subject to the mimicking of those considered advanced and on the other, to the economic imposition of the international neoliberal regulatory bodies, whose main urban interest is in the production of a safe and open environment for foreign direct investment (fdi). Social theorist David HARVEY explain the latter as: ‘the fundamental mission of the neoliberal state is to create a “good business climate” and therefore to optimize conditions for capital accumulation no matter what the consequences for employment or social well being’ . Demonstrating the dialectic of capitalist production, these parallel processes of urbanization have been dramatically unbalanced and heavily tilted in favor of the so-called advanced urbanities. The introduction of neoliberalism to the third world required a much bigger dose of shock therapy.

If the neoliberal agenda as described by HARVEY ‘proposes that human well being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade’ , then its clear that only those urbanities with developed economies and institutional frameworks would be able to successfully rebuild as power centers for capitalist accumulation and attract the massive amounts of surplus generated by the

neoliberal exploitation of the weak, underdeveloped and emerging urbanities. More than in the previous two general capitalist modes of urbanization (Fordism and Keynesianism) the advanced neoliberal urbanization has made the parallel form of urbanization of the third world instrumental to its expansive growth, so much that it has become almost impossible to conceive any form of third world urbanization that doesn’t submit to the aggressive ways and wants of the neoliberal agenda.

The neoliberal regime has not expanded by the acquisition and ordering of weak territories, as many past regimes did after a conquest; instead, during its 29 years of domination, the global success of the neoliberal regime has been characterized by its violent penetration into any existing urban order or disorder. In the early 1970’s, the American political scientist Samuel HUNTINGTON argued that expanding thru penetration is in fact a mode of domination that is highly compatible with the multiplication of national sovereignties in the Third World. Indeed, the multiplication of sovereignties of the last three decades has not only facilitated the growth of multinational markets but more importantly, it has opened new territories to foreign direct investment, creating what HARVEY calls ‘fresh fields for capitalist accumulation’ . What characterized these ‘fields’ before the neoliberal penetration was a vulnerable economy, plus in some cases an existing or produced socio-political

instability. This was the case of Chile in 1973, the famous first neoliberal State experiment, produced by a US supported military coupe that ousted the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende, which was believed to be a threat to the capitalist elites of Chile and the big interests of foreign corporate capital investments.

In this early experiment, the urban impact of the shock therapy was not as nicely orchestrated as the economic policy that produced it. No real attention was paid to urbanization until 1979, when an amendment was made to the general urban plan of the city, proposing a large territorial extension. In principle, the objective of the shock was never spatial, although an important neoliberal prescription was the privatization of space. State property was offered to the open market and private concessions to the building and management of public spaces and urban infrastructure were also sold. In a few years, most subsidized rental housing was converted to subsidized private housing; schools, hospitals and many public buildings were also offered to the market along with the State's construction industry; parks, transit infrastructure, utilities, urban management and services were given to private concession. In short, the production of the city, that since the late 19th Century and throughout a large part of the 20th Century was the responsibility of a democratic social state and its welfare, was now at the will of a corrupt authoritarian regime, its supporting developers, real estate speculators and international investors. The spatial consequences of such economic transformations were immense and possibly never predicted by the early neoliberal economists. I summarize in 6 general points the physical urban effect of the orchestrated economic shock:

1. The expansion of informal settlements, mostly in the peripheries, adding to the ones formed as consequence of Chile's period of Industrialization.
2. The forced displacement of poor dwellers from central areas of the city towards housing settlements in the periphery, causing the multiplication of 'affordable' housing districts and the enclosing of middle-high class 'residential' areas.

3. The creation of what I call 'green zones,' – a term inspired by the new American war terminology – urban fragments that are considered safe for direct foreign investment and tourism.
4. The building of central business districts (CBD) designed to concentrate in type of 'green zone,' the administrative, commercial and financial operations of the fresh capital injection that came from privatization.
5. The introduction of poly-centrality as the main planning concept of the city. The making of Central business districts and 'green zones' already followed such conception.
6. The expansion of the main streets and avenues of the poly-center network and the construction of new roads to reinforce the importance of the newly determined centralities. This goes together with the infrastructural and technological investment necessary to support such urban 'regeneration.'

These points exemplify to my view, the most extreme urban territorial transformations produced by neoliberalism and by no means cover the total urban impact of shock therapy. Similar points can be made in regards to the environmental disasters produced by the imposition of such rapid changes; the social ache brought by the dissolution of collective relations and economic exchange forms; and the radical alterations of patterns of daily life along with the mental conceptions about the city. It is also important to note that the urban processes under industrialization and the functionalist planning that normally came with it, had already produced deep class divisions in the city, capital spatial concentration, informal settlements and large infrastructural transformations. Neoliberal urbanization multiplied these effects and introduced new and better forms of penetration.

Neoliberal urbanization heralded the total social de-concentration of alienated dwellers and workers, by way of the indeterminate scattering of the means of production and their dependents into the outskirts, voids and

peripheries of the city. While the 19th century showed the formation of peripheral concentrations of labor space and housing in determinate spaces inside or outside the city, the late 20th and early 21st century examples and its correlated urban theories, would show us the splintering of the fragments and the submission of their economic autonomy to the urban centers of capital accumulation. Neoliberal urbanism brought a radical division in the civic appropriation of the urban fabric and ultimately bringing the worldwide-pronounced confidence on the idea of the polycentric city, defining the proliferation of urban centralities, as the main operative principle of neoliberal urbanization.

Learning not only from Chile but also from other third world Nations that during the 1980's, under the influence of economic shock therapy, went through similar abrupt processes of urbanization, one cannot help to observe how perfected the methodological frameworks of shock therapy have become. To my view, the best urban examples of such perfected evolution can be found in the neoliberal penetration of vulnerable Eastern European cities after the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1989 and the impact this had throughout Europe.

Eastern Europe and the Perfection of Shock Therapy

The opening of Eastern European nations prompted neoliberal academics to take all historical defeats and successes of neoliberal economic penetration and begin to assemble a more precise and scientific theory that could guide the economic and political conversion of communist or socialist regimes into contemporary capitalist States. Early traces of such theory were first published by the American economist Jeffrey SACHS in January 1990 under the title 'What is to be done?' a form of sarcastic inversion to the once highly influential communist text written by Lenin. Sachs' article dealt with the manner in which neoliberalism should seek to penetrate and triumph in the unstable region. This first article along with other influential texts and lectures

he made during that year, were received by the American government and many academics as containing the most incisive prescriptions for dealing with such incredible task, crediting SACHS with the founding of a new discipline, 'The Economic Theory of the Transition,' later to be known as 'The Theory of Economic Shock Therapy.' I should denote, that according to John Lloyd, a neoliberal economist very close to Sachs, the shock therapy program was precisely designed to be applied in non-democratic States, as in his words, 'no democratic electorate would tolerate [it] for half a year. Yet if it fails there will be no democracy.' The theory traced its objectives on the totality of the post-communist region and not on the specifics of the different States that composed it, obviously leaving the problem of urbanization out of the urgent conversion equation. One might have expected that the teachings of past Latin American and Asian transitions could have prompted the economists and politicians of the disastrous urban effects, social losses and disruptions generated by the consequential rapid migration, territorial destabilization and the alterations of property rights. After eleven years of shocks, it was clearer that the neoliberal penetration was neither about civic rights nor about the betterment of the overall living conditions, as Sachs once claimed 'a recovery of human freedom and a democratically based rise in living standards.' For its patrons, neoliberalism in the third world was about economic domination and never about building an environment for a civic society, in the words of economist Peter GOWAN, 'the supporters of shock therapy turn the idea of building a civil society in the East into the simple notion of ending state interference, state funding and state control. Society, it seems, would be civil only if there was no political interference. The respect for popular sovereignty, the building of links between public policy and voter preferences, or responding positively to expressions of public protest or strike action by desperate employees, forms no part of this program. Strong public protest against the kinds of privatization favored in the West or against increasingly unpopular examples of predatory Western buy-outs are to be ignored.' Such has been the fate of the Eastern European city.

The city became a territory for predatory investment and economic exploitation. As long as there was some kind of formal structure to enforce private property, secure foreign investment and to make daily life better in a few 'green zones,' the other present forms of urbanization such as the extreme growth of informal dwellings and slums, ongoing illegal territorial repartitions or the chaotic practices of the building industries, were often disregarded as unimportant casualties of the shock process. Neglecting its urban and social dimension, any Eastern European nation wishing to restructure and join the international capitalist markets, would have to follow and accomplish these points :

1. Opening the city to international trade. The building of key urban infrastructure for its support was prioritized, focusing investment into trade highways and entry ports than to the inner fabric of the city.
2. Private ownership as the main engine of urban growth. Leaving any form of social or public regulation inoperative, consequently, the city became a wild, wild, west environment open to any form of speculation and trade.
3. Corporate ownership as the dominant organizational form for large enterprises. Urban priority was given for the construction of headquarters and foreign corporate branches, mostly in the 'green zones.'
4. Obligatory openness to direct foreign investment with little or no anti-dumping regulation. This meant that any previously established associations or businesses would now be at the mercy of the ravishing market forces of the West.
5. Urban finances and large development credits to be "regulated" by key international economic institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These forms of debt control made sure that the mediation of all future urban development would be at the hands of foreign interests.
6. The obligatory import of key development

technologies, consultancies, managerial talent and organizational patterns, so to guarantee that the application of the development priorities went unobstructed.

Any Eastern European nation that would conform to the previous points would unquestionably see similar drastic urban transformations as the ones experimented by the Chilean city, as well as the similar weakening of social power, the end of state help or intervention, massive unemployment and the sudden drop of living standards. In contradiction to the historical indicators, SACHS was convinced that the follow through of these restructuring points would help Eastern European nations 'rejoin the rest of the global economy by importing some prosperity from the rest of the world'. But as GOWAN rightly pointed out, the restructuring was not to be a fully internal democratic decision, the restructuring was to be left to 'market signals' and 'market forces' and especially to Western market forces entering through foreign direct investment, as the governments lacked the financial resources to buy large enterprises. The task of target governments was limited to depress wages, to impose hard-budget constraints upon enterprises and to privatize for cash. Market signals and forces will do the rest. Public sector interventionism was certainly necessary, but it took the form of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), exerting necessary leverage to ensure that these points were followed and making sure that any restructuring of state-owned enterprises was blocked before their privatization.

Nineteen years have passed since the first transitional shocks of the eastern European economic therapy, which is an average time span for the evaluation of economic and urban policy. By now, Warsaw, Bucharest, Zagreb, Tirana and Belgrade, to name a few, have surrendered control of their growth to private market forces, foreign direct investments, foreign credits, foreign institutions and to the trade economy of foreign products. However, one important diversion from SACHS' prescription has to be noted, as he seemed unaware of the ethical difficulties of massive

privatization, ‘that those in the target States with the cash to buy a steel mill would be very few in number and without question former or current crooks at the head of Mafia pyramids’. These local millionaires have learned fast to adapt to the scheme. Contrary to what many people are told to believe, a large chunk of the ‘foreign’ investments in some of the Eastern-European countries are made by local businessmen (in close connection to the state’s power structures) and covered up through offshore companies. As an effect of all these changes and due to promoted speculation, land privatization and spatial capital concentration, the territorial organization of these cities has spurred out of control and in many cases it has generated social and environmental havoc. Social relations in these cities are almost unrecognizable to what they were twenty years ago; now, foreign commodities, broad class differentiations (from ultra poor to ultra rich), depredatory competition and European Union aspirations mediate all social relations. From a personified dictatorship to a market dictatorship, this has been the fate of Eastern Europe, represented to perfection in the radically polarized condition of its cities, MARX’s general critique on the capitalist city now precisely applies to these somehow new urbanities, but with a twist ‘The intimate connection between the pangs of hunger of the most industrious layers of the working class, and the extravagant consumption, coarse or refined, of the rich, for which capitalist accumulation is the basis, reveals itself only when the economic laws are known. It is otherwise with the city and the “housing of the poor.” Every unprejudiced observer sees that the greater the centralization of the means of production, the greater is the corresponding heaping together of the laborers within a given space; that therefore the swifter capitalist accumulation, the more miserable are the dwellings of the working people. “Improvements” of towns, accompanying the increase of wealth, by the demolition of badly built quarters, the erection of palaces for banks, warehouses, etc., the widening of streets for business traffic, for the carriages of luxury, and for the introduction of tramways, etc., drive the poor into even worse and more crowded hiding-places. On the other hand, everyone knows that the dearness of dwellings is the inverse ratio to their excellence,

and that the mines of misery are exploited by house speculators with more profit or less cost than ever were the mines of Potosi.’ The twist is that the great capital accumulation and the centralized control of the means of production are not being manifested in these cities, they have been manifesting in the ‘improvements’ of the advanced West.

For how long can we continue to tolerate the powerlessness of spatial practices under such strong neoliberal dictates? In the face of such appalling urban transformations, architects and urbanist must begin to take responsibility, it is urgent to counter such raiding form of urbanization and become operative in these cities. For this, we will need to redefine our education and practice around the spatial understanding of a tragic reality of limited social relations, confrontations and experiences, not on superficial design practices, dead fantasies or banal spectacular constructions. I believe that this alternative can only emerge from the critical and practical engagements, with institutions, society and all the individual behaviors that construct contemporary urban life, and to achieve this, we need a radical expansion of knowledge and most importantly of action. We must acquire the knowledge to engage in governmental processes, in the organization of the political-economy, in the system of rights, in social organization; this, in order to gain access into the true transformative processes of the environment, the city, its fabric and the people that build it. A setting of a practice that is neither top or down, but that mediates the transformative realities that define our dreadful ecologies. This is the call I make to urbanists and architects, a call to redefine the practice.

Miguel ROBLES-DURÁN, architect/urbanist, teaches urbanism at the ZHDK in Zurich, Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and TU Delft. He is co-founder of Cohabitation Strategies a Rotterdam based cooperative for socio-spatial development, and is currently assisting Venezuela, in the design and material conception of the “Socialist City of the XXI Century”.

Notes

[1] HARVEY, D. “Spaces of Global Capital: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development” Verso, London, 2003, p. 25

[2] HARVEY, D. “A Brief History of Neoliberalism” Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.2

[3] HUNTINGTON, S.P., ‘Transnational Organizations in World Politics’, World Politics, vol. 25, no.3 (1973) p.344.

[4] HARVEY, D. “Spaces of Global Capital: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development” p. 25, Verso, 2003.

[5] The Green Zone is the common name given to the [5]International Zone of Iraq, completely surrounded by high concrete blast walls, T-Walls and barbed wire and access was available through a handful of entry control points, all of which were controlled by Coalition troops. It is this security that makes the Green Zone the safest area of Baghdad.

[6] Lloyd, J. Comrades in Monetarism, London Review of Books, May 1992, p.28

[7] Gowan, P. Neo-Liberal Theory and Practice in Eastern Europe, The New Left Review 1/213 September-October 1995, p.28

[8] These points allude to the key restructuring points set by Sachs in his economic theory of transition, mentioned in his article ‘Consolidating Capitalism’, Foreign Policy, no. 98, spring 1995

[9] SACHS, J. Poland’s Jump to the Market Economy, Cambridge, Mass. 1993, p. 3.

[10] GOWAN, P. Neo-Liberal Theory and Practice in Eastern Europe, The New Left Review, 1/213 September-October 1995, p.17

[11] *ibid*, p.7

[12] In the case of Serbia, a research team of B92 Radio and TV concludes that: “... today the largest owners of office and residential space, as well as of hectares of land in Belgrade and Serbia, are Serbian businessmen who made their purchases through privatization or at auctions, hiding behind various offshore companies. Following that direction, the public got the wrong impression that after privatization most of the property was owned by foreign capital.” (“Abuse of office”, Insider TV documentary, RTV B92, 2009)

[13] MARX, Karl (1876) Capital vol. 1, Ch. 25, p. 325, Britanica Great Books Founders Edition, 1952

Going Out of Capital A
a contribution to institutional critique of new
architecture and planning practice

based on the contribution to *Tirana Dialogues*, October 2009

Marko Sančanin

The Tirana Dialogues during this Biannual aimed at involving an architectural imagination and social engagement in public debate about the city — consequently the City of in Tirana. But how are we to expect something like social criticism or political imagination from a discipline (architecture) that long time ago lost its capacity to perform its social purpose and obligations?

Recently I was asked to comment on the emerging regional stardom of Croatian architects. The 2000s witnessed an ostensive growth in real estate developments, architectural proposals, large-scale commissions and an intensive cultural promotion through exhibitions and the architecture press. The editors of one of the most influential architecture magazines in the region expected me to praise Croatian architecture as regionally significant and progressive. What I wanted to discuss instead was the obvious discordance between the success of urban and architectural real-estate projects and their social implications. Even then — and it was in 2004, still early enough that no-one could foresee today’s financial crisis — it was plain clear that the “agents of change” and “leopards of transition”, in which terms those successful architects were admired, were practically unable to differ between architecture as a technical skill that has its value on the market and what is usually called “architecture as knowledge” in terms it that has a cognitive potential and gets its full value through the production of a discourse

within a broader social context. Limiting their social agency on financial regulations and bureaucratic schemes, the discipline of architecture affirmed its underlying anguish from the beginning of the modernist movement — that of becoming an obsolete factor in the development of the city.

While things were economically going well, no-one was suspecting anything could be possibly wrong. The society of advanced capitalism could only generate wealth and affluence. As long as it was catering architects’ urge for building ever-new forms, they had no need for refusal. But as we know affluence has always been the great social tranquilizer. MARCUSE was right when he asserted, “there is no reason to insist on self-determination if the administered life is comfortable” [1]. Now that we are in crisis, things seem a bit different. The good thing is that this crisis is putting architects back in the same position with everybody else.

It would be unfair to claim that the Tirana Biennial is totally different from other cultural clichés that perpetuate the production cycles of art market. It is almost impossible to escape from tendencies and modes of behaviour influenced by capitalist society. Also we have to understand that biennial in Tirana was born under the patronage of the populist governance of Edi RAMA. The mayor of Tirana saw the Biennial as an attempt to match the standards of other western capitals.

Still, we could say that the artistic event in Tirana, even though international, takes place at the periphery of western cultural circles. However the organizers seem to understand well that international cultural practices could also be transfigured into strategies to deal with social urgencies of the local. The decision to place this year’s event in the rundown Hotel Dajti — a place that for Albanians poses both an aura of totalitarian political past and of unfinished modernism, was a good attempt to problematize on urban development as a historical and political process. They also understand that marginality has to do with the colonial regimes of knowledge within which such entities as “the West,” “the Balkans”, the Second, and the Third World are produced. We might say that post-communist cities grew on the margins of the European modernist project. Nevertheless, during the transformations of the 1990s, it became self-evident that the city is also place that constantly reconfigures the notion of the periphery. What we witness in Tirana, for almost 10 years now, is not a delayed, undeveloped or unfinished modernism but rather an example of another modernity which should be considered an integral part of international (post) modernity per sé.

Being positioned aside from real social agency, as architects, we started to practice our intellectual opposition through different forms of activism. Those practices are trying to give an answer to urban paradoxes of a collapsing

but still resilient capitalism. Activism has taken different organizational, legal and economic corporate forms. Faced with an urgent need to start building a critical architectural discourse from the scratch, those corporate forms might seem like a good refuge. Nevertheless, I am more inclined to think that the corporate logic behind them is also suffering from the present crisis in architectural discourse. Even though radical shifts have happened in the fields of working techniques, we haven't moved much from the pre-established corporate logic and organizational intelligence of existing architectural institutions. If we want to address the contemporary urban condition, how we institutionalize ourselves in the urban realm should be seen as a political activity and a message in itself. In her insightful text, Chantal MOUFFE made a concluding remark that "it is not in our power to eliminate conflicts and escape our human condition..." (that of being active political subjects, a/n) ... "but it is in our power to create practices, discourses and institutions that would allow those conflicts to take an agonistic form" [2]. Not until we understand architecture and urbanism as a form of political imagination we will be able to judge its social effects.

What follows are few neuralgic points that mark both our inability to operate in a wider social and political context and to understand the inner structural weaknesses of the new corporate forms we inhabit. All of them come from my experience in collaborating with different collective architecture practices from the Balkan region. They are, however, pretty much applicable in other contexts as well. I do not pretend to give an exhaustive reading of the subject but I hope to give a contribution to a debate that is yet to come.

When claiming social agency and engagement, we tend to ground our actions on ideas of modern society. Ideas that greatly relied on an active role of citizens, advanced democracy and political culture performed in various spheres of publicness. Today, however, we live in different cities. When speaking of participation, we are unaware of the erosion of political culture that has made political antagonisms obsolete. The usual political polarizations have flattened out, and everything simply reverses into its

opposite. In the post-political cities of today, citizens are disinterested in participating in communal social networks. Even more, "...the inability of today's citizens to understand forms of commonality outside of their localized identities and particular interests, is closely connected with a fear from different others"[3]. The human selfishness has become one of the main obstacles of sustainable urban development. To be able to act in these circumstances we have to imagine new social experiences. We have to stubbornly insist on other basic human conditions— that of mankind being selfless. The city as prime place of political imagination can regain its vitality only if the multitude of individual interests meet again in the political arena. There is a whole new world of political ideas and social species that inhabit the contemporary urban reality. Their antagonisms should be dealt with openly and architects can help articulating them by realizing the different spatial practices that produce the city. Imagining new social experiences is closely connected with our ability to imagine new programs that would be based on hybridity and promiscuity of types, economies of trust and social enterprises that produce open-ended urban and architectural solutions.

Even for our fellow-architects that thrive on the present conjunction of populist policies and real-estate market interest, the financialization of the city government has become a problem. The global financial market directly interferes with the distribution of profit and the denomination of architecture related services that used to be organized under the close scrutiny and approval of the architectural guild. But more importantly, the same process implies financialization of the public services and the distribution of urban standards. Even though we haven't yet seen any concrete example of successful private management of public services, it is proclaimed that the management of public goods is inefficient and unsustainable in comparison to the private enterprises that are regulated by financial markets. When architects object to these tendencies they mainly point to the aesthetical preferences of political and financial elites. The fact we hardly mention is that the capitalist mode of production (of the urban) is a paradox in itself, because it continues to

accumulate contradictions and deep social inequalities. All parties involved should reconsider their production until a new social deal is established. As part of this deal, we should establish a new kind of architectural practice that could be more seen as a social enterprise. Primary goal of any social enterprise is to solve a social problem. Claims of authorship, formal preoccupations, and financial gains should be put aside. Leaving its professional armour behind and opening up to the world of social contingencies could be very exciting for the profession. After all, good design always comes as an outcome of thinking outside the box.

Many of our practices that developed in the transformative 1990s have been established as non-for-profits. Our activities dealt with architecture and urban planning in a wider spectrum of social issues. Projects often took the form of social agency, cultural activism and advocacy that intervene in the political sphere. Being defined as a part of civil society, it is important to be well aware that those civil corporate forms, their economical niches and their NGO - discourse was partially shaped in respect to a western concept of civil society. Their organizational bodies were local versions of the legal forms and standards that were invented and largely exported from the west. The way we claim our social agency, talk about concepts of democracy, which know-how we are using, how the *application language* underscores our organizational credo, where the resources come from — it is all connected to the way our corporate forms work and the social function they perform. The concept of civil society is one of the normalizing standards that are usually injected in unstable areas worldwide. Some of our organizations are also closely connected with "soft" western interventions of that sort. It is thought that NGOs should be a more successful and efficient substitute mechanism for the social agency that was formerly covered under the umbrella of the state. Many transformations of domains that used to be public or under state authority are directly connected with the idea that the state is no longer able to perform its social function and therefore should rely on other non-institutional corporate forms. Ironically, this same thought is greatly supported by global financial markets. Our corporate forms should be considered

products of the same process that is displacing social services into hands of private corporate entities. It is important to understand that neither private companies nor any other independent, non-institutional, non for profit, corporate forms are yet able to fully represent the disenfranchised multitude of today's citizens. To claim the legitimacy of a universal public interest and take the (former) responsibility of institutions would miss the point.

Where does the fame and money involved without practices come from? Unlike other architectural firms that depend on the real estate and construction industry, our organizations, at least to some extent, rely on the cultural market. The research on urban phenomena of the third world megalopolis, the urban pathologies taken as metaphors of new urban design approaches, the display of phenomenological aspects of urban life on the brim of poverty at the large exhibitions of the global art market — those are the skills that often become cultural commodities that cater a western cultural audience. It is not difficult to spot when an architect (or builder) tries to avoid ethical dilemmas — putting all the blame on politicians or investors. However we have to be conscious of traces of the same opportunism when speaking of architects as cultural workers. For example when doing a replica of a housing unit from a Latin American favela and exhibiting it in a gallery, or showing photos of illegal settlements from the Balkans without electricity and sewage. Curators explain that translating reality through art and culture is a good way to communicate the message between the undeveloped south and the cultural elites of the north. For me this is a clear-cut case of the social pornography that today's cultural market so appreciates. Many of these "so called research" projects hardly tackle any social reality and in that sense do not question the present political order. The final outcome is an exhibition — not the social reform. From the outside perspective, the world of art and culture might seem as an innocent refuge from the real-estate world of financial markets. Having the experience from the inside, I could confirm that our professional integrity suffers from the similar corrosive tendencies as on any other market.

In addition, the incapacity of engaged architectural collectives to act has to do with how the management of power is distributed within their organizations. Very often forms of charismatic leadership are at their very core from the beginning. Most of our organizations still greatly rely on a few leading figures and already lost the opportunity to expand to new people. This has weakened the ability to make our knowledge and experiences transferable. The qualities needed to make an institutional practice such as ..., decisiveness, the will to act, the ability to define oneself only and exclusively through one's aims, while keeping the collective process of learning going, from the very beginning practising leadership as collective leadership, passing on to the collective the processes of the learning for every individual... "[4] are seriously diminished. We will never be able to contest contemporary forms of political and financial hegemony if we continue to perpetuate our actions under the same premises of power and control.

Today "we find ourselves confronted with both the urgent necessity and the near impossibility of bringing together and carrying out totally innovative collective actions...". We live in "an era in which ...the essential voyages of discovery have been undertaken by such astonishingly incapable people"[5]. In 1959 someone from the French leftist intellectual circles wrote these words. Unfortunately there is not much that we can learn from their experience. Nor can we restage the revolutionary struggles of the past. We can only use its echoes to galvanize our present social condition. Like other engaged intellectuals, architects also feel the need to act. However we are often discouraged with a lack of motivation and a clear vision of what the outcome of our actions should be. I have chosen to finish this text with this incredibly emotional outcry for collective liberation, because it both declares the highest goals of humanity while admitting its obvious weakness. For more than 50 years, the architectural discipline was doing just the opposite. It gave up the highest ideals of the avant-gardes and decided to ground its corporate entities on the blueprinted masks of technological innovations clad with bureaucratic schemes and financial interests. Today, we

have to change our institutional practice. We have to go out of an architecture with the capital A and start to practice support structures [6] of the weak. A radical form of institutional critique is a form of inner institutional practice that can help to reveal the structural weaknesses that developed through history and became pillars of architectural education and practice. In order to change urban reality we have to change ourselves.

Marko SANČANIN studied political science and architecture in Zagreb. He is director of Platforma 9,81 — a non-for profit Institute for Research in Architecture. The institute explores spatial and urban implications of shifting political, economic and cultural identities.

Notes

- [1] Herbert MARCUSE: *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, 1966)
- [2] Chantal Mouffe: *On the Political* (Routledge, London, 2005)
- [3] Zygmunt Bauman: *Identity* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Cambridge, 2004)
- [4] Author unknown (assumed to be Ulrike Marie Meinhof) *Manifesto for Armed Action—Build Up the Red Army!* (883 Magazine, Berlin, 1970)
- [5] *Internationale Situationniste No.3* (December 1959) from *Situationist International Anthology* (edited and translated by Ken Knabb, Bureau of Public Secrets, Berkeley, 1981)
- [6] Support structure as an epistemological concept was borrowed from Celine Condorelli whose work is a very important reference when we practice institutional critique of architecture.



Leonard Qylafi

“Estate”

2007

video installation
8' 57"

This project is related to the transformation of urban space in Tirana, where I live. I started by photographing the process of a building construction. The selected photos are animated to create this slow animation in which one year is compressed in 9 minutes. With a dream like image I try to appeal the viewers attention to the construction process, very actual and chaotic in Tirana today.

[artist's statement]

Leonard QYLAFI is an Albanian visual artist born in 1980, he lives and works in Tirana. He works in different mediums like, video, photography, music and painting.



Laurence Bonvin

“Ghostown (Valdeluz)”

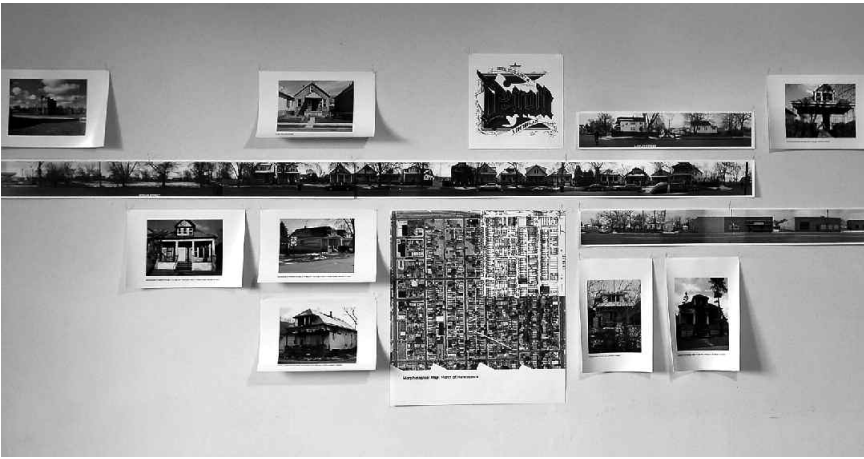
2009

digital C-prints
61 x 75 cm

Ghostown as a photographic project was inspired during my first stay in Madrid in 2007 during which I explored some of the booming new neighbourhoods scattered around the city. With the financial and real estate crisis that occurred at the end of 2008, I realised the new implications linked with that issue. I therefore concentrated this series on the abandoned state of those urban areas planned for tens of thousands of inhabitants that are left unfinished or that are, for speculative reasons, simply not lived in. Valdeluz amongst many others, is a perfect example of an urban project suspended in time and has become a brand new ghost town.

[artist's statement]

Laurence BONVIN is a photographer, she was born 1967 in Switzerland and currently lives and works in Geneva and Berlin. Bonvin's photographic work is mostly concerned with urban and suburban environments.



Detroit Unreal Estate Agency

“Homes in Hamtramck, Detroit”

2009

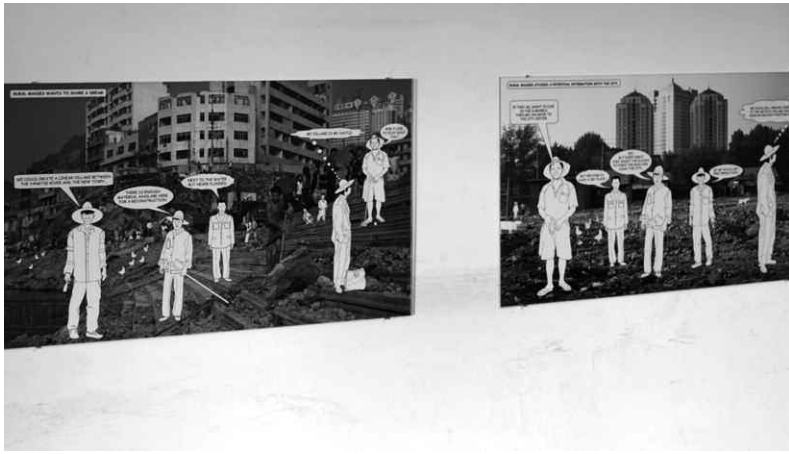
photographs and map

This map and series of photographs gives an insight in the homeownership situation in April 2009 in the north of Hamtramck, a suburban area of Detroit. Hamtramck is a dense working class area with mostly one-family houses. Foreclosed houses, empty lots and ruined buildings represent both the hardships and opportunities of those who live in the city. Low house prices (starting from 100 dollars!) attract pioneers and artists, but also developers from other parts of the US as well as local family enterprises. Newcomers buy these homes to live in — but also for speculation, investment and experimentation. They live amongst old-comers who use their resourcefulness to sustain an American way of living.

In this context Detroit Unreal Estate Agency currently produces an inventory on the 'unreal estate' of Detroit: that is, on the remarkable, distinct, characteristic or subjectively significant sites of urban culture. The project is aimed at new types of urban practices (architectural, artistic, institutional, everyday life, etc) that came into existence here, creating a new value system in Detroit.

Research: Amir DJALALI, Christian ERNSTEN, Edwin GARDNER, Joost JANMAAT.
Mapping: Amir DJALALI.

Detroit Unreal Estate Agency is a project and initiative by architects Andrew HERSCHER and Mireille RODDIER, curator Femke Lutgerink and Partizan Publik's Christian ERNSTEN and Joost JANMAAT.



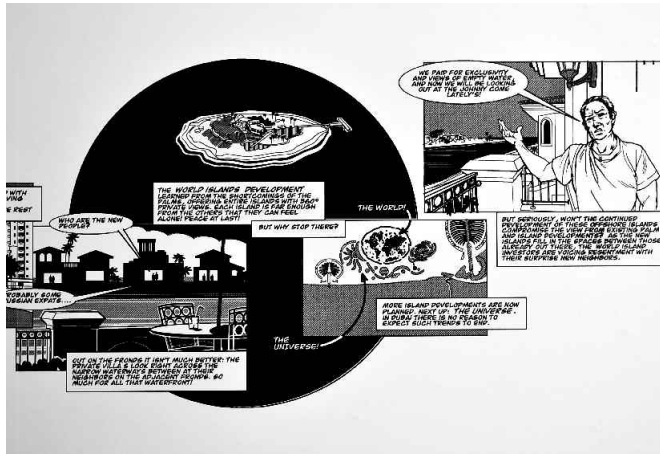
**MAP
office**

“Rural Masses,
6 stories of daydreaming”
2006

photographs/drawings print
70 x 42 cm

The 6 Stories of Daydreaming present and uneasy effort to restructure the rural system in China. As cities and factories overtake more farmland, Rural Masses is considering different scenarios to keep up with current development. Travelling in different 'upgraded' parts of China, Rural Masses discusses the pros and cons of a new settlement. During the exploration, as a dialogue starts, the individuality of each option is ultimately demonstrated by the absurd. Yet those daydreams represent a reality now. Don't you visit farms in splendid China? Don't they grow strawberries in the most polluted part of the Pearl River delta? Weren't they relocated to the new white towns along Yangtze River? Don't they become artists and open art galleries in Beijing? Won't they take the train to Lhasa? Where is Utopia?

MAP office is an interdisciplinary design and research platform conceived by Laurent GUTIERREZ (1966, Casablanca) and Valérie PORTEFAIX (1969, Saint-Etienne), based in Hong Kong since 1996.



Kartun Development Group - KDG

“Waterfront”

2008

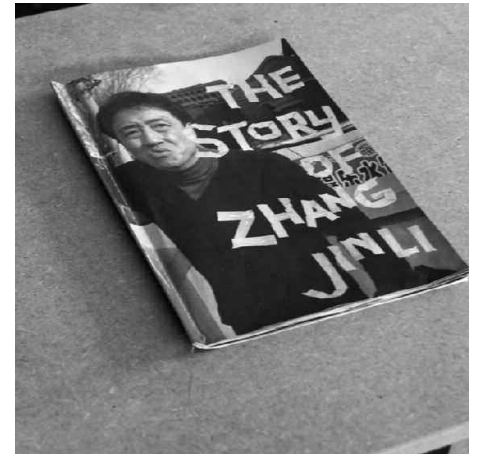
cartoon print
515 x 50 cm

Dubai's identity is summed up for the world stage by the terra-formed Palms and World Islands reaching out from its shoreline along the Gulf. Initially Sheikh MOHAMMED's idea for increasing the amount of valuable waterfront property, these projects have expanded the natural 40km coastline into almost 2,000km of beachfront. However, the experience at the ground does not fulfil the promise of this endless beachfront; it turns out that it is not necessarily beachfront that developers are seeking; rather they are interested only in a view of the water.

How can the good intentions of critical architecture make a way through the inevitable cooptation by the power/capital structures that enable them? By turning this question around and taking on the role of a fictional developer, the Kartun Development Group (KDG) becomes a “sheep in wolves clothing”, to reorient critical awareness from reaction to creativity, and view those structures of capital and power not as impediments but as means — means to a different end than they were previously even capable of envisioning.

Following the logic of the trend of Dubai's beachfront to its natural conclusion, KDG imagines a development providing 100% unobstructed water view for every unit in a single-loaded, twenty-nine story residential slab that is proposed to run most of the length of Dubai's coastline, providing 117,900 units with literally unparalleled views of the Arabian Gulf — with no land reclamation necessary.

Kartun Development Group (KDG) is a fictional developer. KDG resulted in Fall 2008 from a one-semester studio exercise at the Southern California Institute for Future Initiatives (SCIFI), a post-graduate study group at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCIArc), Los Angeles. Waterfront is made by Wes Jones, with Necmi Karaman, Min-Cheng Chang, Jennifer Denardo, Mary Aramian.



Ou
Ning

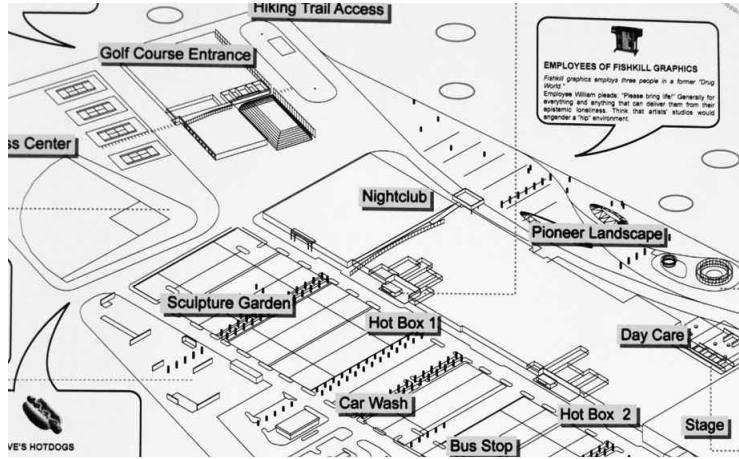
“The Da Zha Lan Project”
2005-2006

Video, 85'
photograph 12,5 x 520 cm
publication

Meishi Street is located on the southwest side of Beijing's Tiananmen Square. In this old city district, called Da Zha Lan, the city was carrying out a works to improve traffic and facilities for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. In December 2004, the Beijing Municipal Government launched a project to widen Meishi Street to 25 meters from its original 8 meters. Many of the original residents living along the street faced the demolition of their homes and relocation. Zhang Jinli, Sun TIESHENG and Liu RUIPING are three of these residents. They're not satisfied with the compensation plan made by the government and developers and started a journey of protecting their rights. All failed in the end, with their properties destroyed by force, even including Zhang JINLI, the most resistant one. This is not a rare case in most cities in China during the process of development. However, what's special about this film is that these victims themselves took many clips, which irreplaceably strengthens the passion and pain you feel in them. In the age of sharp changes, equipped with cameras, Zhang Jinli and the likes are the recorders of alternative history.

Video "Meishi Street": director Ou NING / original video Zhang JINLI / additional camera work Huang WEIKAI, Ou NING, Cao FEI / editors Cao FEI, Ou NING / english subtitles David BANDURSKI / production Alternative Archive. Photograph "Meishi Street Panorama": Zhao LONG.

Ou Ning is currently based in Beijing, China and is the Director of Shao Foundation. His cultural practices encompass multiple disciplines. He is curator of this year's Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture.



Isola Art Centre / The Office for Urban Transformation “Isola, a neo-liberal Italian tale” 2009

slideshow (DVD)
14'30"

The slideshow describes the Isola district in Milan and the contemporary art projects such as out (Office for Urban Transformation) and Isola Art Center, which started there in 2001. In 2003 the 1.500 m2 of the upper floor of a former factory were squatted in order to create an Art and Community Center open to the neighbourhood. The challenge set for the centre was to avoid what nearly always happens when museums, galleries or public art projects are introduced in a working class neighbourhood: they become instruments of gentrification. Out of this awareness the center began to actively work against gentrification by linking the art projects to the neighbourhood's oppositional movement to the urban plans and by the elaboration of counter-proposals.

After the destruction of the building in 2007, Isola Art Center, out and the inhabitants invented a new type of homeless “museum”, organizing acts of protests such as having picnics in the public square, transforming more than thirty shop shutters into artworks and organizing exhibitions and meetings in spaces offered by private individuals, associations, shops and restaurants.

Isola Art Center is an open platform for contemporary art working with the neighbourhood associations in the Isola district in Milan since 2001.
out-Office for Urban Transformation is an open group of artists, architects and researchers working in the Isola neighbourhood in Milan, created in 2002.

Interboro “In the Meantime, Life with Landbanking” 2002-2007 (excerpt)

video, architectural drawing/print

In the Meantime, Life with Landbanking is Interboro's winning entry to the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture's "Dead Malls" Competition, which asked Interboro to envision a future for a dead shopping mall of its choosing. Interboro's project, a reimagining of the Dutchess County Mall in Fishkill, state of New York, was inspired by a conversation it had with the mall's developer, who made it clear that he was landbanking the property. [Landbanking is the practice to hold on to land until the time has come that it is profitable to sell it on to others for more than was initially paid.] Interboro asked "what can be done in the meantime?" Rejecting the idea of a traditional masterplan, Interboro's submission is a collection of small, cheap, feasible moves that come in over time, and lead to many possible futures.

The video In the Meantime, Life with Landbanking: An Autobiography of the Dutchess Mall was commissioned by Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Courtesy of Interboro and the Heinz Architectural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pennsylvania.

Interboro is a New York City-based architecture, planning and research firm founded by Tobias ARMBORST, Daniel D'Oca, Georgeen THEODORE. The project has been made with Christine WILLIAMS and Damon ZUCCONI.

Deadmalls.com 2009

calendars and dictionary

Ever since Peter BLACKBIRD saw how a shopping mall he had visited at the age of eleven had turned into a "ghost town" two years later, he started to visit malls and thus charted a "history of retail" on the basis of the stories he gathered. Determined to ensure that 'dead malls' earned a page in history; Blackbird turned to his friend Brian Florence to bring Deadmalls.com to life in 2000. The two retail historians decided to take Pete's hobby and make it visible to the Internet.

Fascinated by the ever-changing face of retail, Peter has researched and learned as much as he could about the many facets of the retail industry. Having themselves worked for different department stores, they find themselves captivated by the current trends in the retail industry, and have seen first-hand the demise of many of these “great giants of retail”. Thanks to the power of the internet, information from people all over the web contributes to Deadmalls.com.

Deadmalls.com is a non-for-profit endeavour designed to promote the history of the malls as well as their nature, whether thriving or declining, and the impact of time and competition on these establishments.



Bojan Fajfric

“5th December 1978”
2007-2008

video projection, 10' 31"
slide projection, 80 slides
text on the wall, prints

The project 5th December 1978 deals with the department store Boska – a modernist building in the centre of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – built after the earthquake of 1969, which stands for decades as city's landmark. The building can be perceived as a symbol of the time in which it came to be, and a symbol of the Yugoslav self-management socialism, paradoxically embodied in a department store as a symbol of consumer society. This system is long since gone, the years of war and crisis are over, but Boska has remained surprisingly unchanged.

With this installation devoted to the reconstruction of a memory of the micro-community of Boska department store, Fajfric seek to explore the relationships between personal memories and general history.

Bojan FAJFRIC is an artist born in 1976, in Belgrade. He lives and works in Amsterdam. In his work he confronts personal and collective memories in order to imagine other possible outcomes.



Nebojsa Milikic

“Our Building”
2003

radio episodes
video
8' 42"

Our Building is a series of short radio shows, broadcasted weekly via B92 Radio in Belgrade from August 2001 - January 2003, reaching an audience of about 100,000 people. 67 episodes blurred the boundaries of documentary, reality-show and radio drama. The author began making the radio show after the tenants' association in the building where he lived refused his candidacy for president of the association. The materials were produced with the building's tenants in everyday situations, addressing the issues of community life in a typical building in Belgrade. The material was edited in such a way that the content could refer to any apartment building in Belgrade. Therefore, the impact was felt simultaneously at two parallel levels: among the tenants in the building where the show was recorded (narrowcasting) and the population at large, namely, the people who live in such buildings in Belgrade or elsewhere throughout Serbia (broadcasting). Bearing the imprint of common property, of a "housing for everybody" social policy, such communities were driven into the context of ongoing political and economic changes — due to the privatization of flats, the redirection of the economy from state-run to free market, the heritage of the wars in former Yugoslavia, etc.

Video by Compiler/DVD-magazine for contemporary arts No 1, edited by Milica TOMIC and Susann WINTSCH, Zurich, 2003.

Nebojsa MILIKIC was born in 1964 and is an artist, researcher and cultural activist. He lives and works in Belgrade, Serbia, and is affiliated with Cultural center Rex.



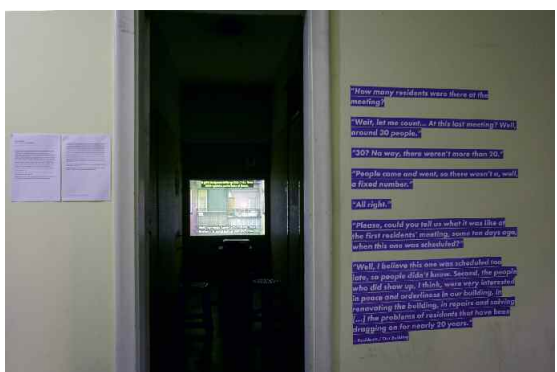
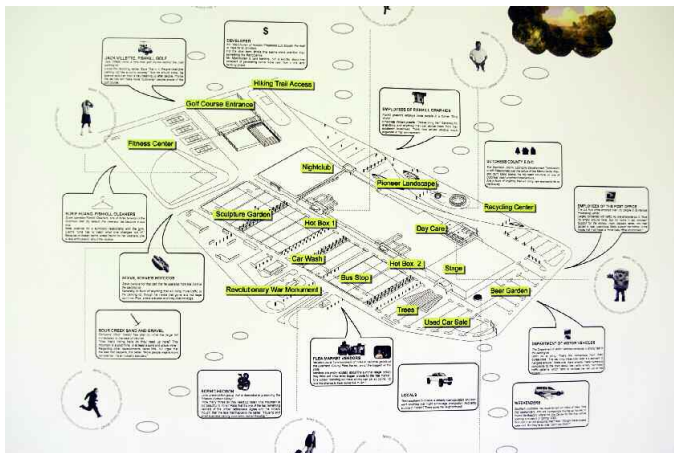
Estudio Teddy Cruz

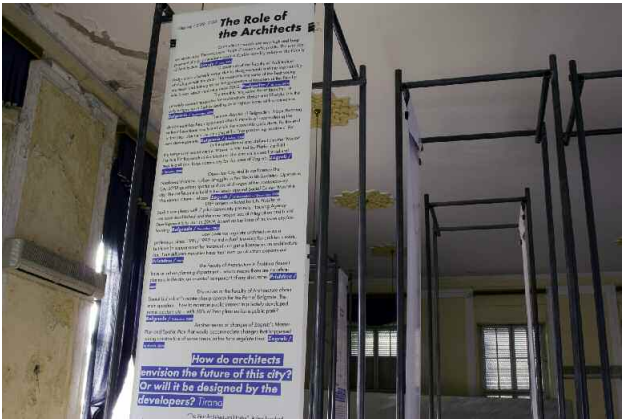
“Radicalizing the Local:
Post Bubble Urban
Strategies”
2009

slideshow
8'

One pressing challenge in our time, primarily when the paradigm of private property has become unsustainable in conditions of marginality, is the need to re-think existing conditions of ownership. More than 'owning' units, dwellers, in collaboration with community based, non-profit agencies, can also co-own the economic and social infrastructure around them. The visual narrative tells the story of how immigrants are re-defining the American Neighbourhood. It describes our work in neighbourhood of San Ysidro, at the San Diego-Tijuana border, where we have been collaborating with Casa Familiar, a community based non-profit organization, in translating the informal densities and economies produced by immigrants in the USA into a more sustainable urban policy and economic model of development, inclusive of the non-conforming spatial and entrepreneurial practices that are emerging within small communities across the contemporary city.

Estudio Teddy Cruz is a research-based architecture office recognized internationally for urban research of the Tijuana (Mexico) - San Diego (USA) border transforming the micro-scale of the neighbourhood into an urban laboratory of our time.







Louise Ganz / Ines Linke

“Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations”

photo
40 x 30 cm

There are more than 70,000 vacant lots in the modernist city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. The project Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations transformed privately owned lots into temporary public spaces. The owners lent the lots for the execution of different actions proposed by the architects and artists. These proposals should create links with the local community, instances of dialogues and negotiations, causing the involvement and participation of these people in the planning and implementation of the projects. Some proposals were aiming at permanence and integration and others at intervention and interruption of everyday life.

If different vacant lots were to be used by people as temporary public spaces there would be a change in human behaviour and the city's spatiality. The project discusses the meanings of public and private, and raises questions about the notions of property and the social dimension of urban space. In the project, created by Louise Ganz and made in collaboration with Ines Linke, participated many artists, architects and people from the communities.

Louise GANZ and Ines LINKE are both artists and Ph.D. candidates and Master of Arts at the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.



ELEMENTAL

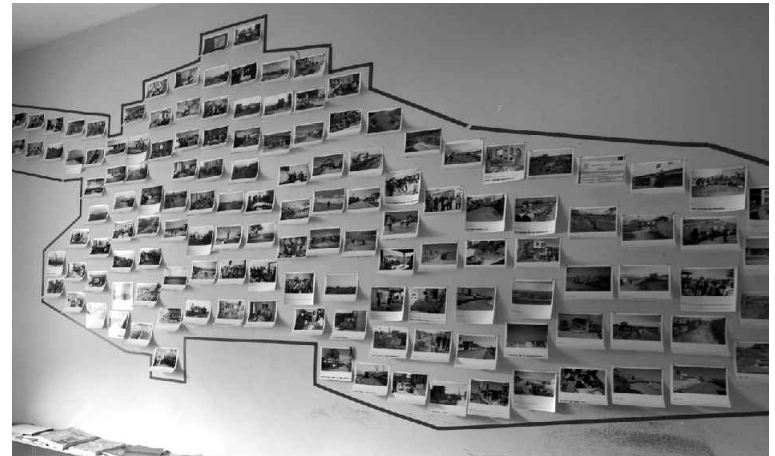
“Quinta Monroy project” 2004-2005

architectural drawings
models, photos
video 30'

Quinta Monroy is ELEMENTAL's first built project, made in Iquique, Chile for 93 families. Since then, they constructed more than 1.000 units and designed other 2.000. Following a few key principles, ELEMENTAL has made a surprisingly elegant and effective approach to social housing:

(1) Social housing tends to be like buying cars: they loose value over time. ELEMENTAL identified a set of design conditions that can make units gain value over time, treating housing as an investment and not just as a social expense. (2) In general, budgets to solve housing problem of the poor can pay only for half of a house. The key question is: Which half? ELEMENTAL takes care of the half that a family will never be able to achieve on its own. (3) Location is much more important than size. The problem of the poor is not the shelter in itself, but the access to jobs, markets, education, health, recreation and social assistance – which are not found in the city outskirts, where land is cheap. Therefore the projects have to be dense enough in order to be able to pay for more expensive and therefore better located lots, with possibility for expansion. (4) ELEMENTAL develops its projects with a very specific way of participation of the communities, focused on information and communication of constraints before opening the process to collective choice. Working on inclusive instead of exclusive cities.

ELEMENTAL started working on housing projects with public funds in 2001. Since 2007 ELEMENTAL is a for profit company with a social interest, whose shareholders are the Universidad Católica de Chile, COPEC (Chilean Oil Company) and the Elemental founders (director architect Alejandro ARAVENA).



Co-PLAN

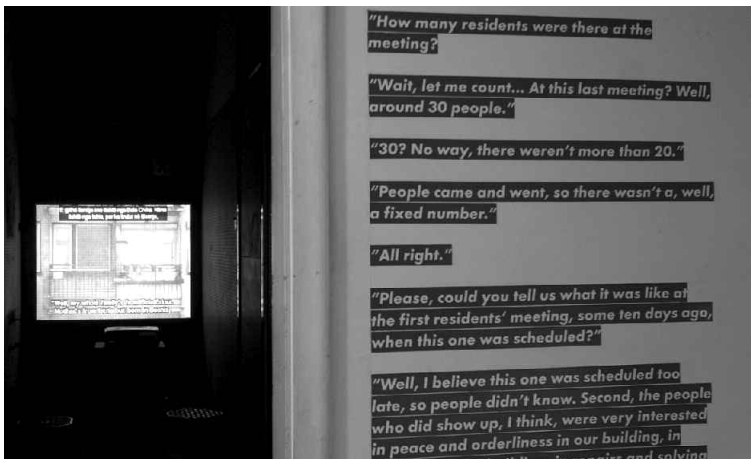
“City Made by People” 1996 - 2008

photo gallery, publications

City Made by People represents, from the experience of Co-PLAN, the first phase of urban developments in Albania after the changes in 1990. This phase (1990-2000) is a period in which the Albanian society was in need to confront and genuinely rediscover itself while in quest for models and reference points. It was a period in which, in the absence of institutional guidance and support, people took control over urban developments. The status quo in planning was treating the growing informal settlements as non-existent, risking to create, thus, two non-communicating virtual urban realities.

For Co-PLAN this was a period in which to introduce realistic planning and to develop models of participatory urban planning showing that rapid urbanization and which, despite negative sides, represents a real potential for the economic development and democratization of society. In this approach, planning is not merely a technical issue but a concerted effort to improve the skeleton of the society and allow for social cohesion and prosperity. During this period Co-PLAN undertook a number of projects that started with the 'Breglumasi' project (1995-1997) that was soon embraced and scaled-up by the Urban Land Management Project (financed by the World Bank) in Bathore (1998-2003). Concurrently the participatory planning approach expanded over the whole Kamza Municipality (1999-2003). Lately with the 'Keneta' project Co-PLAN consolidated its participatory model for regularization of informal settlements, which served as a model for the legalization process.

Co-PLAN emerged out of the 'Breglumasi' project and was legally registered in 1997. Since that time, Co-PLAN has evolved from a grassroots organization into an institute that combines ground experience with public policy. As of 2008 Co-PLAN is part of the Research Institute of Polis University.



Nebojsa Milikic et al./ Cultural center Rex “Flux Beneath Us” 2002 - 2009

drawings, flyers, calendar

Flux Beneath Us is a work in progress and part of the cultural and artistic project Flux, implemented for several years now in the suburbs of Belgrade. The project started by distributing 4500 flyers to promote the idea of constructing the main sewer collector in Kaludjerica – a 'wild' suburb of Belgrade with about 25 000 inhabitants, that emerged in the 1970s. In 2003 a competition for the most beautiful houses in Kaludjerica followed. The winning houses were featured in the 2004 calendar Kaludjerica's Most Beautiful Houses.

The priority problem in such a large community supposedly is the lack of a proper sewer system. The discussions that have been launched about this are meant to define the current state of things and provide a precise description of the situation today, but also future prospects. The discussions and opinion polls have been conceived as an open research project. The collected results related to the problem of wastewater are currently entered on a working version of the map in the local community office where interested individuals will have a chance to follow the development of the project and continue participating in it. After the data has been collected, a meeting of residents will be held to present the results and discuss further plans and activities towards a common sewer network.

Nebojsa MILIKIC, initiator and coordinator, Cultural center Rex; Dragan JOVANOVIĆ, artist moderator; Tanja VASILJEVIĆ, organizer and polls; Nebojsa KITANOVIĆ, design and polls; Ozren NADOVEZA, flyers distribution; Nikola STANKOVIĆ, forum moderator; Aleksandar STOJILJKOVIĆ, map consultant. Organisation and production: Cultural center Rex.



Streetfilms “Lessons From Bogota” 2008

video
9' 58"

In just three years, as mayor of Bogota, Colombia, Enrique PEÑALOSA accomplished changes of monumental proportions for the people of his city. PEÑALOSA changed the way Bogota treated its non-driving citizens by restricting automobile use and instituting a bus rapid transit system, which now carries a 1/2 million residents daily. Among other improvements: he widened and rebuilt sidewalks, created grand public spaces, and implemented over one hundred miles of bicycle paths.

Lessons from Bogota, the final chapter of Streetfilms' visit to Colombia shows: riding the comfortable ciclorutas and cycle paths, a visit to a thriving pedestrian-only street where they said it couldn't be done, a "bollard farm," and footage of the city's parks and public spaces and comments from the city's residents.

Streetfilms is the video arm of the Livable Streets Initiative and produces videos that show how cities around the world are reclaiming their streets for pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders. Lesson from Bogota is made by Clarence ECKERSON, Jr. the director of Streetfilms based in New York.



El Puente_Lab “Medellin 2003-2009”

map, slides, text

With over two and a half million inhabitants, Medellin is the second largest city of Colombia. Medellin has been known as the most violent city in the world since the 1980's. Nevertheless, by means of social inclusion, cultural promotion and urbanistic strategies, Medellin has changed its mind “from scare to hope”, as its previous Major, Sergio FAJARDO, said during his campaign. In the early 1990's a homicide rate in Medellin was 380 for 100.000 inhabitants; nowadays it is less than 29 for 100.000 inhabitants.

The first step in reducing the level of crime was to bring back the State to the no-go neighbourhoods and generate trust between the communities, allowing people to participate with the decisions. After this first step, encouraging of culture, education and arts followed. In 2006 the city started building five Park-Libraries, all in peripheral city zones surrounded by mountains, inhabited mostly by poor people, previously faced with the hardest violence crisis in Colombia. Architectural interventions did not end there. The Metro Cable rail was made next, to connect the centre of the city with the east and west hillsides, focal points of violence and 'combos' (groups of young people linked to Mafia, guerrillas and paramilitary groups).

El Puente_Lab (Alejandro VASQUEZ, Daniel A. URREA, Juan E. SANDOVAL) is an artistic project aimed at establishing a channel of communication and artistic creation between two sides, one in Latin America, the other in Europe, while enabling an exchange of different experiences. Some of the images made by Jenny GIRALDO.



Alterazioni Video

“Sicilian Incompletion” 2006 – ongoing

video “Intervallo” 3’ 37”
drawing and text

Alterazioni Video has been working on identifying, surveying and researching examples of unfinished buildings for over four years. They are public works, and for a variety of reasons (design errors, clashing political decisions, inaccurate cost estimates, contractor bankruptcies, disregard of building regulations, disappearance of funds) their construction has been shelved, leaving just a series of ruins, abandoned even before having been used at all.

The highest concentration of unfinished works can be found in Sicily, and the Sicilian city of Giarre proved to be one of the areas with the highest concentration of public unfinished works: a whole network of abandoned infrastructures, some of which are almost surreal. Alterazioni Video, in cooperation with the public administration, is developing a concrete proposal to create the Archaeological Park of Sicilian Incompletion at Giarre, over a 300-hectare area.

Alterazioni Video is an artistic collective established in Milan in 2004 by Paololuca Barbieri, Alberto Caffarelli, Matteo Erenbourg, Andrea Masu and Giacomo Porfiri. They describe themselves as a platform that combines art with the social and alternative functions of the new electronic media.

“Cities Log” 2009 9 banners

The Cities Log is a chronology of spatially important events, decisions and discussions in the cities of Western Balkans (Belgrade, Kotor, Novi Sad, Podgorica, Prishtina, Pula, Skopje, Tirana and Zagreb), which put the current developments in Tirana and Albania in a wider, regional perspective. This Cities Log is based on a series of conversations made with professionals in the field of architecture and urban issues during several weeks of travel through cities in the region, and is complemented with generous contributions from a number of individuals and organisations.

Along eight topics (privatisation, real estate, clientalism, legalisation & legislation, building identity, infrastructure, the role of architects, and the struggle for collective space) the Cities Log depicts a rough section through the developments of cities during a one year (Summer 2008 – 2009) period, set in the context of fast capital investments, newly emerging power relations and the challenges brought forward by the transition into new citizens engagement.

Cities Log is made as a backdrop for ‘Tirana Dialogues’, series of public discussions that took place from 3-7 October.

Cities log has been made by STEALTH.unlimited (Ana DZOKIC and Marc NEELN) through conversations with and contributions by: Besnik ALIAJ, Gjergj BAKALLBASHI, Branko BELACEVIC, Jelena STEFANOVIC, Dafne BERC, Teodor CELAKOSKI, Sotir DHAMO, Ulrike FRANZEL, Valon GERMIZAJ, Zakilina GLIGORIJEVIC, Adelina GRECA, Astrit HAJRULLAHU, Florina JERLIU, Aleksandra KAPETANOVIC, Ivan KUCINA, Marko MILETIC, Ilir MURSELI, Oliver MUSOVIK, Divna PENCIC, Dubravka SEKULIC, Petrit SELIMI, Pulska grupa, Aneta SPASESKA, Borislav VUKICEVIC and others. Designed with Ajdin BASIC.

Insider “Abuse of Office” 2009

TV serial episode 1 – 47’

Abuse of Office, a seven episodes series, reveals the functioning mechanism of the so-called “building mafia” in Serbia and the main reason of its existence – the corruption in city and state institutions. That is why the price of newly built apartments in Belgrade and Serbia is unrealistically high.

The TV serial is named Abuse of Office as journalists of the Insider managed to prove that Serbian Parliament members passed laws that are first of all advantageous for the businessmen in Serbia, allowing the privatisation to turn into the purchase of real estate and not into recuperation of the economy and the ruined factories. Exclusive locations in Belgrade were acquired through buying a ruined factory, company, printing firm – without the building land being included in the price, which, in fact, is worth the most. Further, Insider reveals how many local businessmen were practically allowed to get for free the best empty city land, with which

the budget of the city and the state, and consequently also citizens, was cut short for several million Euros.

Insider started in 2004, with their first documentary broadcast on RTV B92, in Belgrade, Serbia. Its authors received many international and domestic awards for investigative journalism. “There are forbidden questions, answers that shouldn’t be heard, lines which are not allowed to be crossed. This is the starting point of the Insider.”

Vladan Jeremic and Rena Rädle “Belleville” 2009

video – 22’

Belleville is the name of a residential complex in New Belgrade built on the occasion of the international sports manifestation “Summer Universiade 2009”. On 3rd of April 2009 in the early morning, diggers tore down the barracks of 45 Roma families living in close vicinity to the residential units. Their violent eviction was assisted by police without giving time to the residents to save their belongings. Despite Serbia holding the presidency of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” this year, the authorities didn’t offer alternative housing to the families. The video documents the protest of the victims that set off to the city centre three times to demand shelter in front of the city hall.

Vladan JEREMIC and Rena RÄDLE are working together since 2002 in Belgrade, Serbia and elsewhere. They use art as one possible format for radical criticism and take an active public position in different fields of social activism. JEREMIC/RÄDLE are founders and members of the organizations for culture and communication Biro Beograd, slobodnakultura.org from Belgrade and Top e.V from Berlin.

Lorenz Aggermann, Eduard Freudmann, Can Gülcü “Beograd Gazela – Travel Guide to a Slum”

book (English and Roma)

Beograd Gazela – Travel Guide to a Slum takes us into this striking area in the heart of Belgrade in order to redefine its significance in the public consciousness. It should, however, not only encourage readers to visit Gazela or similar settlements, but the travel guide should also draw attention to the multi-layered mechanisms of marginalization and discrimination against Roma and hopes that through its well-grounded description of this sociotope, a general basis for further humanitarian and political projects can be created. Also those who actually do not want to pay a visit will still get a well-substantiated insight into a place exemplary for the living environment of tens of thousands of inhabitants of Belgrade who are excluded from the majority of the society – a situation practically paradigmatic for the recent history of the Roma people in Southeast Europe.

Lorenz AGGERMANN, born 1977 in Graz, studied Theatre, Film and Media studies, German studies and European Ethnology in Vienna and Berlin. He is currently working at the University of Bern.

Eduard FREUDMANN, born 1979 in Vienna, lives and works in Vienna and Belgrade. He researches and intervenes in the intersections of art and politics, power relations and social contexts, theirstory/ourstory and media mechanisms. Can GÜLCÜ, born 1976 in Bursa, is an artist and architect, he lives and works in Vienna. He focuses on political and social issues, contemporary history and urbanism.

Civil Initiative for Muzil

“Muzil: First Public Discussion” 2009
“Muzil: The First Visit” 2009

videos — 4' 45" 4' 21"
newspapers, maps

Muzil — a peninsula that occupies the southern part of the Pula bay in Croatia — has been used exclusively for military purposes, for almost 200 years – until recently when it was demilitarized. Although its size corresponds to quarter of the city, it is as if Muzil never existed for people of Pula. Now that there is an opportunity to finally get to know and use it, national and local authorities have prohibited access to the area. Arguing that they want to prevent theft and vandalism they ban the entry to all citizens of Pula. “As most citizens, we are certainly neither thieves nor vandals! We want to get to know Muzil and include it in the heritage of the city to which it belongs” proclaims the Civil Initiative for Muzil.

The demilitarization of Muzil has opened an opportunity for a new evolution of Pula. What would the citizens of the city like to see happen there? The worst case scenario is the one in which political decision-makers refuse to engage in dialog with citizens. Could Muzil, the only spot from which you can see the whole city and its surroundings, become a symbol of a new Pula? “We want to use Muzil in order to get to know it, love it, and ultimately plan its future for the well-being of our and coming generations. We have a historical chance to decide together what kind of life in Pula we want!”

These two short videos document the first public appearance of Civil initiative for Muzil (23 January 2009) and the first organised visit to Muzil area (8 March 2009). Videos producer: Videofarma, Pula.

Civil Initiative for Muzil is a network of individuals formed with the aim of discovering the former military area Muzil (Pula, Croatia), opening it to the public, promoting its public utilization and debating its future. The initiative consists only of individuals — not groups, associations, institutions or political parties.

Fifth Park

“The Struggle for Peti Park” 2009

slideshow (DVD) — 7’

This slideshow tells the story of Peti Park (Serbian for “Fifth Park”) — a small green area

in a 1960s neighbourhood in Belgrade. In mid 2005, the city government cuts the trees with the purpose of building a commercial complex in the park. The local population protested, trying to keep the green area while the city government claimed that the area was already reserved for construction in 1980s and that the mini-park was just a temporary solution. While at one point even the police was involved to make the construction possible, the local population gained popular support among Belgraders and celebrities for their cause. In January 2008 the municipality of Zvezdara re-planted 31 firs in a circular pattern in an effort to keep the park.

Slideshow made by Branko BELACEVIC, Marko MILETIC, Dubravka SEKULIC, Jelena STEFANOVIC.

Fifth Park – I Want to Know is a collaborative project of the Green Youth of Serbia and the Initiative council for the protection of the Fifth Park, in Belgrade, Serbia. It is supported by the Balkan Fund for Local Initiatives.

Right to the City (Pravo na grad)

2009

slideshow (DVD)
publications

Initiative Right to the City acts upon topics and cases of unsustainable urban development, privatisation of public space, corruption of the management of public spatial resources and exclusion of the citizens from the process of planning and decision-making in the city of Zagreb. “Relatively to our human and material capacities and the limitation of citizens’ influence, we can point out issues to the public, demand changes of law, regulations and plans, use juridical instruments and procedures that are at disposal for citizens, instigate citizens to actions — but we cannot answer to all urgencies nor replace the public government.”

“Therefore, if you notice issues related to construction, traffic, or ecological problems in the city of Zagreb — or if you are faced with violation of the quality of life in your direct surrounding, consider possibilities to on your own or together with your neighbours undertake the first steps.” This presentation – made with Dubravka SEKULIC — shows some of the tools that have been used in actions during the last years.

Right to the City (Pravo na grad) is an initiative and campaign focusing on issues related to the spatial development of Zagreb, Croatia. It started as collaboration of civil society organisations from the domains of youth and independent culture. All the activities are carried out in partnership with Green Action (Zelena akcija).

First Archi Brigade

“First Architectural Uprising” 2009

slideshow (DVD) — 3’

“We are the first Archi Brigade, a spontaneously gathered informal group of students of architecture and others who share the same ideas regarding already existing and yet planned architectural and urban works in our city Skopje. We were

formed by the inclination to take a proactive role in the designing of the architectural reality of today.”

Skopje is rapidly and definitely drowning in kitsch of a previously unseen extent and of yet uncertain consequences. The public space in this city is subject to plans and projects of politicians-economists and some of their friends. Independent views raised by other experts are ignored. Instead of public and professional debates about the development of the city, competitions and plans are made in secret. Therefore, the group claims, “it’s time to stop criticizing only on internet forums; it’s time to stand up from our comfortable TV chairs and to join the initiative: FIRST ARCHITECTURAL UPRISING, instigated by us, the students of the Faculty of Architecture, for our own good and for the good of Skopje”.

First Archi Brigade was initiated by a group of students of architecture in the city of Skopje in Spring 2009. Their first protest against the evident “regression in the field of architecture”, embodied in the building of newly-to-be built orthodox church on the main city square was attacked by counter demonstrators and reached extensive media attention.

Luise Donschen and Archis Interventions / Prishtina

“Pump Up Prishtina” 2008

video — 11’ 36”

This film by Luise DONSCHEN portrays Visar GECI — an architect, but also a television star. His summer program, ‘Cocktail Show’, breaks all viewer records. GECI not only teaches the art of mixing cocktails (something he learned as a student in Graz), but also uses television as a medium for political satire. The film shows the production of the TV show in his disco bar, which he runs in the summer and shows his professional activities as architect but also as the owner of Prishtina’s largest fitness centre. These non-architectural activities give GECI the freedom to choose his clients and stay independent as an architect. But the film is also a portrait of Prishtina. GECI explains the urban development of Prishtina after 1999. The film gives an insight of the problems appearing out of mostly illegal building activity, which destructed almost 70% of the city’s urban fabric and raised social conflicts and safety problems.

Archis Interventions/Prishtina is a non-governmental, non-profit offshoot of Archis (also known as the publisher of Volume magazine), initiated with aim to renew faith in public dialogue. AI Prishtina is since 2005 carried out by Kai VÖCKLER, Florina JERLIU and Visar GECI.

Luise DONSCHEN (1982) is a German ethnologist and filmmaker, she studied in Hamburg and Belgrade.

Sabine Bitter / Helmut Weber

“NEW Novi Beograd 1948–1986–2006” 2007

video — 20’

Young architects, urban planners, artists, and curators – who live and work in Belgrade – read quotations from an unpublished text by the French sociologist, philosopher and urbanist Henri LEFEBVRE. The selections from LEFEBVRE’s text are presented in the video to rethink the notion of “self-organization” within the long neoliberal moment and to actualize the question of how claims to “autogestion” and “the right to the city” produce new forms of citizenship and new understandings of the relationship between the state and citizens.

The video was realized within the project “Differentiated Neighbourhoods of New Belgrade” and is part of the project’s publication (ed. Zoran Eric, Belgrade: MOCAB CVC, 2009).

“Autogestion, or Henri Lefebvre in New Belgrade” 2009

artists’ book

This artist book is based on an unpublished original text – reproduced as a facsimile – by Henri Lefebvre. The text from Henri LEFEBVRE was part of a proposal with French architects Serge RENAUDIE and Pierre GUILBAUD for the International Competition for the New Belgrade Urban Structure Improvement (1986).

In his urban vision for New Belgrade – the capital of former Yugoslavia founded in 1948 – LEFEBVRE emphasizes the processes and potentials of self-organization of the people of any urban territory to counter the failed concepts of urban planning from above. For LEFEBVRE, the promises of both modernist-capitalist and state-socialist architecture and city planning had failed. Yet, LEFEBVRE sees an advantage for New Belgrade and Yugoslavia: “because of self-management, a place is sketched between the citizen and the citadin, and Yugoslavia is today [1986] perhaps one of the rare countries to be able to pose the problem of a New Urban.”

“Autogestion, or Henri Lefebvre in New Belgrade” is edited by Urban Subjects US (Sabine BITTER, Jeff DERKSEN, Helmut WEBER), published by Sternberg Press, Berlin and Fillip Editions, Vancouver, 2009.

Sabine BITTER/Helmut WEBER are Vienna and Vancouver based artists, who have been working together since 1993 on projects addressing cities, architecture, and the politics of representation and of space. Since 2004 they are members of the cultural collective Urban Subjects US.

Tirana Dialogues

public discussion series at Hotel Dajti
from 3rd to 7th of October 2009

Ana Dzokic & Marc Neelen

As an integral part of Biennial's Episode 2, STEALTH.unlimited organised with Emiliano GANDOLFI (independent curator, architect and initiator of Cohabitation Strategies, Rotterdam) five days of public discussions. They brought together a number of the exhibition participants and other professionals from the Balkan region and a wider global context. The talks were set in the Cities Log space and positioned as dialogues between two approaches to the different topics highlighted.

Tirana Dialogues started with the topic **Hands Over the City — civil groups and investigative journalism for urban justice**. It is obvious that the privatisation of city land and public spaces, along with clientalism between city governments and businesses is one of the major problems related to urban development today. In these circumstances the struggle for urban justice starts from below. Miodrag CVOROVIC (producer "Insider" documentary series, RTV B92 Belgrade) started by presenting their insightful investigation on 'construction mafia' in Serbia, while Teodor CELAKOSKI (activist and coordinator Right to the City, Zagreb) spoke about the (at times rather performative) actions of this civil initiative to confront some the unfavourable spatial developments.

The neighbourhood today turns out to be one of the most interesting sites of action. **Activating the Local — neighbourhood interventions for social engagement** brought together Nebojsa MILIKIC (artist, cultural activist, Cultural Center Rex, Belgrade) who introduced two of his

neighbourhood projects that use collective infrastructures - tenants meetings and the problem of non existing sewer – to start imagining the communality of the neighbourhood. Doina PETRESCU (architect and initiator of Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, Paris) spoke about ways to generate communal spaces through simple means and mobile architectural interventions.

The context of the Biannual and the presence of a number of curators expanded the topic initially farmed **Exposing the City of Tomorrow — architecture biannual as a tool for change** from the presentation of Ou Ning (artists and curator 2009 Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture) and Emiliano GANDOLFI (curator at the 11th Architecture Biennale Venice and 3rd Architecture Biennale Rotterdam) to a discussion on the role of the Tirana Biannual by involving Edi MUKA, Ana DZOKIC and Marc NEELEN, as curators of this year edition and Fang-Wei CHANG commissioner of the Taipei Biannual.

The third day of dialogues started with the topic **Urban Commons — policies and public involvement for the inclusive city**. The Adriatic costs is today under enormous pressure of development. What are the means and ways to make these developments inclusive towards the citizens of these areas and not only to developers or tourists? Aleksandra KAPETANOVIC (from Expeditio, an NGO for sustainable urban development, Kotor, Montenegro) presented a number of threats and actions in this direction. Emil JURCAN (architect, Pulska grupa, Pula) spoke about the

notion of 'komunal' – land that is neither state nor privately owned – and how such a model could be developed on particular locations in Istria.

Architecture magazines are usually proliferators of seductive images of realised architectural forms. **Printed Matters — architecture magazines: media strategies and societal ambitions** brought together the editors of two magazines - Fabrizio GALLANTI (Abitare, Milan) and Maroje MRDULJAS (Oris, Zagreb) – to speak about other possible roles of the media, triggering professional societal engagement. Their discussion was joined by Mia DAVID (editor, Kvart magazine, Belgrade) and Borislav VUKICEVIC (Vrijeme daily, Podgorica).

During socialism cities were planned top-down by state-run planning institutes, today the situation is much less clear. Planning institutes, if they function at all, nowadays often cater private developments and facilitate these investments within the urban plans. **Shifting the Field of Action — a new role for architecture and planning institutes** discussed the position of professional organisations that sprang out of the NGO scene in the Balkans region during the last 15 years. These organisations label themselves 'institutes' in the lack of proper public institutions. Organisations like Platforma 9.81 – a non-for profit Institute for Research in Architecture, Zagreb, represented by Marko SANCANIN and Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development, Tirana, represented by Dritan SHUTINA, are examples that push the professional boundary and engage in new modes of operation.

Two approaches under the umbrella of **Building Participation — making places for local empowerment** concluded this series of dialogues. Teddy CRUZ (architect, Estudio Teddy Cruz, San Diego), one of the best known socially engaged architects today spoke about the project for collective space he is already for seven years running with a small immigrant community in San Ysidro, on the Californian border with Mexico. And Francisco SANIN (architect, Syracuse University, New York / Medellin, Colombia) introduced the amazing change that took place in just four years term of the mayor of the city of Medellin in Colombia. Till recently the centre of drug cartels and the most violent place on the globe – this city has been socially and spatially transformed by a number of architectural interventions made in the most difficult and poor areas. Both of the projects pointed out that as much as good architecture is important, the same count for building participation and involvement of ordinary citizens in this process.

In recent years Tirana has been undergoing a substantial urban transformation. **What We Want — an imaginative discussion on the near future of Tirana** concluded Tirana Dialogues through a conversation with the public, prepared in collaboration with the Tirana based architects Gjergj BAKALLBASHI and Ulrike FRANZEL. It addressed the challenges and potentials for what is to come – and is hopefully the spark for other local talks about Tirana's future!





Tirana Guide to Parallel Urban Realities

2009

map
280 x 185 cm

Before the modernity of mapping, before measured precision and geographical accuracy begun to be the norm in surveying and technical rendering, town maps and guides were made as anecdotal works with a high level of subjectivity, they represented the lived experiences of the surveyor and the daily life of the place as seen by him or her.

The Tirana Guide to Parallel Urban Realities is a city guide (and a map consisting of 80 'cards' on the display here) that reconstructs the city hidden below the mask of modern cartography. It tells the tale of a city in process and characterized by parallel, or contradicting urban realities.

Looking at how cities are made and how they function, we can recognize different logics, different powers that are of influence, different ways how inhabitants and users of the cities deal with the environment they construct and live in. Especially in a context like Tirana, which is very fast changing, there is not one system of spatial production, but there are many - changing, shifting, testing the ground and testing the powers they meet. In the built city, we see the results of this.

Tirana Guide to Parallel Urban Realities is co-organised with Polis University Tirana and has been researched and produced during September 2009, with: Ivan KUCINA (architect, works at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade), Endrit MARKU (Polis University, Tirana), Gezim QENDRO (Polis University, Tirana), Miguel ROBLES-DURAN (architect/urbanist, teaches at the ZHDK in Zurich, Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and TU Delft, co-founder of Cohabitation Strategies, a Rotterdam based cooperative for socio-spatial development), Piet VOLLAARD (architect and architectural author/critic, director of ArchiNed, Rotterdam and co-author of a/o Architectural Guide to The Netherlands 1980-present) and students Polis University: Belina KODRA, Enola ISUFI, Glodian DAUTI, Linda LOKA, Migena MERTIRI, Nevin BILALI, Persida SHKREPA, Silva KUSHI, Joana DHIAMANDI, Lisana PIRO, Edison RIBAJ, Malvina KALLABAKU, Malvina ISTREFAJ, Saimir KRISTO, Kreshnik TURABI. Tirana Guide has been designed by Ajdin BASIC.



TIRANASaurus – a secret night tour of Tirana

3 october 2009, 22:00

"Tiaransaurus is a nocturnal investigation of the city's hidden identity and potential, swimming through layers of landscape and history, sensations and fictions. There will be missing statues, ghost infrastructures, a trip to Paris, a meeting with a Priest on a hill, and of course pink stucco temples. Strange ways to look for the future indeed! Out there in the dark there are secret dimensions waiting to be activated." [announcement]

Why at night? Since 2003, AWP conducts urban investigations at night aimed at unveiling the other side of contemporary cities, after the day-time logics extinguish. The night-time envisioned as a new frontier for prospective urbanism, but also as an interdisciplinary context for critical debate and creative experiments. The explorations confront site-specific documentary and fictions, from which territorial stories emerge, used as scenarios for the production of public events such as Tiranasaurus. Other cities investigated were from Rome to Barcelona, Belgrade, Prishtina, Helsinki, Brussels...

Tiranasaurus is based on sites mapped by the Tirana Guide to Parallel Urban Realities and involved about 100 participants. The tour has been set up by Marc ARMENGAUD, philosopher and artist, co-founder of AWP-Paris, an office for territorial reconfiguration (architecture, landscape, urbanism), and teacher at the Paris Malaquais architecture school, Dubravka SEKULIC, architect and researcher (Belgrade/Maastricht) and Polis University students: Belina KODRA, Sajmir KRISTO, Migena MERTIRI, Joana DHIAMANTI, Nevin BILALI, Linda LOKA, Silva KUSHI, Glodian DAUTI, Malvina KALLABAKU, Malvina ISTREFAJ, Enola ISUFI, Lisana PIRO, Persida SHKREPA.



Aleksandar Zograf

"Postcards from Tirana"

2009

cartoon (print)
30 x 40 cm

Postcards from Tirana, in two episodes, have been made as a special contribution to Tirana Guide to Parallel Urban Realities produced this September. The comic is a part of travelogue series that Aleksandar ZOGRAF makes in different cities. The premier publishing of the comic will be during October in the Italian Weekly Internazionale and Serbian weekly Vreme.

Aleksandar ZOGRAF (a pseudonym of SASA Rakezic) is a Serbian cartoonist. He has been active on the international comic scene since the early 1990s.



Episode 3

Corinne Diserens

curator of Episode 3

Extract of a conversation between Fabiola Haxhillari and Corinne Diserens, Tirana September 2009

Fabiola Haxhillari: The curator as an author among others chooses, limits, excludes. Why did you decide to invite this group of artists in your episode, considering the act of selection against an infinite number of possibilities?

Corinne Diserens: I do not feel I limit or exclude, but I invite and incorporate. We are in a very specific situation. In a hotel that has its strong history starting from fascist Italy times and then to communism, dictatorship, to finally close down and be looted, but still holding a central position in the city's urban texture fronting what I have learned to be a very popular little park. It is in between the main square of Tirana Scanderbeg where the opera and the National Museum of History are located and at the other end of the Deshmoret e Kombit Boulevard the government, the university, the art school and the stadium. All that to say, it is not an easy architecture to consider as an exhibition place, on the other hand it is a very exceptional and challenging situation. Regarding my invitation to the artists, I took into consideration various parameters, from the biennial setting to its economy, and the fragile Albanian context in which contemporary art is unfolding today.

FH: How do you see the notion of the Biennials in the third millennium and specifically in developing countries such as Albania? Do Biennials today educate or authorize, or what is you would say their role today?

CD: In our case, I like to imagine that maybe what is today a Biennial could become a more permanent platform for contemporary art, and if the Biennial can be a stimulus to establish some structures to support the arts, to generate dialogs than maybe they are necessary. I had been in Tirana some years ago for the second Biennial in 2003. I have been working with a few Albanian artists, and more specifically with Anri SALA, and this sharing work process has grown in me - even though in a distance – a sensitive curiosity towards Albania and its recent transformations. I am very happy to further my relation to this country through with what I like to do, which is curating. The proposition made by Edi MUKA and Joa LJUNGBERG, co-directors of T.I.C.A.B. to work with “The Symbolic Efficiency of the Frame” is a subtle way to bring on board the historic, social, cultural legacy we are activating, without being under the umbrella of a thematic dictate.

In a time where public sphere is in danger of disappearing, and TICAB being neither a public institution, nor a for-profit, private one, the Biennial has the potential to urge the question where do we stand with the artistic practice in the public sphere. As said above, Tirana offers today very few platforms for contemporary arts and it is one of our main objectives to be a go-between the publics and artistic experiences. In doing so, it is also to break what some wish to make believe that art is difficult, is elitist, etc., and all those prejudices. Subjective encounters with

works of art are very enriching and complex; it's not with cultural populist policies that you can construct meaningful dialogs with various publics.

Now, with regard to this very important question of education, evidently education programs have to be further developed, and TICAB is aiming towards that. But it can only be productive if public schools also engage in it. The second episode of the Biennial proposes a conference program with architects, urbanists - mostly from the Balkans - enlarging the reflection of Albania today with its neighbours.

FH: There are many artists in your episode who have developed their works in Albania. The work of Francis Alys, Sandra BOESCHENSTEIN, Peter FRIEDL, Alexander SCHELLOW, Paola YACOB, to mention some. How did these ideas realize? And was it difficult to bring the works of such a different group of artists together in such an unusual context like Tirana?

CD: For our episode, some of the works have been made for the Biennial. Tirana seems to have been suggestive to many of the artists invited who came over the summer to research for their work. Thanks to the receptiveness of the TICAB's team and the great generosity of the artists themselves it has been possible to produce exceptional works which play within hotel Dajti's paradoxical set up.

FH: There is a shared opinion among artists in this region, also in Albania, that if their work doesn't reflect the old paradigm of how the West sees the East their work is left unnoticed by the international curators. How do you see this discourse?

CD: I cannot think in those terms. Evidently the historical context is of great importance, and we have to further our critical understanding of it. On the other hand, artworks go from the particular to the universal, transcend traditional criterion to analyse a society in transition. It may be informed by the history contingencies, but it transposes the viewer, the listener, the spectator to another reality that opens new possibilities of representation and sensitive experience. Another aspect of the creative process I am very involved with, is the activation of the archive, not the dusty archive, but the archive with a production-of-knowledge momentum.

FH: Since we mentioned the historical context, for ideological reasons there is a long history of censorship in art in this part of the world, which without doubt has left its own traces. Do you see traces impacting today's art also?

CD: Today in Albania there are active writers and artists who have lived harsh censorship under the dictatorship that confined them with imprisonment or forced labour. They are dealing with their past experiences even though contemporary Albania is an emerging democracy. There is also a lot of frustration building up in front of the important corruption of the current Albanian political class, and the lack of support for the arts. It is quiet troubling to go to the National Art Gallery neighbouring Hotel Dajti, and see on one hand its large socialist realist painting and sculpture collection and on the other a very poor and confusing pseudo panorama of contemporary art (why is there no works of the young Albanian artists active in Europe today ?). Without any critical context of this dictatorial history of censorship, are exhibited paintings that were censored at the time of major living artists. A country is in transforming processes, we always have to continue to deal with our own ghosts.

FH: How do you see today's avant garde art evolving? Is there a new universalism emerging — altermodern as in Bourriaud's manifest of this Tate Triennial — post-postmodernism, or nothing new anymore under the sun in this world of information saturation?

CD: Particular can be universal... One question that keeps coming up is which representation and who is represented. I'm currently working on a project which compiles some case studies of what I like to call Moving Vicious Circles — it is explorative work on the question of artistic resonances from successive avant-gardes of the XX Century and the central role played by the arts interweaving as poetic and politic forces that have resisted the ruptures of the century. Taking into consideration mainly the period from the 50s to 1979, it pulls out some artistic experiences from the historical avant-gardes, in particular the Russian, Polish and German ones... which have nourished the American avant-garde of the 60s — which in turn, by putting into light and activating those European experimental legacies, has re-injected in contemporary artistic practices their never-ending critical and explorative attitudes where art is conceived as a way of experimenting the world. Or it explores how some artistic practices informed by the second half of the XX century American vanguard and those being nourished by the European avant-garde experimentations, can still act on our today. I think I have answered your question...

The Aura: An Approach

Jalal Toufic

Dedicated to those who when they reach what to common people has become within *spitting/shouting/striking distance* sense that it may still be *nowhere near*.

In the case of some artworks, films, and thoughtful books, while the material is from this world, the result is another universe that detaches from this one as baby universes do in the physical multiverse. The title of a lecture Philip K. Dick gave in 1978 was: “How to Build a Universe that Doesn’t Fall Apart Two Days Later”[1]; all works of art that present “a universe that does not fall apart two days later”[2] are *out of this world*, not only in the informal sense of *extraordinary*, but also literally, and have aura.

I care less about either distance or closeness; what I am drawn by is distance that remains one however close one gets. In Lars von TRIER’s *The Kingdom* (1994), as he stands in front of a corpse soon to be dissected, a doctor asks one of his students: “Would you mind if I touched your face?” “No thanks!” He then asks another: “You. Stand next to him. Closer! Closer! Closer! Closer!” “I don’t like it.” “Do you think the people who lie on this table like it? Would they like it when we begin to cut them up?” “I don’t know.” “I say that the fear of being touched, of getting close to people, is the fear of death. Why? Because it is the fear of fellowship. Every time you move along the seat of the bus to avoid contact, every time you avoid poking your finger in the wound of a patient’s illness, it is the fear of fellowship, of that greater fellowship. Everyone we work on here has accepted his place in the fellowship.... With sublime generosity a corpse delivers its body to the science that belongs to all of us.... That invokes

respect. Right—the first incision.” Yes, the corpse is open to proximity, even to communion, but the dead as undead is the site of an aura, that is, of the *phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be* (Walter BENJAMIN). In Bram STOKER’s novel *Dracula*, originally the distance between Jonathan Harker, who lives in London, and Count Dracula, who haunts a castle in Transylvania, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains, is over a thousand miles. Harker, a solicitor, is then sent out by his employer to explain the purchase of a London estate to Count Dracula and get his signature on the required papers. He reduces gradually the physical distance between him and Dracula. Across one or more lapses, he arrives at the castle, and there is invited by Dracula to a dinner the same night. In MURNAU’s and HERZOG’s *Nosferatus*, Harker sits next to the count at the dinner table. Is he now close to the latter? Or is he now dealing with a problematic distance? Does he unconsciously feel this problematic distance so he “misjudges” the distance of the knife with which he is cutting a piece of bread to his other hand, wounding his finger? At this point, the distance briefly seems to get even smaller, as the driven undead cannot resist grasping Harker’s bleeding finger and drinking and sucking his blood. I imagine that horrified but unable to extricate his finger from the forcible grasp of the vampire, Harker swish pans his gaze to the side, only to see himself all alone in the mirror (“the man was close to me, and I could see him over

my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself”!).[3] that is, only to witness that the undead is nowhere (inside the mirror) near (outside the mirror), yes, *nowhere near*. In other words, with regard to the vampire, Harker encounters the phenomenon of a distance, however close he may get to the vampire. While earlier Harker was unsettled and disoriented by being closer than he reckoned as a result of the lapse of consciousness he underwent (“Chapter II: Jonathan Harker’s Journal [continued]. 5 May. — I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach to such a remarkable place”),[4] he is now, as a result of the vampire’s aura, puzzled by realizing that he is more distant from the vampire than he at first believed, perceiving in the mirror the phenomenon of a distance, however close the vampire may be to him outside the mirror. The one who is discerning regarding the aura fathoms that, unless he is resurrected, the vampire continues to be distant from any living person even while sucking his blood, that is, even while “being” as near—but not nearer—to him as his jugular vein, and however close the living get to him, *without having to see that in the mirror*. [5] Harker disavowed the vampire’s anomalous absence in the mirror. The next day, while exploring the castle, he came across documents in manuscript form that mentioned his host’s birthdate ... and

date of death, centuries ago! Once more—the first time was on not seeing his host in the mirror even though he stood next to him in front of it—he felt that he was not the contemporary of his host. Yet, when a few days later he saw Count Dracula in a coffin, he considered, on recovering his composure, taking advantage of the vampire’s condition to drive a stake in his heart. But, very quickly he came to the realization that he could not do so: the count was frozen, immobile rather than motionless. Harker was not the contemporary of his undead host not only because he himself was born in the nineteenth century while his host was born and died hundreds of years ealier, but also because while immobilized, whether in a coffin or while standing, the undead was not in time, was withheld from it, therefore was distant however close one may get to him. Harker again felt the aura of the vampire; while they were both ostensibly in the same present, he could not be the immobilized vampire’s contemporary: in order to stab him, an action that occurs in time, he had to wait for him to be out of the state of immobilization and again in time.

Walter BENJAMIN: “The concept of aura which was proposed ... with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch” (“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” 1936).[6] What is the man or woman addressed by Walter BENJAMIN resting from? Might it be from their futile attempts to catch up, in an infinitely divisible space, with a tortoise, one consequently auratic?! “Imagine ACHILLES chasing a tortoise ... before ACHILLES can catch the tortoise he must reach the point where the tortoise started. But in the time he takes to do this the tortoise crawls a little further forward. So next ACHILLES must reach this new point. But in the time it takes ACHILLES to achieve this the tortoise crawls forward a tiny bit further. And so on to infinity: every time that Achilles reaches the place where the tortoise was the tortoise has had enough time to get a little bit further, and

so Achilles has another run to make, and so Achilles has an infinite number of finite catch-ups to do before he can catch the tortoise.”[7] BENJAMIN wrote in a footnote to his essay: “The *essentially* distant thing is the unapproachable”; in the context of an essay that’s largely around the aura, *the phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be*, I would rather have written: “The essentially distant thing is the unreachable—in a particular manner: the *infinitely* approachable.” The two examples BENJAMIN gives of the aura of a natural object are actually examples of objects that naturally have no aura! If there is a natural object that has aura, it is the black hole and its event horizon from the reference frame of an outside observer: “Windbag, watching Goulash from a spaceship safely outside the horizon, sees Goulash acting in a bizarre way. Windbag has lowered to the horizon a cable equipped with a camcorder and other probes, to better keep an eye on Goulash. As Goulash falls toward the black hole, his speed increases until it approaches that of light. EINSTEIN found that if two persons are moving fast relative to each other, each sees the other’s clock slow down; in addition, a clock that is near a massive object will run slowly compared with one in empty space. Windbag sees a strangely lethargic Goulash. As he falls, the latter shakes his fist at Windbag. But he appears to be moving ever more slowly; at the horizon, Windbag sees Goulash’s motions slow to a halt. Although Goulash falls through the horizon, Windbag *never quite sees him get there*” (my italics).[8] Can a mountain be auratic? Unless it exists in an infinitely divisible space, in which case it is subject to a ZENO paradox and auratic, a mountain may be auratic if it is *unnatural*, for example if it is actually the guise of an angel. “Beyond the issue of the rightful hierarchy of angels (Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, Angels?), we tend to have two figures of the angel: the angel as overwhelming (RILKE: “Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels’ / Hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me / suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed / in that overwhelming existence....” [*Duino Elegies*, trans. Stephen MITCHELL]) and the angel as discreet, the guardian angel. One of the main

tasks of the guardian angel is to shield the chosen from the overwhelming presence of the other angel. Did an angel appear to prophets or other humans on mountains? Yes, JIBRA’IL (GABRIEL) appeared repeatedly to MUHAMMAD on Hara (aka Hira), a mountain to the northeast of Mecca. But the aforementioned question is not the most pertinent one when it comes to the relation of angels to mountains. The angel can appear in the form of a man: “GABRIEL came to the Prophet while Um Salama was with him. GABRIEL started talking (to the Prophet) and then left. Then the Prophet asked Um Salama, ‘Who is he?’ ... She replied, ‘He is DIHYA’ [al-Kalbi: a handsome man amongst the companions of the Prophet]....”;[9] but the angel can also appear in other forms, for example a mountain. Was that then a guardian angel who appeared to MOSES in the form of mountain Tur (aka mount Sinai)? And did MOSES have, through God’s Mercy, by means of the angel-as-mountain an aside from a sight “no one may see ... and live” (Exodus 33:18-20: “Then MOSES said, ‘Now show me your glory.’ And the LORD said, ‘... No one may see me and live’”)? “MOSES ... said: My Lord! Show me (Thy Self), that I may gaze upon Thee. He said: Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain!” “Gaze upon the mountain” would here mean: have an aside at the angel in the form of the mountain. “If it stand still in its place, then thou wilt see Me. And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And MOSES fell down senseless. And when he woke he said: Glory unto Thee!”[10]

Respecting God, distance is not reciprocal: God is distant however close one tries to get to him (“Then he [the prophet MUHAMMAD] drew close and He [God] came down. Till he was (distant) two bows’ length or even nearer ... indeed he saw Him at a second descent, Near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass Behold, the Lote-tree was shrouded [in mystery unspeakable!]. The eye did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit” [Qur’an 53:8-17]), while God is near to one however distant one, for example CAIN or JONAH, tries to be from Him (“We are nearer to him than his jugular vein” [Qur’an 50:16]).

“A large crowd followed and pressed around him [JESUS]. And a woman was there who had been subject to

bleeding for twelve years.... When she heard about JESUS, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.... JESUS ... turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' 'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, "Who touched me?"'" (Mark 5:24-31; cf. Matthew 9:20-21). How unaware of the aura, at least at that point, were JESUS CHRIST's disciples according to Mark for them to mishear "Who touched my clothes?" as "Who touched me?" "And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed" (Matthew 14:35-36). I am taken aback by this misreckoning of the distance of JESUS CHRIST, this time on the part of MATTHEW, apparent in the slippage from "just touch the edge of his cloak" to "touched him"—how much more sensitive to the aura of JESUS than MATTHEW were the people who bought their sick! They proved to be not common people. It is appropriate that Jesus, who has aura, therefore who has distance however close one gets to him, is not himself touched, that the closest they get to touching him is, notwithstanding MATTHEW, touching the edge of his cloak. "Now THOMAS (called DIDYMUS), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when JESUS came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to

them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.' A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, JESUS came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to THOMAS, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' THOMAS said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' Then JESUS told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'" (John 20:24-29)—Jesus, who has aura, did not say: "Because you have touched me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not touched and yet have believed." Had THOMAS insisted on touching the man who came and stood among them and had he successfully done so, then this would indicate either that the one he actually managed to touch is not JESUS CHRIST but an *imposter*;^[11] or else that he managed to touch one who has aura—that is, with regard to whom there is a distance however close one may get—only through a miracle, so that his feat would have been the first miracle performed by one of the disciples of CHRIST—unless by touching JESUS, THOMAS would have felt that his hand was no longer at hand, no longer belonged to him, the distance becoming now internal to him—and then Christ would have had to miraculously restore his hand to him, make him feel again that it belonged to him. Yes, others cannot touch Jesus—who has aura, therefore who maintains a distance however close one gets to him—except

miraculously. "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cured of his leprosy" (Matthew 8:3); "And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them" (Matthew 8:15); "When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith will it be done to you'; and their sight was restored" (Matthew 9:28-30). What are the miracles here? They are the cure of the man's leprosy, the disappearance of the woman's fever, the restoration of the sight of the blind, but also that Jesus, who has aura, therefore who maintains a distance, however close it may be, actually touched these humans! In other words, when the one who has aura touched the blind and by touching them healed them, this included two miracles, healing their blindness unnaturally, and touching them when otherwise he maintains a distance, however close it may be.

Notes

[1] Every artist or writer who works to construct a universe that doesn't fall apart two days later cannot but admire this universe that has not fallen apart even after 13.7 billion years— notwithstanding the presence in it, or rather at its borders, of the other universes constructed by artworks, novels (including some of the ones Philip K. Dick wrote) and thoughtful works.

[2] Many museums and biennials include both artworks that present each "a universe that does not fall apart two days later" and others that have already fallen apart before they are framed, indeed "before thy gaze returns to thee" (Qur'an 27:40)—how lacking in discernment is the museum director or the curator who places these two sorts of works together!

[3] Bram STOKER, *Dracula*, revised edition (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 32.

[4] *Ibid.*, 21.

[5] The vampire most often does not experience a distance however close it may be, but rather the opposite, a kind of overwhelming encroachment of objects, particularly the sun.

[6] Walter BENJAMIN, *Illuminations*, ed. and introd. Hannah ARENDT, trans. Harry ZOHN (London: Pimlico, 1999), 216.

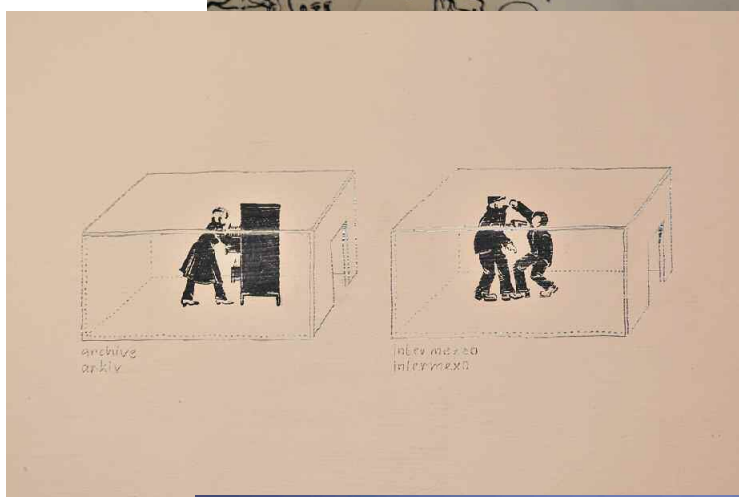
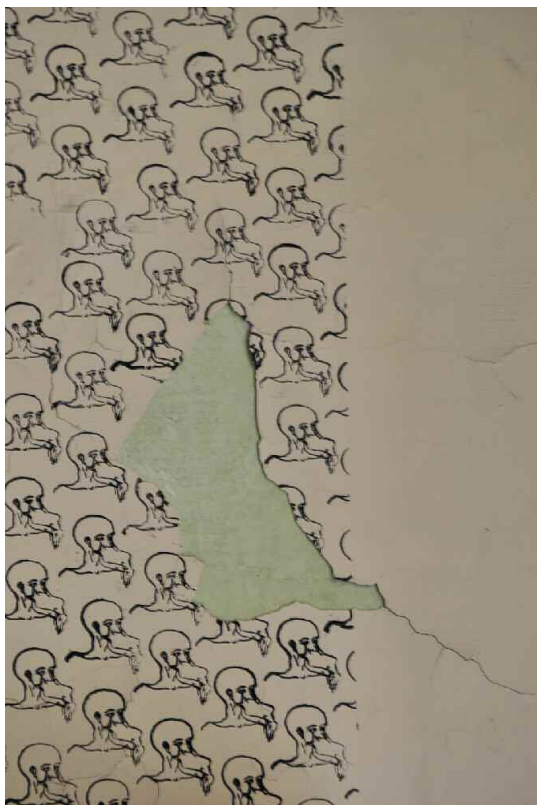
[7] Nick HUGGETT, "Zeno's Paradoxes," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/paradox-zeno/>.

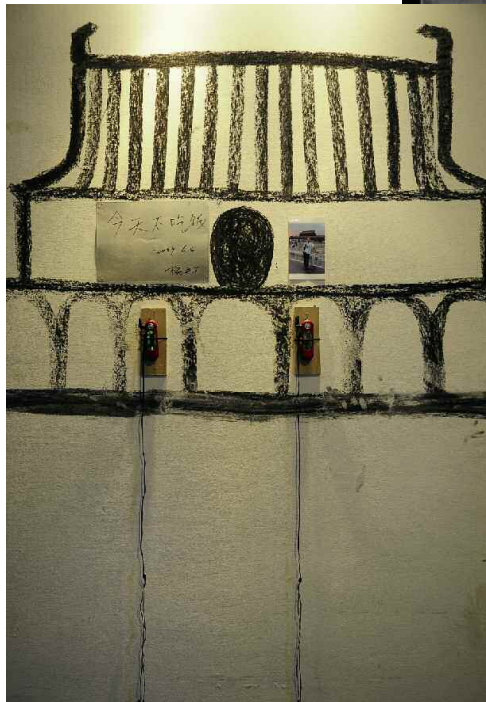
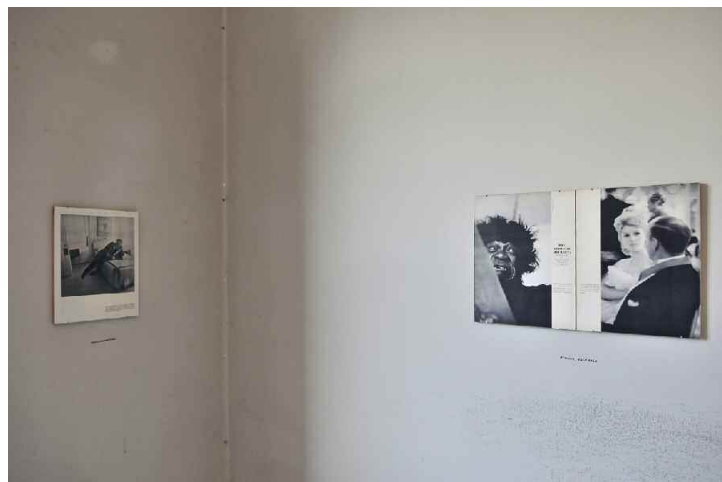
[8] Leonard SUSSKIND, "Black Holes and the Information Paradox," *Scientific American* (April 1997): 55.

[9] *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book 61, no. 3634 (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), 662; cf. *Sahih Muslim* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Jil, 2005), 995-996/
<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/muslim/031.smt.html#031.6006>.

[10] *Over-Sensitivity*, 2nd ed. (Forthcoming Books, 2009; available for download as a PDF file at <http://www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads.htm>), 236-237 (endnote 254); cf. "Kneeling Angel with Mountainous Wings (aka Toward a Title for a Gibran Watercolor Left Untitled), in Jalal TOUFIC, (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: The Post Apollo Press, 2003).

[11] Muslims believe in the aura of JESUS, therefore they did not consider that others, notwithstanding the latter's assertions to the contrary, could come close enough to him to crucify him—so, it was another who was crucified: "... saying: We slew the Messiah, JESUS son of MARY, Allah's messenger—they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them" (Qur'an 4:157).





Naked are the Others

Maxi Obexer

Some time ago, the identity card of a 17-year-old boy fell out of a fishing net full of decomposed clothing, bones and fish. The discovery put a face and an identity on this teenager, but it did more than that. The card testified to the existence of a person who had already been dead for five years, and whose death had gone unnoticed until this point in time. And that wasn't all. When the card washed up, it brought the other 287 people who had gone down in the shipping disaster back into existence. Their disappearance had not caused the merest stir; although television outlets had reported the sinking of a ship off the Sicilian coast, the Italian government denied the event, and it was finally forgotten. They died as if they had never lived – a death that not only obliterated their existence, but served to negate it altogether.

The card did what its owner and his 287 fellow passengers could not: it crossed the European border, arrived on land and made it into Europe. It also broke through another barrier, however, one that separates refugees and European citizens. With a face, a name and the person that the card belonged to, it was easy to make out his origins, and with his origins one could reconstruct his past, and with that past establish the future that the youth and his family had mapped out for him. His uncle, who was living in Milan, appeared on television. He declared that his nephew, Anpalagan

GANESHU (a name you can Google now), had been sent to Europe along with his brother so that the two of them could attend high school and then university. It was what their parents had wanted: they could not guarantee their children a good education in Sri Lanka because of the political unrest there.

We are so accustomed to going without the name, age and origin of refugees, and their perspectives and perceptions even more so, that this sort of business does not come to our attention until we suddenly confront a fully realised person. Usually we don't need to hear more than the fact that they are refugees to know who they are and what they want. We don't want to know any more, because as long as we know that, we also know categorically what they imagine for themselves: material gains. We don't really need to know very much. This identity card penetrated the wall of fog onto which we usually project our knowledge – our ignorance, rather.

Refugees move about behind this wall of fog, sailing along on the other side of it. Some of them even prefer the invisibility, choosing to enter without a passport and leave authorities in the dark a little longer. When they drown, this wall remains; it simply shifts from the horizontal to the vertical, on the border between the surface and the deep.

Many called for the wreck to be investigated after the identity card surfaced, and for a death certificate be issued in the names of all who perished. In effect, they called for the identity card that had already stood in for the existence of 287 people to now conjure up death certificates that would testify to the passing of each person by name, in black and white. Above all, it would have been something that could provide clarity and certainty to their loved ones. A company offered to salvage the ship for the cost of one million euros. We could have wrested back the individuals from that formless mass of clothes, mud, and skeletal remains. Concrete forms with names, faces and origins would have arisen from invisibility and shapelessness.

The million euros are probably not the only reason that this did not happen (the cost could have been raised through donations). The Italian government voiced its opposition to the salvage operation, pointing out that the ship had been found just outside of Italian territorial waters. But these borders could not be the real reason; had the ship been carrying European passengers, they would have known how to overcome the nautical barriers. So why was it? It has to do with those other borders that differentiate between visibility and invisibility. There must be a reason not to let these borders blur, even if it would help identify the dead. There must be a reason that the bodies found remain naked, without any other layer, blank. Without pasts, without faces,

without names, and without any other symbolic enhancement of their existence and their actions. Their decision to leave their country of origin is meant to carry no broader meaning than the decision itself.

Why do we deal with arriving refugees so hastily? Here we have a journalist reporting in the foreground: interviews with border police, the mayor, sometimes with fishermen or people from NGOs and other experts. In the background, the mute boat people flicker by. They are stashed away into buses; a last shot shows a pair of eyes locked on the reporters and journalists from behind the tinted windows of the bus. It is almost as if the refugees were the watchers, the curious observers – rather than the actors, the reason for this conglomeration of officials standing about on the beach.

Why can't we let them speak for themselves? Why are there always others speaking about them? And why are the reception camps cordoned off like prisons? This has nothing to do with criminals. The camps are not only cordoned off to keep the refugees from reaching us – no one from our side can get in to reach them either.

The representation from Giorgio AGAMBEN used the ancient Roman legal figure of *homo sacer*, whose exposed "bare life" is isolated from secular and religious life alike in a sort of untouchable sphere. Like the sovereign, the *homo sacer* has a political status that demarcates the furthest extent of the law, yet at the same time he lies outside of its jurisdiction. Everyone is his sovereign. The *homo sacer*, or sacred man, cannot be sacrificed as part of a religious ceremony, yet he can be killed at any time without consequences. In contrast to a sacrifice, the death of the *homo sacer* has no greater meaning. This excludes any comparison between him and the citizens themselves. Refugees, too, find themselves at the extremes of the exposed life, and the trouble that Europe has with "her" refugees comes from the desire to leave them there. Any comparison with our civilizing and cultural systems of order, value, or meaning is therefore to be avoided. Europe's

achievement has been to keep the figure of the refugee removed from any connection with us. He must remain naked, at best without even a name or origin. And he also is not allowed to be associated with the myths and moments of our past. He ought not to be interwoven with the history of our progress, and this requires a certain effort, since the tale of setting off for new shores is at the heart of the history of European progress.

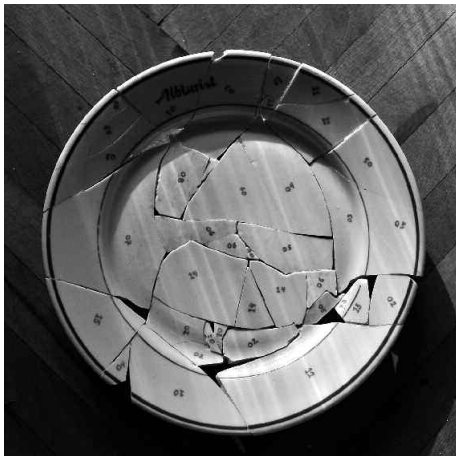
The place where the refugee is sailing is precisely where the origin and the cradle of European humanity – or at least, the cradle of the European world – is located, on the Mediterranean and the world's oceans. The same routes, the same borders once traversed by the conquerors are now used by refugees, although the latter travel in the opposite direction. European sailors were well aware of the dangers – stormy seas, rocky underwater reefs and rocks – that the refugee is exposed to. All of these places – the routes, sailors and ships – have entered into European myth and legend. They have acquired meaning beyond their actions; their stories have provided the stuff of our cultural identity. And the refugee is not allowed to be associated with any of it, even though he has undertaken something similar. His action must remain devoid of meaning and identity.

The *Flying Dutchman* comes to mind, that protagonist in the myths of European explorers, and the "wall of fog" that he broke through. He cackled as he did it (that wall was the border of the Christian world, after all), even his crossing would curse him to wander eternally until Judgment Day, belonging neither to the living nor the dead. Yet the Flying Dutchman is still considered a proud hero. Even in his accursed state, his name still conjures an explorer's pride and self-empowerment; he is still the upstanding herald of new worlds. And even in those legends that are sceptical of the European faith in progress and joy in exploration, the boldness with which their protagonists set off is something to be venerated and admired. The Flying Dutchman stands for the "brave and spirited heroes," as Luís VAZ DE CAMÕES writes in his *Lusiads*. The refugees, on the other hand, stand for nothing. Against them the Europeans must reconstruct that same wall of fog that the Dutchman broke through laughing.

While the Europeans have constantly attributed metaphysical qualities to their own curiosity about the world, they must leave all that behind when thinking about refugees. A European's romantic desire to dissolve boundaries must in the case of the refugee become nothing more than a blind dash to the outside world. The refugee has no desire, and it is not self-empowerment that leads him to abandon a system of inequality, injustice and a lack of opportunities, as the European emigrants once did, but an undefined passive reaction. Refugee: the very word reveals everything about this reduction to barest nakedness. He is merely a creature seeking refuge, and nothing more. He stands for nothing, not even for himself, since he usually possesses no name, no self-assurance, and no other vision besides a wish for designer jeans.

This self-centred European continent, which still endows its conquest of the world with the pathos of an expansion of the self, denies even death to the refugee – at least, a death with any meaning. Like the *homo sacer*, the refugee is there for the killing, in the sense that his death has no meaning. In contrast to a sacrificial death, and above all else, the death of the refugee must not be associated with sacrifice – because then we might have to ask ourselves whose sacrifice he is.

Translated from the German by Casey BUTTERFIELD.



Francis Alÿs

“15+1”
2009

Installation

Courtesy the artist

Francis Alÿs is presenting a new work made with dinner service plates of the Hotel Dajti when it was in its heyday. 15 plates from the dinner service were broken into small pieces and then glued together again, however leaving out one piece from each plate. All the pieces from each plate were assembled together to make a sixteenth plate. On the wall, a filmstill taken from a newsreel shows a formal state dinner held during the dictatorship in Hotel Dajti, with the portraits of Mao and Hoxha in the background, as Albania was commemorating special trade agreements with China.

*Francis Alÿs was born in 1959 in Antwerp (B).
He lives and works in Mexico City.*



Jérôme Bel

“Véronique Doisneau
2004”

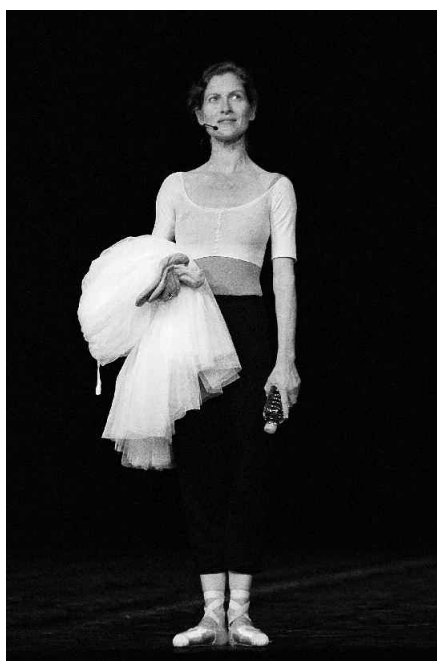
October 4th, 2009

Hotel Dajti, 03:30 p.m.

Projection of the film "Véronique Doisneau
2004" & encounter with Jérôme BEL

Invited to make a piece for the ballet of the Paris Opera by her director Brigitte LEFÈVRE, Jérôme BEL wanted to stage a kind of theatrical documentary on the work of one of the dancers of the ballet: Véronique DOISNEAU. The dancer, closed to retirement, alone on stage, retrospectively and subjectively considers her own career as ballerina inside this institution. After screening the 30 minutes film, Jérôme BEL answered questions of the audience debating his approach and ideas viewed through DOISNEAU's performance.

*Jérôme BEL was born in 1964 in Paris.
He lives and works in Paris.*



© Icare



Sandra Boeschstein

“The Tirana Pieces”
2009

36 possibilities share one light

Wall piece: pencil, stamped oil paint,
thread, objects on pins, holes

when is the frame smaller
when the picture is larger

Drawings: ink and partly stamped oil
paint on paper, each 42 x 29.7 cm

how large is an event,
when do they start to be several

Installation: pencil, stamped oil paint,
thread, pins, holes, mirror, fly and pillow

Courtesy the artist

“With their simplicity these figurative drawings, from ink on paper to extensive wall pieces, lap at the borders of differing realities, respectively their representations. These situations are unobtrusive offers of realness, aiming at a gathering of esthetic discontinuities whilst being superimposed on the walls of the real spaces. The refurbishment of the hotel room scrapes the passage between drawn representation and material presence. Incompatible compositions follow the traces of the rooms' past in search of a drifting constitution of reality, which radiates the absence of a stable reference. These splintered interiors are the opposite of an invasive esthetic of conclusiveness with its assertion of suppleness. Among the fragments only the individual process of perception can be continuous.”

Sandra BOESCHSTEIN

“...The starting point for Sandra BOESCHSTEIN's drawings is the immediate universe of things. In this way she prises everyday objects out of their routine, observational contexts, questions their very materiality but also their metaphysical qualities, ultimately examining inherent meaning and patterns. In the mysterious, partly precarious pictorial realities, the quotidian relics transform themselves into purged residues of a reality, marking out inexplicable zones, which, for their part, lie beyond sensory perception and which refer to conceptual systems and their limitations... The sheet and the wall function respectively as a resistant space in which hybrid, mobile structures can duly emerge—structures that comprise a host of different organisational forms and conditions, areas of void and ones duly designated, differentiated portrayal and schematic form.”

Irene MÜLLER, Seeing as an Act of Movement

Sandra Boeschstein was born in 1967 in Zürich. She lives and works in Zürich.



Vincenzo Castella - Multiplicity

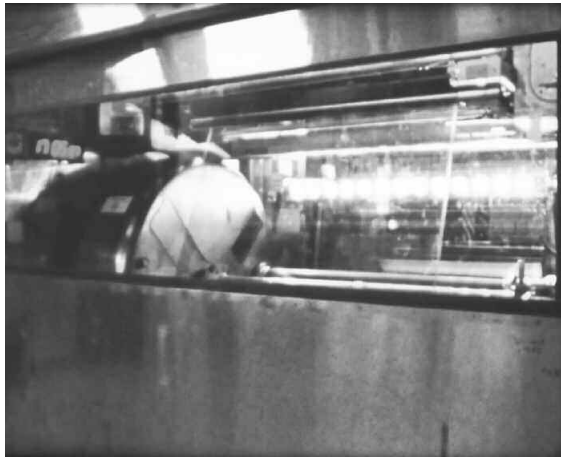
“Milano.Chronicles”
2009

Photo-Motion
(from 8 x 10" color negatives)

Courtesy the artist

Here six images capture six pieces of contemporary Milano, six places which have seen an incident, a murder or a tragic accident in recent years. In the frozen time of this sections of the urban worlds, a search for changing details looks for signs or clues to this recent past, but only finds symbols linked to the collective imagination: invisible traces of the emotions with which we reacted to the news at the time, memories which continue to attach themselves to the places marked by past events. By moving obsessively between emotions and memories linked to these places this installation by Vincenzo Castella and Multiplicity opens up a window on the unconscious mind of Milano. Those who choose which facts become 'new' exploit the emotions of fear and insecurity to organize their newspapers and their pieces for local TV programs, as they select items to show from the multiple facets of daily life. And, in this way, by searching in the cracks and amongst the details, the dark corners of these Milanese places, our gaze inevitably comes back to ourselves, to our nightmares and our dreams reflected, as in broken mirrors, by the city which has absorbed them.

Vincenzo CASTELLA was born in 1952 in Napoli. He lives and works in Milan.



Tacita Dean

“Kodak”
2006

16 mm colour and b/w film optical sound
44'loop system

*Courtesy the artist and
Marian Goodman Gallery Paris, New York*

Shot at the Kodak factory in Chalon-sur-Saône, France after the discovery of the closing of their film production facility, Dean's film is a beautiful and self-referential homage to a process whose future is shrouded in uncertainty. With the demise of the medium that she feels closest, Dean sought permission to film at the factory itself and the film examines that medium by turning it on itself. Kodak's narrative follows the making of the celluloid as it runs through several miles of machinery and explores the abandoned corners of the factory. On the day of filming, the factory also ran a test through the system with brown paper, providing a rare opportunity to see the facilities fully illuminated, without the darkness needed to prevent exposure and underscoring the luster of the celluloid as the dull brown strips contrast with the luminous, transparent polyester.

Tacita DEAN was born in 1965 in Canterbury, (E). She lives and works in Berlin.



Marta Dell' Angelo

“Untitled” (Manual of the human body)
2007 - 2009

Collage
(oil on canvas, black felt-tip pen on paper, digital print, press clipping, drawing on paper, black written spray, print on tissue paper, written stickers, written with carbon, print on toilet paper, chalk sculpture, acrylic color on the wall, white written with chalk.)

Courtesy Le Case d'Arte, Milano

The work installed, Untitled (Manual of the human body) is inspired by the homonym book the artist did in 2007. The manual is conceived and devised through subsequent readings of the material accumulated, through which the red line catches a glimpse of artistic alteration and the biography of the author. A collage of works, images, words, texts (from Woody ALLEN, SARTRE, BUKOWSKI, PASOLINI), fragments, photographs from the internet and newspaper press clippings - the artist has created links and associations like a joint game. This book aims to demonstrate how an absolutely personal and subjective experience can become both applicable and universally comprehensible.

These original images leave new ones composed of heterogeneous scenes that the artist seizes from proper reality and the surrounding one. The subject of her works is often the female body represented in moments of intimacy. A "scientific" objective translation of the physical and mental human state of being, inside of which the internal and the external events of the world co-exist. She chooses to paint in a way that is both fast and simple, details are avoided but the shapes and their volumes are representing a synthesis of what they are. She usually looks for details, close-ups, ordinary gestures and postures, sometimes odd ones and other times impossible ones as if they were frozen or suspended in a state of 'apnea'.

Marta DELL' ANGELO was born in 1970 in Pavia, (I). She lives and works in Milan.



Marta Dell'Angelo

"La conversazione,
Tirana 2009"

Round table October 2nd, 8:30 pm.
with Ema ANDREA (actress)
Adrian KLOSI (publicist)
Mimoza AHMETI (poetess)
Kozeta NOTI (professor)
Gezim QENDRO (art historian)

Marta DELL'ANGELO was born in 1970 in Pavia, (I). She lives and works in Milan.



Peter Friedl

"The Children"
2009

video (loop)
2' 12"

Courtesy the artist

The Children is based on the painting *Fëmijët* (1966; *The Children*) by Albanian socialist realist painter Spiro KRISTO (b. 1936). For the shooting, the outdoor street scene of the painting was staged as a tableau vivant inside the Hotel Dajti.

Shortly before the manuscript of *Les mots et les choses* (1966; *The Order of Things*) went to the printer, Michel FOUCAULT decided to put his essay "Las Meninas" as the first chapter at the beginning of his book. *Las Meninas* is the title of the famous VELÁZQUEZ painting (1656) to which FOUCAULT dedicates a detailed description and analysis. Before mentioning the name of Diego VELÁZQUEZ, he writes: "A strangely literal, though inverted, application of the advice given, so it is said, to his pupil by the old PACHECO when the former was working in his studio in Seville: 'The image should stand out from the frame.'" Francisco PACHECO del Río was VELÁZQUEZ' teacher (and father-in-law). He also served as the official censor of Seville's Inquisition and was the author of *Arte de la pintura: su antiedad y grandeza* (1649). In *The Children*, PACHECO's advice – the only piece of text – is heard from the off, spoken by one of the girls, in Albanian.

Peter FRIEDL was born in 1960 in Oberneukirchen, (A). He lives and works in Berlin.



Uran Hajdari

"Albania is marching ahead"
1973

Images of 13 clay statuettes

Albania is marching ahead was shown for the first time in the ground floor hall of the Albanian Palace of Culture (Opera House), in 1973. The piece consisted of a large sculpture figure of a woman, marching on, surrounded by 46 small sculptural groups (the heads), some of them triple headed, some of them double headed and some of them single headed. All heads represent all "reactionary", obscurantist and micro-bourgeoisie layers of society, remnants of the past that are fading away from the march of the New Albanian woman.

Uran HAJDARI was born in 1931 in Tirana. He lives and works in Tirana.



Amar Kanwar

“The Smile”
2007

One channel video
31”
1 color photograph
79.5 x 55 cm

Courtesy Amar Kanwar and
Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

The next morning Senior General Than Shwe Supreme Head of the Burmese Military Dictatorship visited the cremation memorial site of Mahatma GANDHI in New Delhi to pay his respect. The Burmese dictator laid a wreath, offered rose petals and his aides smiled. This happened on the 25th of October 2004.

Extract from the magazine ‘Himal – South Asia’,
Cover story – February 2006,
‘Blood Red Petals by Amar Kanwar’,
published in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Extract —
If you want to see the most brutal dictator in the world at present, go to Rajghat in Delhi where Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI was cremated on 31 January 1948. It is a special sight in deed.

The timing is mid-morning on 25 October 2004, although the scene could take place any time. Senior General Than SHWE, the supreme head of the Burmese military dictatorship, along with his entourage, comes in through the main entrance. The grass is well manicured, the flowers placed by the Horticulture Department are immaculate, and a sickly-sweet smell reminds you that someone has placed incense sticks in all the right places. Hidden speakers gently release GANDHI’s favourite hymn into the calm morning air, *Vaishnav jan to taynay kahyeeye*. Translated, the softly intoned words say:

A godlike man is one,
Who feels another’s pain
Who shares another’s sorrow,
And pride does disdain.
Who regards himself as the lowliest of the low,
Speaks not a word of evil against any one
One who keeps himself steadfast in words,
body and mind,
Blessed is the mother who gives birth to such a son.

Appropriately, Than SHWE’s wreath is made up of white flowers. Two bodyguards are carrying the wreath, and walk a step ahead of the Supreme Dictator. The bodyguards are in dark



suits and ties, clean shaven, smart and tough. They are all wearing new white sneakers. The Supreme Dictator himself is impeccably dressed in a dark suit and tie, but he wears black leather shoes. The entourage moves slowly; General SHWE’s aide instinctively flicks a speck of dust off of the back of the bodyguard carrying the wreath – just in case the general sees it and disapproves. Almost everybody looks pleasant, although Shwe has no expression on his face, and the gathered Indian dignitaries seem a little apprehensive.

The Supreme Dictator eventually reaches the all-important spot, where GANDHI’s feet would have been when he lay on the funeral pyre. The wreath is placed. It is time for the *parikrama*. The entourage must now respectfully walk around the funeral site, and the general comes back to the spot again. He is still stone-faced at the end of the circumambulation. As he encircles the sacred spot, the volume from the speakers inexplicably rises. A basket of rose petals appears from nowhere.

The photographers ready their cameras. The Supreme Dictator is very particular about his image – he does not much like to be seen. In person, he seems to be the silent, standing-in-the-background, grim-faced tough sort of character. He is very superstitious, and perhaps also a nervous kind of dictator. As chairman of the ruling State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Than Shwe is the senior most leader of the military regime, which he has led since 23 April 1992.

Born in 1933 near the town of Mandalay, Than SHWE is said to be an introvert, who often makes decision after consultation with his personal astrologers. He worked in the postal service before joining the army’s Officer Training School at age 20, where he became an expert in psychological warfare. An army captain in 1960, by 1985 he was promoted to Major General and named Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army. After the bloody crackdown of Burma’s pro-democracy student demonstrations in 1988, Shwe became vice-chairman of the then-ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), Deputy Minister of Defence, and the Army Chief of Staff. In 1990, he was promoted to general.

Those who have spent significant time around Than Shwe say that he thinks and acts as though he is a king, and is rumoured to seat visitors at his home in chairs lower than his own – just as did his predecessor, the longtime dictator Ne Win. Shwe’s family members reportedly prefer to address one other with royal titles.

The moment finally arrives. Than SHWE has come back to the place where GANDHI’s feet had laid at his final resting place. It is still the 21st century. Aung SAN SUU KYI is still imprisoned. Thousands of political activists, artists, poets, journalists across three generations have been killed, lie in prisons or are scattered in exile across the globe. Blithely, the Supreme Dictator picks up a handful of soft rose petals and tosses them gently into the air. They fall silently on Gandhi. The Supreme Dictator reaches out again towards the basket. There is no still no change in his expression.

Suddenly a panicky photographer shouts, evidently having missed the choice moment: “Excuse me, sir, excuse me! Once more! Once more, please!” The general pauses for a moment – *Vaishnav jan to taynay kahyeeye* swells on the speakers and Than SHWE shoots the photographer a quick, loaded glance from the corner of his eye. An aide whispers into the general’s ear. The mask remains expressionless. Nonetheless, he obliges the lens man and tosses the rose petals yet again. The aides smile. The photographer clicks repeatedly.

The hymn is now very loud, shrieking in frenzy. The general picks up the rose petals again and tosses them, again and again and again. Miraculously, the basket of petals never seems to empty; our supply of rose petals is endless, and the general keeps throwing and throwing. He’s still throwing them there today. If you want to see the most brutal dictator in the world at present, go to the Rajghat. It is a special sight indeed. The posture is awkward, the face a little strained, but he is still throwing, the petals falling on the *Samadhi sthal* in a quiet flurry.

Amar KANWAR was born in 1964 in New Delhi.
He lives and works in New Delhi.



Elena Kovylna

“The green apples”
1999
“Waltz”
2001
“Shooting gallery”
2002
“The Medal”
2003
“Feu le monde bourgeois”
2009

Video of a selection of performances

Courtesy the artist

Elena KOVYLINA is a Moscow-based artist whose confrontational performances concern the political significance of a woman’s experience in Russia today. Taking on the varied roles of author, aggressor, and object of desire, KOVYLINA’s devastating and visceral social critiques have made her among the most radical young artists currently working in Russia.

Elena KOVYLINA was born in 1971 Moscow.
She lives and works in Moscow.



Pierre Leguillon

“Pierre Leguillon features Diane Arbus: A printed Retrospective 1960 - 1971”
2009

magazines

Courtesy Kadist Art Foundation

Pierre LEGUILLON presents the first retrospective of the works of Diane ARBUS bringing together all the images commissioned to the New York photographer by the Anglo-American press in the 1960s. The exhibition presents the original pages of the magazines, including 'Harper's Bazaar', 'Esquire', 'Nova' and 'The Sunday Times Magazine'. Always conceived specifically by Diane ARBUS for the press medium, these photographs are showcased in their original format for the first time.

This private collection consists of more than 150 photographs, demonstrating Diane ARBUS' discreet point of view through a great variety of subjects: reportage, anonymous or celebrity portraits (Norman MAILER, Jorge Luis BORGES, Lilian et Dorothy GISH, Mia FARROW, Marcello MASTROIANNI, Madame Martin LUTHER KING...), children's fashion, and several “photographic essays”, with captions or comments by the photographer herself. By presenting the original magazines, the exhibition emphasizes the formal choices related to layout, and places the photographs back in the social or political context of that time.

Pierre LEGUILLON was born in 1969 in Nogent-sur-Marne, (F). He lives and works in Paris.



David Maljkovic

“Lost Memories from These Days”
2006

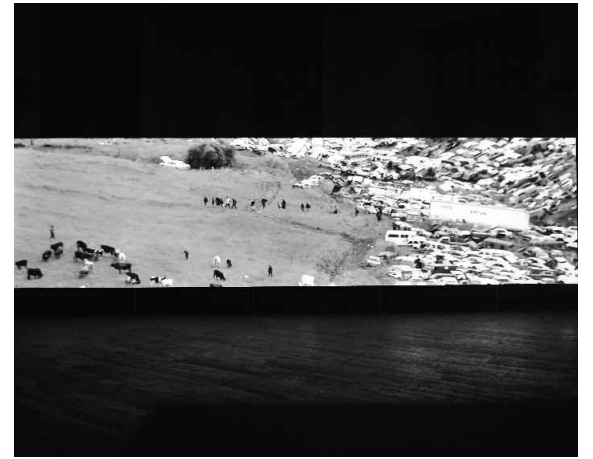
One channel video and sound installation,
6'4"
25 collages on paper
22.5 x 30 cm each
and wood structure

Courtesy Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam

Lost *Memories from These Days*, take as their point of departure an architectural icon from recent Croatian history: the Italian Pavilion at the Zagreb Fair (established by Josip Tito as a rare example of economic exchange between East and West), which was in its heyday in the 1960s and '70s, but which today languishes in a state of semi-abandonment. In these works, the hypnotic nature of the gestures and words of the protagonists creates an effect somewhere between the hallucinatory and the absurd: in one instance a group of young people mechanically repeat, in a trance-like state, what sound like phrases from an elementary course in English; in another, through physical gestures that are decelerated until they become almost sensual, girls describe their relationship to cars: symbols of a future that seems never to arrive. The columns of the iconic Italian Pavilion – a monument to what was once a successful economic and cultural dialogue between the former Yugoslavia and the West – appear to be echoed in a set of polystyrene shapes that lock the tires of the cars which the girls describe to the land: prevented from moving, the static vehicles seem to allude to Croatia.

Like the fragments of a thought that slowly piece together, MALJKOVIC's works steal up on us gradually, transporting us to a dimension outside of time, where the past and the future are invisible poles between which flickers a uniquely imagined perception of the present. In recent years his work has developed in the form of two related projects: the trilogy 'Scenes for a New Heritage 1-3' (2002-6) and 'These Days' (2005). Each of these narratives-in-progress comprises either a video – the main medium in MALJKOVIC's practice – or occasionally photographs, collages and drawings, which are reminiscent both formally and conceptually of the radical and Utopian architecture of the 1960s and '70s.

David MALJKOVIC was born in 1973 in Rijeka, (C). He lives and works in Zagreb and Berlin.



Aernout Mik

“Osmosis and Excess”
2005

Digital video on hard disc
Loop

Courtesy carlier / gebauer

Osmosis and Excess, came into being in the borderlands between San Diego in California and Tijuana in Mexico. In the work two contrasting sequences are slot into each other: footage of the hilly outskirts of Tijuana, dotted with countless wrecked cars, and video images of a downtown pharmacy flooded with mud. Tijuana is the Mexican pendant to San Diego in the USA; the city lies directly on the border between the two countries, with the bulk of border traffic flowing through it. Endless ageing used cars are brought across the border from the USA, only to be stripped of their useful components and abandoned. In the opposite direction, vast quantities of low-cost pharmaceuticals are smuggled from Mexico into the USA through San Diego. *Osmosis and Excess* prevail, a repeated and self-enclosed commodity cycle. The landscape along the border and the lives of the people who live there are determined by these phenomena. Mik's *Osmosis and Excess* portrays the border region in an extreme panorama format as a microcosm comprising a landscape defined by a merely internally functional commodity circulation.

Aernout MIK was born in 1962 in Groningen (N). He lives and works in Amsterdam.



Santu
Mofokeng

- “Ishmael: Eyes Wide Shut”
Motouleng Cave, Clarens, 2004
- “The Buddhist Retreat”
Kwa-Zulu Natal, 2003
- “Sacral Animals”
Motouleng Cave Clarens, 2004
- “Christmas Church Service”
Mautse Caves, Ficksburg, 2000
- “Inside Motouleng Cave”
Clarens, 1996
- “Christmas Church Service”
Mautse Cave, 2000
- “Church of God”
Motouleng, 1996

- “Ishmaell Inside Motouleng Cave”
Clarens, 2004
- “Untitled”
- “Self Portrait, KZ 1, Auschwitz”
1997 / 98
- “Hotel Globe”
Auschwitz, 1997
- “River near Theresienstadt”
Czech Republic, 2003
- “Hiroshima Memorial Park”
Japan, 2004
- “Sachsenhausen”
Berlin, 1998

14 photographic prints

Courtesy the artist

“My South Africans believed in apartheid as in *inyanga* (traditional healer), as in the *sjambok* (...), as they believed in everything which made it unnecessary for them to forge their own destiny; they loved their fear, it reconciled them with themselves, it suspended the difficulties of the spirit like a sneeze. Apartheid was a roof. And under this roof life was difficult, many aspects of life were concealed, proscribed. People tried to live their lives in dignity but their joy was tainted with guilt and defiance.

In South Africa many black people spend their lives chasing shadows. While the expression ‘chasing shadows’ has quixotic connotations in English, in indigenous languages the expression represents the pursuit of something real, something capable of action, of causing effects – a chase perhaps joined in order to forestall a threat or danger.

Seriti in Sesotho (my mother tongue) does not really translate. The word is often translated only as ‘shadow’, unwittingly combining the meaning of *moriti* and *seriti*. The word *seriti* overlaps the word meaning ‘shadow’, but the absence of light is not all there is to *seriti*. In everyday usage *seriti* can mean anything from aura, presence, dignity, confidence, spirit, essence, status, wellbeing and power – power to attract good fortune and to ward off bad luck and disease.

The demise of apartheid has brought to the fore a crisis of spiritual insecurity for the many who believe in the spiritual dimensions of life. Today, this consciousness of spiritual forces, which helped people cope with the burdens of apartheid is being undermined by mutations in nature. If apartheid was a scourge the new threat is a virus; invisible perils both.

Nothing forces a backward glance like a threat. The Chinese say that our body is the memory of our ancestors. This is an ominous proposition since apartheid is an impossible ancestor, inappropriate and unsuitable. Whenever we come under threat we remember who we are and where we come from and we respond accordingly. The word ‘remember’ needs elaboration. Re/member is a process by which we restore to the body forgotten memories. The body in this case is the landscape – on whose skin and belly histories and myths are projected – which is central to forging national identity.

One can’t travel far within this country before coming upon shadowed ground of negative remembrances of violence and tragedy. This partly explains my peregrinations here and in foreign lands. This journey which began at home in Soweto, took me to places invested with spiritual meaning in the Free State; concentration camps, burial grounds in Middleburg, Greylingstad and Brandfort in my effort to embody the SA landscape. In 1997, I started to visit the shadow grounds in Europe and Asia. I wanted to see how other countries were dealing with places associated with negative memories. In South Africa we were still discussing the fates of Robben Island, Vlakplaas and similarly affected sites at the time. Suffice to say, my forays into the metropolises of Europe have since convinced me of the futility of this inquiry. There is no universal model to follow. My efforts at this point are tantamount to chasing shadows.”

Santu MOKOFENG

Santu MOFOKENG was born in 1956 in Johannesburg. He lives and works in Johannesburg.



Nëse
arrij të bëj
dicka me
duar
të pastra

if I manage
to do something
with clean hands

MANUEL JOSEPH | JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE | MARC TOUITOU

“Do
shihemi
shumë
shpejt
Zoti J.”

“See you very soon
Mister J.”

Milosao, a 16 pages supplement of the newspaper Gazeta Shqiptare, Tirana, October 4th, 2009.



Jean-Luc Moulène

“La Vigie”

2009

(Raw version) Diaporama 241 photographs
20'

Courtesy the artist

Jean-Luc MOULÈNE uses photography as a tool for studying natural and cultural phenomena as they have been redefined by the development of the industry, media and commerce. He considers photography between fine arts and media. Away from communication model (a quite powerful functionalist utopia with dream of an infallible tool for appropriating the social imaginary and consequently determining social behavior), he tries to emphasize the gap between the tool and the imaginary so as to produce real poetic alternatives.

Jean-Luc MOULÈNE was born in 1955 in Reims (F).
He lives and works in Paris.

PAULOWNIA

Imperial Paulownia or *Paulownia tomentosa* is an exotic species which grows spontaneously in the cracks of city pavements, in vacant spaces. “Paulownia” comes from Anna PAULOWNIA, daughter of Czar PAUL I, and “tomentosa” recalls the smooth texture underneath its big leaves. It does not reproduce naturally, but always next to a planted individual, like an “escapee.” It originates from the North of China and Korea and was brought to France in 1834 as an ornament for squares, alleyways, gardens and streets. It can grow as high as ten to twelve meters, it flowers in May and the flowers resemble fox gloves. It resists pollution, cropping and cold (up to -23°C). Its fast growth and the beauty of its flowers make a beautiful city-dweller of Imperial Paulownia.

The Chinese have used Paulownia seeds since the mid-nineteenth to pack delicate objects in porcelain destined to sail beyond the Pacific Ocean. It spread to America where it is considered an “invasive” species.

From August to September, it has fruit in the form of capsules containing from one hundred to several thousand seeds which when blown by wind may reach as far as a kilometer. Paulonia has an important root system which can grow thirty meters around the mother plant and therefore can spread out quickly in a vegetative manner. Imperial Paulownia may also be propagated by fragments of its stem or roots. Its eradication is thereby extremely difficult.

VIGIPIRATE

Vigipirate is a French security plan destined to prevent threats or to react to terrorist attacks. Created in 1978 during the presidency of Valéry GISCARD D'ESTAING, when Europe was the target of a wave of terrorist attacks, the plan is regularly updated according to the type of threats at bay: in September 1995 it was set off after a car exploded in front of a Jewish school at Villeurbanne, reactivated in December 1996 after an attack in the Paris RER station Port Royal, in September 2001 after the New York attack on September 11th.

Vigipirate is set off by the Prime Minister who determines the level of national alert applicable on the territory. There are four levels of alert. Yellow: security is reinforced, orange: an attack is expected, red: serious attacks and scarlet: major attacks. After the London attacks on July 7th, 2005, and up to today, we have been constantly on a red level.

Vigipirate is part of civil defense, its story shows how measures thought of as exceptional tend to become banal once applied, and to become part of our “daily landscape”: transparent litter baskets, armed soldiers on the streets, reinforced ID controls, etc.

Everyone, from the simple citizen to the armed soldier, is placed under the principle of being responsible for security.



Anri Sala

“Air cushioned ride”

2006

Video
6'4''

Courtesy the artist

Air Cushioned Ride takes as point of departure an aural phenomenon that the artist experienced while driving across Arizona, as he listened to baroque chamber music on his car radio in a highway rest area. As he was approaching a group of parked lorries, the airwaves of an unknown country music radio station, diverted by the presence of the vehicles, started to interfere with the music he was listening to. The video consists of the recording of this experience, illustrating how SALA approaches the notion of place from the point of view of memory and the subjective experience of time and space.

“A Spurious Emission”, 2008

Performance
Conductor: Fatos QERIMI
Musicians: Dorina LARO (Viola)
Fatma SPAHIU (Clavicembalo)
Megi DASHI (Violin)
Elidon GORO (Guitar, voice)
Selim ISHMAKU (Banjo)
Angjelin TOMA (Bass)
Ilir KRYEKURTI (Percussion)

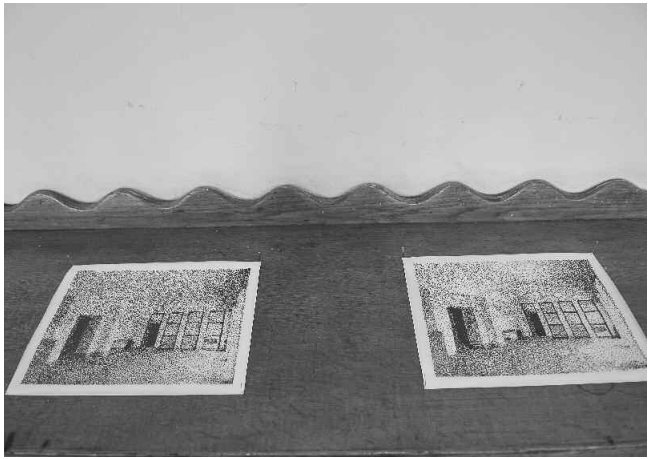
Courtesy the artist

The performance is based on the video “Air Cushioned Ride”, 2006, on an encounter that Anri SALA experienced while driving across Arizona, listening to baroque chamber music on his car radio. The broadcast was disturbed when he pulled into a rest area and an unknown station playing country music intermittently interrupted the baroque music. This kind of interference is called spurious emission. Anri SALA commissioned a composer to transpose this sound experience into a musical score, performed by a baroque trio, a country band and a radio announcer.

The performance presents the encounter, between a baroque trio — cembalo, viola da gamba and viola — and a country band — guitar, bass and drums — that alternatively play the different parts of the composition. The soundtrack functions as a collage between two musical genres, two different times.

Performed at Hotel Dajti, Tirana on October 2nd 2009 at 8.00 pm.

Anri Sala was born in Tirana, in 1974. He lives and works in Berlin.



Alexander Schellow

“tirana north – trajectories”
2009

5 x 2 books
two animation films
one drawing

“Fushe Arrez”
11 July, 2009

Animation

“Construction site”
Kukes, 12 July, 2009

Animation

Courtesy the artist

In physics a trajectory means the path that is followed by a moving object through space. This could be a satellite, a projectile or a molecule. The term thus includes the concept of orbit. Mathematically a trajectory can be described either by the geometry of the path, or as the position of the object over time — such as, for example, a sequence of values calculated by the iterated application of a mapping f to an element x of its source (in discrete mathematics), or a time-ordered set of states of a dynamical system (in control theory).

tirana north - trajectories visually reconstructs five walks through the Northern part of Tirana. The drawings are realized from memory and in that way coded by interaction with people on site as well as by observation/perception during the walks from a radical peripheral point of view. The underlying practice of drawing leads to a format-filling structure, in which a single image usually encapsulates a particular movement and allocation of attention. The question of the orientation of a foreign body and perception in a labyrinth-like urban area that was built entirely illegal and now forms a self-organized, in a specific way organic, structure becomes central.

The project links to related perspectives of architecture and politics that appeared as relevant during the research on location. Examples could be the housing-legalization-efforts of national and international institutions, or on a smaller scale the effects and local reactions on the recent invention of street names and an address-system, implemented by external urban planners.

Alexander SCHELLOW was born in 1974 in Hanover. He lives and works in Berlin.



Sugarjar

“The Sound possibility of a person” Reconstruction of Beijing Sugarjar’s space
2009

— “Sugarjar’s Sunday listening”
October 2009

— Double frequency recording:
“Walking”, June 4th 2009

— “Acoustic measurement:
Reversing, please note!”,
August 16th 2008

— “Sound Poem”, December 2008

Sound media installation

Courtesy the artist

Sugarjar is an independent cultural structure, focused on the Chinese independent music and sound art of communication, created in June 2003 in Beijing. During the T.I.C.A.B., Sugarjar “copies” a new Sugarjar at the exhibition area: it’s just like the same Sugarjar space at the 798 art district in Beijing, that is an open space to see, listen, buy and experience Chinese independent music and sound art from the 1990’s to the present. And you can also be personally involved in the activities of Sugarjar’s “Sunday Listening @ T.I.C.A.B.” every Sunday during the exhibition.

Sugarjar’s “Sunday Listening” is the spread of Chinese independent music / sound art continuing project, from the sounds of sociology level of observation to the existence of sounds and people. The artist rides an old-fashioned “Forever” brand bike (20th century, 70’s, made in Shanghai) through neighbourhoods in the city, opens the sound of the car reversing annunciator (installed on the bike), loops playing all the way “Reversing, Please Note!”, thus forming “acoustic measurements” of the scene.

Double frequency recording: “Walking”, June 4th 2009 represents what on this date the artist wrote on his blog. He wrote: “Today, I will do a one day hunger strike. Then I wore a white t-shirt, with white cloth wristband, and wore a black mask came to the Tiananmen Square “take a walk” to protest the violent suppression to the student democratic movement in 1989 by Chinese Government, to protest the information blockade and distortion of the true history of the past 20 years. 11:55a.m, when I walked to the periphery of Tiananmen Square, I was stopped by two policemen. I conflict with them. This is the scene of the conflict in the whole process of the field recording.”



Rosemarie Trockel

“Die Marquise von O”
“a la Motte”
“REMIX”

Films on DVD

“le sofa talentueux”
2007

Sofa, 3 Collages

*Courtesy of the artist and
Spruth Magers Gallery*

Rosemarie TROCKEL’s work consists of a sofa from the 70ies and three collage boxes. It was shown for the first time in the exhibition “Man überlebt es. Man kann es. Jeder auf seine Weise, Marguerite DURAS, Marcus Steinweg, Rosemarie Trockel” at the BQ Gallery Cologne in 2007. In her collage boxes she collects everyday materials as well as fragments of her own works and composes them in these “capsules”. Putting them on the sofa gives the viewer an idea of her mode of working. In her studio, she often puts smaller works on the furniture to see how they work – during this process she noticed that this experience situation was so strong and already a complete work.

Her collages give the viewer the impression that their production grew out of first finding. Initially, the use of exclusively inherently domestic objects is a point of debate. The use of things found in the home gives her pieces a more craft-based process; they seem to have been made by someone putting together what they could find, much like one would do in making a scrapbook.

Rosemarie TROCKEL was born in 1952 in Schwerte (G). She lives and works in Cologne.



Luca Vitone

“le Ceneri di Milano #1”
2007

Ashes from incinerator
plexi display case, wood
140 x 230 x 6 cm

Courtesy Galleria Emi Fontana, Milano

The artwork of Luca VITONE focuses on the idea of the place, inviting us to recognize something we already know, defying the conventions of mutable, faded memory that characterize the present. His work explores the way places are identified through cultural production: art, music, cuisine, political associations, and ethnic minorities. VITONE bridges the gap between the sense of loss of place, characteristic of the postmodern, and the ways in which feelings of belonging arise in the intersection of personal and collective memory. He reconstructs and invents forgotten paths to build his own geography. Luca VITONE carries his personal research on the monochrome further. The artist manipulates organic elements such as wine or saffron powder, or those present in the atmosphere such as its pollution, dust or exhaust gasses and transforms them into a painting medium. The present work contains the ashes of the city of Milan — the burning down of its urban waste into an extremely fine dust. This is the new medium used by Luca VITONE to map out the place. The essence of the work is shifted towards what is not visible through seductive surfaces which become the mark of a new portrait of the city.

*Luca VITONE was born in 1964 in Genoa.
He lives and works in Milan.*



Paola Yacoub

“Hotel Dajti”
2009

Digital Animation, 24 photographs, 6 texts
2' 23"

Courtesy the artist

Planche 1 :
1975. I was in Beirut. It was the beginning of the civil war. The first battles took place in the hotel district in the Phoenicia, Holiday Inn and St George hotels.

Planche 2 :
In the hotel battles, Christian militia opposed to the Palestinians fought hotel by hotel, floor by floor.

Planche 3 :
Today, the St George and Holiday Inn hotels are still in ruins, 34 years later. Syrian soldiers, among others, looted even the coatings on the elevations.

Planche 4 :
I was in Beirut and I was 9 years old when the battle of the hotels started.

Planche 5 :
Since the battle of the hotels, hotels and their architecture haunt me. That is why I wanted to be an architect, because of the war, because of hotels and their modern architecture.

Planche 6 :
And for me, hotels are still in the front line of conflict. For example, on 2 September 2008, a massive explosion destroyed the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad.



Paola Yacoub

“Beirut Central District”
1996

Document, DVD
26'

Courtesy the artist

In a postcolonial situation “subjectivity” attempts to rebuild itself through the ruins of a modern architecture: photographs of Hotel Dajti in ruins are associated with a trauma of the Lebanese civil war. The first major Beirut battles occurred in hotels in 1975. It divided the city along a green line for almost 20 years. This event taken as a subjective viewpoint is projected on Hotel Dajti in Tirana. The hotel is a sample of a rationalist fascist architecture. An architecture, which was systematically used by the Italian fascists to culturally subordinate their colonized cities. It was about translating a political order into a built form. The architect Gherardo Bosio, strongly influenced by the architect Giuseppe TERRAGNI, initiated the plan of the hotel. He was also the architect in charge for the urban plan of the ancient imperial city of Gondar in today's Ethiopia. In fact, the modern movement as a whole has been transformed into a cultural colonising vehicle by Western powers between the WW I and WW II. This is the case in Beirut too.

*Paola YACOUB was born in 1966 in Beirut.
She lives and works in Berlin and Beirut.*

Film Program

in collaboration with the Marubi Film and Multimedia School / 21 – 18 October 2009

Chantal AKERMAN, Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, 1975
Chantal AKERMAN, D'Est (East), 1993
Chantal AKERMAN, De l'autre côté (From the other side), 2003
Raymond DEPARDON, 10e chambre, 2004
Danièle HUILLET & Jean-Marie STRAUB, Sicilia!, 1998
Charles & Ray EAMES, Powers of ten, 1977
Mika TAANILA, Futuro — a new stance for tomorrow, 1998
Dan GRAHAM, Rock my Religion, 1982-84
KORPYS / LÖFFLER, Nuclear Football, 2004
KORPYS / LÖFFLER, Villa Feltrinelli, 2008

Xu TAN, Air is Good - traditional massage, 2005
Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, Tropical Malady, 2004
Gordon MATTA-CLARK, Clockshower, 1971
Gordon MATTA-CLARK, Splitting, 1974
Gordon MATTA-CLARK, Day's End, 1975
Anri SALA, Dammi i colori, 2003
Jimmie DURHAM, The Man Who Had a Beautiful House, 1994
Wang JIANWEI, Living elsewhere, 1998
Peter FISCHLI / David WEISS, The right way, 1983
Peter FISCHLI / David WEISS, The point of least resistance, 1981



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page 48: Jean-Luc Moulène, Soleil, Tirana, 2009-07-22.
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