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Amalia Pica, $A \cap B \cap C$ (*Line*), 2013, photo: Remis Ščerbauskas, Martynas Plepys.

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Introduction

Magic Carpets: A Rhizomatic Platform Benedetta Carpi De Resmini

Over time, humans have established travel as one of the ways of relating to different civilisations. This in turn has provided us with important clues to the fundamental characteristics of humankind in interacting with its environment. The scope of travel does not exclusively imply a physical movement from one place to another, but also an

tween countries and exploring all the different cultures. In this process, artists take up an essential role in helping to break down borders and barriers, to build bridges capable of reducing distance and differences.

I strongly believe that this platform's most important element is the possibility of sharing ideas and

the possibility of creating a list of young and emerging artists that will be useful for partners regarding future projects. The processes that Nicolas Bourriaud mentions in his essay "Post Production" designate "an area of activity" in which alternative protocols are processed for already-existing representations and narrative structures. "To learn to



Platform members at <http://magiccarpets.eu>

emotional involvement, which gives travel a purely psychological function. The Magic Carpets project came from an encounter with the Director of the Biennale of Kaunas, Virginija Vitkiene. The idea was to create a project together that could become a broader and more inclusive platform. Magic Carpets, a title I conceived, refers to the famous tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights* and the idea of the magic or flying carpet, a "fantastical device" to travel around the world in the blink of an eye. The platform can be compared metaphorically to this carpet as a space to share different histories and tales while discovering how much we have in common as well as what differentiates us from one another. The cornerstone of the Magic Carpets platform is based around the essential concepts of travel, borders, community and rhizome. The title Magic Carpets refers to stories that lead us to another place and to a long nomadic tradition that expands geographically. Travel is a fundamental tool for building relationships with others and with one's own context, to break down the borders existing be-

thoughts and developing topics related to several problems faced by all of us. These problems range from migration, intolerance, social marginalization and social disadvantages. The approach of Magic Carpets is meant to be rhizomatic and horizontal, metaphorically and later physically creating a common place of equality for everyone where stories, legends, symbols, artworks and ideas could be shared.

In comparison with other residency projects, Magic Carpets is strongly committed to building a mutual exchange experience between artists coming from different countries. The artists are selected by each partner according to their portfolios. Special focus is given to the artist's attitude towards working with communities since one of the most important objectives of Magic Carpets is to involve local people and create interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogues between artists and communities. Artists are specifically selected based on their practices, which perfectly align with the partner's topic. It's not easy, of course, to choose only 2 artists, but this process has given us

make use of forms means first of all to know how to make them one's own and live in them", moving from a culture of consumption to a culture of activity, from a passive attitude to a form of resistance based on the reactivation of denied or marginalized potential. Fiction becomes a way of capturing the truth and art becomes the optical instrument for looking at the world in order to outline a dialogue with the context. I truly believe that this platform is expanding the possibility of broadening borders and dialogues. If we are to consider new generations and most of all art in relation to reality and everyday life, then we need platforms that will provide us with the space to explore this. Magic Carpets allows us to trespass boundaries and build new horizons and connections, involving artists capable of creating mutual exchanges with local communities.

Benedetta Capri de Resmini is a Director of Latitudo s.r.l. and curator.

6-7

Engaged Art: The Art of Cooperation

Lexa Peroutka



Victor Marx, Mikael Tofvesson, *A New Sweden*, DADS Gallery, Liberec, 2016, foto: Oskar Stolín.

“Community is produced through our recognition that we have no ‘substantial identity’ (and our consequent realization that this lack of identity must in fact be shared by others)”. (Kester, 2004: 155)

Socially engaged art, also described as collaborative, community, participative, intervention, political, dialogical, etc., is an alternative method of practice aiming for elementary (and often local) correction of the negative consequences of the global market on non-market interpersonal relationships. A return to selfless cooperation and interaction in one’s closest surroundings is often outside individual and public interest unless it conforms to the conditions of returnable and profitable investment. Alienation, hand in hand with continuing individualisation (they are virtually synonymous), are among the significant elements of our liberal present, and often form the first barrier on the path towards cooperation and community work. This shortage of non-commercial interpersonal cooperation, however, also creates a natural counter-reaction. Artists become more interested in interpersonal relationships and society. The process of creation-collaboration currently places a much greater emphasis on moral rules and the equality of the participants (gender, authorship, work with an active community or its activation, equality in decision making) as opposed to the participants’ more limited and non-authorial work under the supervision of the author as we know it from the past (up to about the 1990s). The idea of the artist as a master of their trade is a traditionally modernist one. Today, the emphasis is shifting to the resultant effect in finding solutions to real social problems and to an open-ended process rather than the work-in-itself. This kind of practice, however, is in sharp opposition to the production of art of a definite aesthetic and to art as commodity.

The essence of art is fluid and open to paradigmatic changes. A traditionally visual medium can become a non-visual tool of social change. The tendencies heading outside of visibility itself are more than apparent. The originally aesthetic language of art is replaced by pragmatic non-visual (or partially visual) elements of communication. The aesthetic

quality of art enters into a crucial contradiction with the new conception of art as a means of communication, dialogue and change.

“The hegemony of the eye is very strong in our culture, and to challenge the commitment to its ocular-centric, or vision-centered aesthetic, replacing it with a paradigm shift that displaces vision with the very different influence of listening, is to open oneself up to the complaint that what is being described here is not art at all, but environmental activism, or social work.” (Gablik, 1998)

Visuality represents the qualities of the work which are attractive and easily marketable. There is a clear relation here between the non-visual and the non-commercial, and also between the visual and market exchange. In any case, optically attractive works that are engaged in any way are very successful on the art market and in the media.

In her work *The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents*, Claire Bishop speaks of the complicated relationship between the engaged artist and aesthetics: “More significant is the tendency to view the aesthetic as (at best) merely visual and (at worst) an elitist realm of unbridled seduction entirely complicit with spectacle. Simultaneously, it is also argued that art is an independent zone, free from the pressures of accountability, institutional bureaucracy, and the rigours of specialisation”. (Bishop, 2006)

By the very essence of its working methods, i.e. non-elitist cooperation which allows work in a community, engaged and collaborative art is in contradiction to art marketing and the products of human activity in general. Art and its distribution to the people (marketing) was one of the main conflict areas in the countries of the disintegrating Eastern Bloc, and it was also present at the birth of radicalising tendencies in Russian actionism. The collaborative projects mentioned by Claire Bishop are marked by “(...) they work

against dominant market imperatives by diffusing single authorship into collaborative activities (...)”

Authorship, today the artist’s elite domain, also representing his right to freedom of speech – a right interpreted almost as superior to the freedom of the ordinary citizen – is endangered by collaborative art. It is not a problem, however, to “correctly” assess this loss of authorship and thus “render” the collective work a product with market value, not even noticing what the artistic collective’s intention was.

As if the art market ignored the existence of art which is at odds with the market. This could easily be understood by laymen. Art theorist Boris Groys has a similarly skeptical view of the art market whilst also denying the absolute independence of art.

Creation for the art market – these days, common and expected – is criticised by engaged art, so the denial of commercial principles (it follows) doesn’t have to lead to a paradoxical success on the art market. In many more radical cases, it is about the creation of a parallel, “shadow” world (of art), which exists on the basis of sharing, cooperation, and collectivism (see Chto Delat). Maria Lind presents a vision of a separation of engaged art from official art in the EU in her article “The Future is Here”. The cultural politics of the Union and the pressures of the self-regulating market do not offer many alternatives, prefiguring the incoming rift in art production. One cannot work as an autonomous creator whilst also looking for a place on the reduced space of possible success.

These are the conditions within which today’s art of engaged action and participation operates, and it remains a question what positions it will hold in the near future, how it will finance its activities, whether it can sustain today’s hybrid financing (public politics and compromise), whether it finds its permanent spot in the language of art criticism, and whether it is capable of influencing anything in its vicinity whilst also influencing the paradigm of artistic practice.

Excerpt from doctoral theses “Information and Identity, Critical Art: Limits and Possibilities”, FAVU, Brno, 2011

Lexa Peroutka is a visual artist, curator and writer focused on critical art practices.

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Nongkran Panmongkol, *A Circle*, video and installation, Agoraphilia, Neighbourhood Boogie Woogie, Hunt Kastner Gallery in Prague, 2019, foto: Lexa Peroutka.

Community Art? Cristina Bogdan

The first question we need to ask ourselves when faced with the apparently coherent expression "community art" is what exactly motivates this coherence – is it internal, or have these two terms been put together with the purpose of an external gain? Well, since 'community art' is nothing but the late 20th century's development of 'contemporary art', a concept belonging entirely to the western knowledge system, one only need to remember that 'art' in this system can no longer be thought of outside the 'artworld' and 'community' is something which this system has feigned to build ever since it factually dismantled it in the 16th century when the west became modern and capitalist!

'Community art' brings together 2 terms which function in the realm of illusion and which read in this agglutination as: a practice imposed upon a fantasized social construct, claiming to act not in the subjective realm, whose ultimate purpose is to integrate the artworld through a route other than the gallery. Not only can community art suck up developmental funding which object-making art cannot, it can also be included in the biennial & museum circuit without having to go through the potentially painful, even though by now almost extinct, validation system of critics & peers. In 99% cases, community art is good. It empowers, it develops. Even though I argue for non-criticism or post-criticism in the Latourian sense, community art is really a vicious understanding of that ontology.

Community art is, as suggested above, a staple of western artists. I have been invited to attend several such projects in the past few years. Each time I was taken to some god forsaken town in a superrich Northern country where the flight cost 4 times my salary. Once there, I was asked to produce original knowledge together with a bunch of Berlin artists/critics/flâneurs with the purpose of impacting the local community. I felt like I wanted to quit my job and go and actually live in a forest. What a waste of money and how much hypocrisy. I would never accept such an invitation again. Unfortunately, non-western artists and organisations have picked up the practice, aided by the existence of developmental funds in the periphery and are currently not much better off than their western brothers and sisters. Think of all the artists who go and record the struggle or even suffering of a people, spend time in the region, make friends with the locals and affect a long-term relationship only to get more 'sincere' images and then go and exhibit the result in white cubes in the capital. Even if 'community art' does not involve image making - or, say, the purpose isn't to make images of any kind, but to develop some forgotten local craft or rebuild some lost connection between people and people or people and nature etc. - still some documentation is produced and it is ultimately that which reaches the larger public. These records usually build and sustain the illusion of a community delimited in space and



Mangalia, the commercial and military harbor, screenshot from a video by Mriganka Madhukailya, 2019. Courtesy of the author.

time through gestures, physical aspect and architectural patterns, highly static in terms of values and beliefs, the perfect backdrop for creative gestures. By the time this image is publicly displayed, the artists have shifted to a different project, marking yet again the impossibility of the political to emerge in an artistic system. Ultimately, the artworld is political *only* in the sense that symbolic and financial capital is played out within it, therefore any artistic gesture can *only* be read in terms of its subsumption to this set of processes and the values they carry - contrary to what many in the artworld may say, that is the only correct reading of the expression 'all art is political'.

So I am not impressed with community art at all. In fact, the creation of such an expression to designate a set of highly problematic practices strikes me as the shrewd tactics of the artworld to tap into some of the last spaces resisting western metaphysics, i.e. global financial capitalism. This was exactly the kind of observation that led to another controversial idea back in the 60s: 'every man is an artist'. I think that the kind of effort that went into proving that Beuys and the like were nothing but idealists and conspirators and were, in fact, *problematic* (in cases like this, the passive-aggressive intention behind the word is of utmost importance), is only paralleled by the speed with which their ideas were turned into profitable design methods and experimental curricula in overpriced art schools. Yet I think one should take the example of these idealists and look at shamans and witches rather than artists if one wants to regain faith and develop practices which have a meaning for at least one other person except themselves. I don't know if communities even exist, but creating a real connection with another person is something most people might not even achieve during their lifetime. So I would start there - and see whether the work does or doesn't require a hashtag.

Cristina Bogdan is a researcher, curator, editor and lecturer.

1 On this question, see Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Autonomedia, 2004).

9–10 The Long Shadow of Participation and Social Engagement in the Art of the New Millennium From relational antagonism to symbolic representation Mariana Serranová

When we look at contemporary live art, its complexity, symbolism and strong expressivity, which works dramatically with time, staged action, and the ambiguous identity of the carrier of the narrative, the processual post-conceptual wave of the new millennium seems formally subtle, careful and schematic, the role and position of art in society – in the practice of the up-and-coming generation – is more often linked to strong images that enthrall their audiences and formally rich metaphorical representations.

Relational aesthetics and the politically motivated need for social activities, which – at a time of frustrating transformation – appealed to the deficit of cooperation on the institutional field; resulted in insufficient initiatives. This led artists and collectives to an effort to break the stereotypical borders of art through interactions with the world outside art, creating a debate and thus consecrating the social and political role of art. Around the year 2000, the collective activities of artists and artist groups such as

Barbora Kleinhamplová, *Důvěryhodný vztah / Reliable Relationship*, video, 2014, 20:31 min.

Rafani, Isabela Grosseová and Jasper Alvaer, Kateřina Šedá, Adam Vačkář, the Ládví group, the duo of Jiří Franta and David Böhm, or later P.O.L.E., have taken on the characteristics and strategies of activism. To this end, they infiltrate various environments using questionnaires, probes and other points of contact with unknown political groups and communities. This tactical arsenal played its part in a certain formal

loosening. Strategies taking art out of the academic cage brought a feeling of liberation even though the programmatic empathy towards marginalised groups and overlooked contexts was sometimes unfinished and superficial.

Further developments on the international scene during the crises of neoliberalism and international cooperation



programmes (struck by economic collapse within the EU), sharing global problems on social media – all this confirmed our scepticism and a knowledge of the system's fragility. Attention moved to a different kind of responsibility. The proclaimed openness, greater awareness, flexibility and operativeness demanded a deeper evaluation – a look into the shadowy problems of these global times and their

doctrines. Naive programmes were replaced by doubt and a loss of orientation, a more existential approach allowing for a deeper examination of the emotions surrounding various conflict situations. It does not seem that taking a political position in the globalised world is easy, nor is it easy to define oneself as a political subject or a stereotypical identity.

A grand irony in the development of the comeback of situationism, participative art and cooperation in the preceding two decades – which emphasised inclusion, left-wing values and the emancipation of both individuals and groups – is the declared and justifiable measure of scepticism and doubt on how meaningful these altruistically intended activities can be. The artistic motivations can be summarised with terms like "the ethical turn" and "the social turn" and the related manners of



Barbora Kleinhamplová, *Důvěryhodný vztah / Reliable Relationship*, video, 2014, 20:31 min.

representation referring to Brecht's legacy of activating the spectator.

Around the year 2005, the international scene seemed ready for art that no longer celebrated sociability and collectivity, but could instead admit to the narcissism of beneficially staged activity in art, placing various social asymmetries and conflicts soberly into context, including the use of antagonism. On the Czech scene, we noticed subversive and ironic interventions such as the absurd, hidden and unasked-for help of Eva Jiříčka (*Parked Other People's Things*) or Vasil Artamonov and Alexey Klyukov (*Jak jsme pomáhali - How We Helped*), or Daniela Baráčková, Petra Herotová and Tomáš Uhnák preparing food for the "privileged" part of the attendees (*Vaříme pro muže - Cooking for Men*). Their aim was to confirm the ambivalence; to admit the inevitable duplicity in the relationship of the artist and social field under scrutiny; to confirm the unhealthy dynamics of stereotypes. In an effort to resolve the contradiction between utopia or an idealised version of engagement, projects were created which directly demonstrated the obstacles and contradictions that better illustrated social reality, such as ethnic, social or gender inequality. In a reality constructed by power interests, a manipulable identity became the carrier of roles, and the concept of fluid bodies within the transforming context of political and gender ambiguity complicated political action, as we can observe in the work of Isabela Grosseová and Jesper Alvaer or the staged videos of Barbora Kleinhamplová or Kočovní společnost (Sláva Sobotovičová and David Fesl).

A more complex approach within the "theatrical turn" is represented by the Brechtian approach of Aleš Čermák or the youngest generation of artists, such as Vojtěch Novák and Andrew Hauner. We can also see certain ritual strategies such as a fusion of theatricality and open processes. Ritualisation relates not only to the persisting strategies of the art made by older generations of performers, including audience members as active participants, but we can also observe it occurring at an unprecedented rate with the youngest artists. A theatricality which does not risk the participation of an unprepared audience is still a highlight, professional and well-instructed performers becom-



Daniela Baráčková, Petra Herotová, Tomáš Uhnák, *Vaříme pro muže /We Cook for Men*, performance, 2011, How to Begin from the Beginning, Futura Gallery, Prague, photo: Tomáš Souček



Eva Jiříčka, *Morning wash*, video, 2006, 12:55 min.



Kočovní společnost / Nomadic Company (Fesl & Sobotovičová), *01 Pilot*, performance, 2019, PLATO Ostrava, photo: Matěj Doležal.

ing a means for suggestive, subliminally composed images – for examples we can look to Eva Kořátková, Barbora Kleinhamplová or, in the younger generation, Lukáš Hoffmann a.k.a. Saliva, New Aliens Agency and Marie Tučková. If gesture, the manifesto and interventions were the characteristics of the art of the first decade of the 21st century, then the art of the second decade confronts us with complex processes and extreme situations, often through ostentatious spectacularity or extravagant theatricality, expressing amassed and unprocessed emotions, presenting unsorted material and thus appealing to a broader and deeper spectrum of attention and sensitivity in today's tense times.

Mariana Serranová is a curator and contemporary art theorist.

11-12 From ACTION to COMMUNITY: Performing Together Leonardo Ruvolo



Vitaly Weber, from the photo series *Sign*, outdoor situation, Sicily, 2019.

Framed by the Sicilian rural landscape, artists and activists from Italy met to start a community where borders of life, art and politics blended together. During nationalist propaganda investment, experimental practices able to sabotage the dichotomy between leavers and remainers, globalists and nationalists emerge. Since Italy's unification, rural areas have been sources of low-cost labour force for the urban and industrialized north. But today, the rural is the fire line. The capital is withdrawing, leaving behind the ruins of a never ended territorialisation. The new urban slaves, depressed and addicted, find in it a space of freedom and empowerment, while locals from rural areas find new energy to arrange their strategy to survive. This text tries to conceptualize the spontaneous path we are trying to follow.

Why should art (capital) be interested in a community approach?

- knowing everything that happens
- profiting from being everywhere
- having relations with everyone

What radical community(ies) put on the table today, on the altar of its own sacrifice, is: no money in exchange for some-

thing/nothing. What I experience living among communities, temporary or less, organized or not, is the fact that all the actions they perform are done for the sake of the community's existence itself. This has nothing to do with the art system idea, producing contemporary aesthetics, ornamental artefacts and speculative financial-based value objects.

What is community art?

Assuming capital as pure automatic code, crunching data and rendering reality, imposing a totalitarian connection of personal durations functionalized to the general machine, community is a barricade against this latter stage of territorialisation. Firstly, community wants to prove that money-flow can't break relation links between community members. Art produced, not considering money as a necessary a-priori, is always avant-garde. Further on, community arises from time to time around a common goal. And because every single individual has its own proper strategy about the immanent fact of being here, in the world, community is ontologically temporary. It lasts until the moment when at least two of the community members perform any action whatsoever together. For these two reasons, community aesthetics embody their own survival strategy, or the whole set of strategy implemented by the community members.



Vitaly Weber, from the photo series *Sign*, outdoor situation, Sicily, 2019.

Which strategy does contemporary radical community implement?

Community is committed to define a survival strategy rather than aesthetic. Its success depends on the fact of its pure existence. Economic inequality caused community to rethink what the conditions of existence are, starting from the fact that they are not money-based, but time-based. Conditions of existence are those that answer the question, "How long do you want to stay in"?

Firstly, we have to clarify the private and individual conditions of existence:

1. The minimum living standard (how)
2. One's time for the community (long)

Then, we can start to discuss what the collective conditions of existence are:

- property
 - from ownership to usership
- food
 - growing it, supplying it locally, not buying it
- expenses
 - everyone contributes according to their income and wealth
- alliances
 - private sponsor, better if you bond with them, not through money
 - local institution, ask for assurance and spaces
 - get in contact with the community around oneself

Why erase any particular theme, topic or issue? And how is this related with object oriented ontology?

Conceptual frames are boring. No one likes to be trapped in anyone else's fantasy. Topic or issue, as well as doing a collective project for the sake of participating, is not the right way to free collective entropy or the community engine. Living together and doing things together implies a series of functions and objects representing the nearest infrastructure

on which community will expand its power of attraction. Discovering the function and creating the objects are a crucial direction followed by a common action. In this way, community avoids being trapped in a specific aesthetic, everything is possible, the future is open. There is actually nothing that can't be approached through the community art method.

Who takes care of the time we spend together? What's the relation between patience and time? In their duration things appear and persist in their actuality. Time is the continuous comparison of a different duration. This is why its duration is the measure of its success. Community, being formed by individual human entity, has a fragmented lifetime made by individual commitment duration. The ultimate goal would be to develop a dispositive for which none feel trapped in the timeline of someone else. During a common duration, the time-keeper is the one taking care of the spontaneous agreement timelines have: to not colonize each other. Decolonization of another's time passes through personal conflict, clash and riot. One against each other, community becomes toxic because it is manipulated and monopolized by those implementing consensus rule. Consensus doesn't really work. That is why I believe in assuring a continuous dialectical conflict between community members. In the end, it is not necessary that everyone should agreed on everything. Community lasts when each member claims a space to make a decision. This process needs to be curated, protected and hidden. Out there, there are people who have only the worst intentions.

Leonardo Ruvolo is an art theorist and critic in Milan and Sicily.



Anna Brussi, *Sketch*, documentation of Sicily community, 2019.

Beginning of a Dialogue, Hear (Out) the Trombone Martina Raclavská



Mothers Artlovers visit to atelier of Eliška Fialová in Pragovka, 2019. Photo by Adéla Márová.

You can easily become an overlooked member of the art scene. Usually, it's enough to get pregnant. It's no longer possible to rush ahead, produce numerous works, establish contacts and maintain connections. Mothers lose their tempo, life slows down and society starts overlooking them. It no longer counts on their presence. The 2017 debate on the enormous imbalance in the representation of women in exhibitions in the Czech Republic is proof of that. Within the artistic community, success is often hard-earned, based on exhausting activity and constant visibility. For a long time, this wasn't a topic and mothers in the art world lacked a strong voice that would reach today's decibels. Although there was a four-member group known as Mothers and Fathers (Matky a otcové) back in the 2000s, who created group shows centred around the theme of parenthood, there was no ambition to change the system of care. Brno-based artist Kateřina Olivová also had a talk show on the radio, Milk and Honey, where the guests were all actively working mothers. In 2017, at tranzit.cz, curator Tereza Stejskalová began formulating the Codex of the Feminist Institution. Things slowly went into motion.

Only with the Mothers Artlovers group, established at the end of 2016 by artists-mothers Darina Alster in Prague and Kateřina Olivová in Brno, did this voice multiply within the artistic community to the point where it's starting to sound like a trombone. Originally a support group for mothers active in the arts facing isolation and a loss of both specialist dialogue and a motivation to work, Mothers Artlovers gradually turned into an activist group. It has around two hundred members with fifteen people at its core. Mothers from the art community (and later couples) began by offering each other mutual support – meeting, discussing, presenting their projects, sharing experiences and discovering the borders of prejudice, taboos and their own possibilities.

The group gradually entered the public spheres through workshops and lectures on finding sustainable ways of life;

with questions as to the possibilities of living within the artistic community whilst also being a parent. They clarified that the group's output would not consist of portrayals of motherhood, but would instead aim to create environments with new principles. At the Prague Biennale Project: Magic Carpets 2019, for example, the group focused on children's corners in galleries, posing an unusual question: why are they more reminiscent of paid playrooms than a creative space to which we apply artistic standards? They created an environment for discussions where one could meet the group's members, leaving behind "sediments of time spent together".

Now, after three years, the Mothers Artlovers group will present their own Manifesto at the Fotograf Festival this autumn. The members, as parents, will meet society halfway, communicating their needs and demands. They'll be targeting their own partners, communities, institutions, and politicians. In relation to the Manifesto, the group will also send institutions a questionnaire with inspirational questions aiming to discover the possibilities this institution offers parents-visitors, what facilities they offer artists with small children while they prepare exhibitions or during residencies, and how they approach childcare with their own employees. The dialogue, hopefully, will have begun, and the games will begin...

Our society, carefully constructed on fame and success, economic growth, and consumerism, is falling apart like a house of cards. We chased upwards until we forgot (not only) those who establish our foundations and *de facto* produce society. An inclusion of mothers – and, more generally, parents – into society could begin in one of the potentially freest, though also unsustainably under-financed fields. In the world of art. Why have we never asked them about their needs?

Martina Raclavská is an art writer (but not a mother).

Artyom Loskutov – Pity Kitties – They Got Facial Hair Georgiy Stebunov

In 2004, about eighty people in Novosibirsk marched on the 1st of May carrying posters with absurd slogans. This public performance was coined *Monstration* as opposed to de-monstration, which suggests something negative: negation, elimination, degradation. It was initially designed as pronouncedly nonpolitical, never supportive of the government, free of corporate backing and any kind of control over the content. Some of the slogans parodied those of the communist May Day demonstration, which traditionally took place in the Soviet Union ('Gas, Oil, May' or 'Down with dope! Up with milk!'), others - just nonsensical ('A fly is a helicopter too', 'I dig up worms and set them free' or 'Don't fall down from the bridge, you will get ill'), puns and spoonerisms (no way to render wordplays properly).

Monstration was created by the art group *Contemporary Art Terrorism* and was initially hugely supported by different artists. Artyom Loskutov, an artist and one of the authors of Monstration, insists it is a happening rather than a performance (we will keep calling it 'performance' referring to 'public performance') because there is no set agenda or scenario except for a date and place: everything happens extempore.

Over time, Monstration gained some popularity among ordinary people for being a 'funny' alternative to the boring May Day demonstration. Its participants went in the tail of the parade before 2010, sort of travestying the fossil of a festivity. Later after getting bigger, they worked up their independence. Two thousand people went to Monstration in 2010. According to eyewitness reports, this was three times as many people as at the communist party May Day demonstration. Since then, it has been held in many cities throughout the country. In the following years, Monstration in Novosibirsk attracted about four thousand people each time it took place. The posters were displayed in an exhibition space for public viewing after the performances.

Public political activities in Novosibirsk in the early 2000s, says Loskutov, consisted of such flabby protests as against the war in Iraq (that was not related to the domestic policy and therefore 'safe') or protests against pension reforms, which were drummed up by seniors exclusively. Some radical movements, for example the National Bolshevik Party, went to protest and gathered a few dozen determined activists. But that was all, political life was generally dull and insipid, and Monstration appealed to mostly energetic young people who had never felt they had a voice before. Monstration was a sort of outlet for them. It may be considered a catalyst, along with plenty of changes that have engulfed society over the last decade, of the high political activity the youths have been showing consistently since the protests in 2011.

In Russia, there is never a guarantee that a movement, even claimed to be a nonpolitical one, will be allowed to exist freely without drawing attention from the government. The conditions in which Monstration is placed are traditionally politicized and thus the government seeks control over it. People gathering is a sore subject with officials. Every utterance must be approved if it is made public. As a result, Monstration was not approved by officials for various reasons in some cities. Somewhere a policeman would check a poster before letting it be put up at the event. Sometimes organizers would be detained before or after the performance.

In the case of Monstration, the absurd is in the place where the politically approved statement usually dwells. Of course, Monstration is not innocent of political charge, but this is apparently a catch. The legal reasons for banning



Monstration have always been lame. The officials find themselves in a pickle. They come to detain organizers, to hinder proceeding. Not knowing what they should do, they change their strategy over and over again. As a result it has always come with agitation and turmoil. Monstration is a threat to them since they ought to behold a rehearsal of the political statement. It is as if the youths have declared: 'We are not doing it right now, but we will get around to it.'

Another remarkable turn of events took place earlier this year. The Young Guard, the pro-government youth wing of the United Russia party (the ruling party with the majority in the Russian parliament since it was founded), announced an event like Monstration. They even called it the same, only it was scheduled on the 8th of March. Then another event was announced in Crimea timed to the anniversary of the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Artyom Loskutov expressed his resentment at the appropriation of the original name and the principles altogether, calling the occasion 'bleak Komsomol', whereas 'true Monstration' does not support the government, is not commercial, slogans are not imposed, and it is held on the 1st of May. It seems to be a big deal for the officials to guarantee that the public utterances do not go uncontrolled, which they fear the most.

Monstration is not one of a kind. Akin public performances took place in Novosibirsk in 1995, in Barnaul on 1st April 1997, in Poland in the 80s, let alone its precursors in the so-called Day of Fools, described in detail by the Russian philosopher M. Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, four categories constitute the nature of such a festivity: *familiar and free interaction between people, eccentric behaviour, carnivalesque mésalliances and profanation*. The medieval Day of Fools predominantly made all folk take off their social roles and play goofy and cheerful games. Because it tended to embrace so much of society, it relieved tension rather than the opposite. In contrast with its ancestor, Monstration uses the nonsense and foolishness as a weapon against, and within, a firm structure to loosen its grip.

There are also some connections to street parties. There were several in Prague, arranged by mostly left-wing young people belonging to a number of different movements, from the anarchists and anti-globalists to the greens. They provided music and food and tried to deliver a particular message, but above all, they attempted to liberate city space. At this moment we are getting back to Bakhtin's Carnival. Monstration likewise aims to revitalize public gatherings and restore it in its rights by means of innocuity, friendliness and cheerfulness in its pure form.

Georgiy Stebunov is a columnist focused on art and literature.



- 1 On the poster: 'Love yourself'
- 2 On the banner: 'BANNED IN RUSSIA'
- 3 On the poster: 'They drive the truth away here' or 'They tell the truth here', both meanings
- 4 Red poster on the right: 'All power to the howlets!' This alludes to the famous slogan 'All power to the soviets!' with one letter changed in the Russian word советам

- 5 Monstration in 2017
- 6 Monstration in 2017. The slogan on the banner is 'BANNED IN RUSSIA'
- 7 Resistance', arrow points to the resistor: 'here'
- 8 On the purple banner: 'The city needs us, not this rag'
- 9 On the red poster: 'Who burned down the buttons in my social elevator?'

London View – An Interview with the artist Kathrin Böhm Tereza Záchová



Kathrin Böhm, *I don't want to make another project*, tape on paper, 2019.

TEREZA ZÁCHOVÁ

You are an artist of many faces, because, as I am well aware, you always work with someone. You are connected to lots of collective projects like My Villages or Company Drinks. What led you to start them? Are there any connections among these communities (Myvillages, Company Drinks)?

KATHRIN BÖHM

I stopped using the word 'projects' in early 2019, acknowledging the fact that what I am doing as an artist is meant as practiced societal possibility, a one-to-one way of working and being together. The word 'projects' doesn't capture that very well. Many of the groups and initiatives I have co-founded have become long-term, and they are now better described as cultural and social infrastructures. They are all based on principles of collaborating, working in public and sharing economies.

Myvillages was set up in 2003 together with Wapke Feenstra and Antje Schiffers, questioning and breaking down the binaries when it comes to contemporary art and the rural. Myvillages has worked from within rural communities, we have co-produced products, shops, films, books, conferences, a nomadic school and a mobile library on art in the rural, and Myvillages is better described as an artist run international arts organisation which is connected and held together by a multiplicity of communities and interests.

Company Drinks is different in its set up, but similar in its aim to allow for a complexity of issues, interests and places to merge. Company Drinks is art in the shape of a community drinks company based in East London. I initiated Company Drinks in 2014 as a new and lasting public space in my hometown London. The enterprise connects local rural, industrial and communal heritage with the changes in geography, demographics and politics of the early 21st century. Rooted in the well-remembered history of East London families working as fruit and hop-pickers aka cheap seasonal labour in the nearby countryside, Company Drinks suggests to "go picking" again, but this time the "going picking" is part of a collectivised and communal drinks production cycle, where we grow, pick, make, brand, trade and reinvest together.

Using a very basic definition of economy as a system in which we organize and practice our relationships with others (including the planet), the economy is cultivated through how we behave and make everyday decisions, and is brought back in the realm of everyday culture (and art).

TZ

When we met in London, you mentioned the Company Drinks community with a new building and it was brilliant to go and see it there. As I know from you, Company Drinks has moved to the edge of London where you have a huge building with a kitchen, other rooms and a community gar-

den where you regularly gather to hold workshops and pick berries. One of the big aims of this space is to bring together many different groups of people. How important is this place within the community?

KB

Company Drinks is based in Barking and Dagenham, a so called Greater London Borough which is part of London but, at the same time, is located in the county of Essex. It's a perfect place to understand how our cities have developed, and in the case of Barking and Dagenham the land has been agricultural until fairly recently, and later industrial (the famous Ford factories). Now it is mainly post-industrial and residential and is regarded as economically and socially deprived. At the same time it has also been declared London's largest corridor for real estate development. So it's full of dualities and contradictions and conflicts, and my interest with Company Drinks is to set up a space where different collective and individual histories, identities and desires can actually meet and do something on their terms. Company Drinks has many different access points and everybody can join with their interest, be it someone's interest in gardening, the social aspects of what we do, a free trip, nice drinks, exploring new plausible economies, etc. We use the green open spaces within the borough to forage for fruit and berries for our drinks and we go to the nearby countryside to glean and pick strawberries, currants, apples and hops. We were nomadic for the first four years and are now based at a former sports pavilion in Barking Park, where we have a Grow Club, a social space and a production and training kitchen. Company Drinks has grown organically and our activities are community-led and organised along the seasons. Company Drinks is responsive and our business decisions have simple ethics: not to colonise or exploit people or the planet. Company Drinks is popular locally. We also know from conversations that it is the mix of people and a new collective productivity that makes it relevant. People describe Company Drinks as rich, even though we operate on a slim monetary budget, but it is indeed extremely rich in terms of what we collectively know and have access to. It is a matter of reminding ourselves, and reclaiming forms of self-subsistence and self-representation that resist and reset dominant neoliberal and divisive thinking.

TZ

Do you think that native communities have fully integrated into the local art scene or back and forth?

KB

In short, Company Drinks combines many different ways of culturing, and art is one form of producing culture alongside many others, where art is important but not special.

Company Drinks is about how art relates itself to wider society. What is its function? Who benefits from art? What's the use of art? Using the quite narrow concept of art as an object for spectatorship comes with narrow possibilities of how we as artists relate with others: I'm the creator you are the consumer. I'm much more interested in the concept of 'Usership' in art, a term which is clearly

described and explored by Stephen Wright in *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*. It doesn't mean that art needs to be useful, but that it should open up about how others might use it.

Company Drinks exists for many different reasons and is connected to many different communities, be it the local home-schooling group, the east London community of former hop-pickers, the new London food growing scene or adult soft drink scene, etc. To come back to your question, it's the broad range of uses of this one bottle (and any other aspect of what we produce) that connects many communities and interests. No one has to become fully integrated into something. It's about keeping a fluidity between possibilities and allowing for connections instead of separations. This is very political for me.

TZ

How do you start if you decide to start? What do you need for it? Do you think that with this position it is necessary to write grants for funding and have some money?

KB

I guess I have cultured my own way of interdependence as an artist over the years, so any start is a combination of setting up relationships of mutual interests and a basic budget. Myvillages started from a moment of collectively deciding that we as artists wanted to consider the rural as a place for our art practice. At the time none of the curators we knew were interested in supporting this desire or the topic, so we set up our own organisational form, which is an International Foundation registered in The Netherlands. This was initially self-funded, making use of the gift economies in our own home villages and the non-monetary economies amongst ourselves. We soon collaborated with others and identified and merged budgets to produce public events, such as the first Village Convention at the Museum in Ditchling in 2005.

Company Drinks started with my own desire to initiate something long-term in my hometown London. The initial proposal was financially supported by the local council and Create London, and since then we have established a diverse economy that underpins all of our activities. This diverse economy is not just a pragmatic strategy for survival, but also part of a wider global push to Take Back the Economy by acknowledging the economy as an everyday activity we are all involved in. Our economy at Company Drinks is comprised of income from sales, free rent, volunteer con-



Company Drinks Group Portrait 2018, photo: Jennifer Balcombe, courtesy of Company Drinks, 2018.

tributions, donations, foraging and gleaning, income from cultural and educational grants, etc. So yes, we have to write funding applications, but more importantly we regard our economic activity as a cultural one which comes with ethics and principles. The economy of things is not just a way of financing, but an opportunity to cultivate relationships and practices. In that sense the format of a drinks company is just a means to practice ideas of collectivising and communing, where the monetary element is of course acknowledged but isn't allowed to dominate.

TZ
You worked as an editor for the book *The Rural* published by Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press. How was it? What was the key for deciding which essays you wanted to publish?

KB
Myvillages was offered the opportunity to edit *The Rural* as part of the Documents of Contemporary Art series. Wapke Feenstra and I didn't hesitate to say yes. Since we were very aware of the many artists and curators working with contemporary art in rural settings yet highly invisible within an urban art scene, we wanted this book to be artist-led in the sense that it would not colonise the rural as yet another topic for the arts, but would open it up and describe the rural as a complex and interrelated possible space for artists to work from within. The whole series is a republishing of existing texts. We selected texts for five chapters covering overarching topics such as "how to read the rural", acknowledging the rural as a contested and historical realm and presenting various forms of existing artistic practice. The book clearly doesn't want to define the rural but rather acknowledge existing rural particularities.

TZ
This was a really rare book with lots of good essays and interviews about community, rural work, villages, etc. I enjoyed it a lot. Do you think it could impact the audience and result in them building a local community again?

KB
We know that the book is selling really well. And the international conference on the rural which was organised by the Whitechapel Gallery and where Myvillages has also been an advisory partner was also fully booked. This confirmed an urgency to make the rural more public and present within the current art discourse. So yes, we think that the rural and rural culture has been repressed due to an urban cultural hegemony for many centuries. Self-subsistence is, for example, an aspect that – even though under immense threat – is still a strong practice among many rural communities – and I think we could make an interesting connection between self-subsistence and the concept of autonomy in the arts in order to develop cultural and economical practices that insist on the importance or rich ecosystems, instead of following the path of prioritising monocultures, be it in the arts or elsewhere.

TZ
Have you come across an ideal community? Or what is an ideal community for you? What would your ideal community look like?

KB
I want to use a statement from the Keep it Complex website here, which explains that all this kind of work is less about community and more about society. "Keep It Complex is about making clear what we want, without simplifying discussion: a peaceful, caring, angry, anti-austerity, factual, DIY, transnational, struggling, messy, family-friendly, queer, inclusive, intergenerational, generous, diverse society." What's important to all the work I do in groups and collectives is that we try and practice what we preach. That we don't just announce radical ideas but try and make them work to whatever extent is possible under the given circumstances. You don't have to use the word radical to be radical. I don't really want an ideal community, but ideally I want a feminist society based on politics of care, because equality doesn't hurt anyone. So the aim is societal, and my job is art.



Setting the Table: Village Politics, Myvillages exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, installation shot, photo: Wapke Feenstra, 2019.

TZ
Thank you so much, Kathrin.

Tereza Záchová is an art curator and art educator.

Notes
MyVillages was started by Kathrin Böhm (UK), Wapke Feenstra (NL) and Antje Schiffrers (DE) in 2003. www.myvillages.org
Company Drinks was set up in 2014. It is currently run by a team of five part-timers. 1200 local residents are involved annually. www.companydrinks.info

The Centre for Plausible Economies was founded by Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder in 2018 to bring together artistic action and critical thinking to reclaim the economy. The centre is hosted by Company Drinks. Keep it Complex – Make it Clear is run by an evolving group of art practitioners who share and produce activist knowledge through campaigns and events. www.makeitclear.eu

19–20 *Deconstructing the Pyramid- An Interview with Artist Duo Bobrikova & Oscar de Carmen* Tereza Záchová

TEREZA ZÁCHOVÁ
Let's start from the beginning. Could you explain International Encounters of Community and Environmental Sociology, what does it mean? And who will be part of it?

MARTINKA BOBRIKOVA & OSCAR DE CARMEN
We would explain it as an interdisciplinary space of conversation focusing on how to create new approaches in cultural policies based on the model of the auto-sustainable infrastructures. The participants are both the invited experts who present ideas based on empirical data generated by research, as well as the audience.

TZ
Could you introduce your project Anti-Symposium a little bit?

MB & OC
Anti-Symposium is a meeting that serves as a site for participants to exchange and share their experiences and to discuss the future of independent cultural frameworks. Being an (Anti) Symposium provides a space for a public discussion through horizontal dialogue seeking to generate participatory actions from all of the participants. The benefit of this format is based on establishing a (Non) program where there are no conferences, no discussion groups, no presentations or issues around the theme we raise.



Anti-Symposium, 2019, photo by Antti Ahonen.



Anti-Symposium 2019, photo by Oscar de Carmen.

TZ
Why did you decide to make format like a symposium and what does it bring for you?

MB & OC
We are interested in the action of the meeting and the fellowship that exists among the participants who attend a symposium. We have always noticed that most people most enjoy the social part of the event when everyone drinks or eats together, accompanied by the pleasures of conversation, where participants share their integrated experiences through the passing of time, giving as a result a passive act of regeneration of thoughts that are not organized in a formal technical structure of discussion.

TZ
As I know, you have chosen the Uddebo village for the first time. What made you interested in Uddebo? Is there anything that makes it special from other villages?

MB & OC
Our relationship with Uddebo is beyond the Anti-Symposium project, we, together with local artist Linnea MF Larsson, funded FUCK in 2017, a non-profit organization currently based in Uddebo, whose work focuses on promoting inter-social relations in the rural environment through an international residence and local and regional institutional collaborations.

We have chosen Uddebo as the base of the IECES because we view Uddebo as an inspiring place where one can visualize the cooperative development of the neighbourhood in helping to organize, enhance and strengthen the partici-

pation of the community. It is precisely in these same terms that we are interested in observing other villages, other dynamics, other social realities that IECES can feed on.

TZ
What about village community? What about the relationship between the local and invited guests? I would say it could potentially be difficult.

MB & OC
The community is based on the neighborhood fraternity, any relationship between people based in respect ends up being an experience towards understanding. The experience for people invited to participate in the IECES is to learn and live together. This is precisely what builds a bridge of relations between the participants of the symposium and the local people. And we want this bridge to help generate the possibility of new relationships between the participating actors and the inhabitants that belong to the Uddebo community.

TZ
You have already done two sessions of Anti-Symposium. Have you seen any results? What differences did you find between the two sessions?

MB & OC
It is a long-term project and it will be implemented in different phases over the next few years. The difference from the first edition is that we started from scratch. In this second edition we already had a previous experience that told us what we needed to do to carry out the event and how to build on top of the already existing experience.

TZ
In a global climate of political and economic dispossession, what does 'community' and "collaborative" stand for?

MB & OC
It means taking responsibility for our own actions. It means participating in the dismantling of the self-imposed system that monitors and oppresses us. More specifically, if we focus on art, community and collaboration are synonymous with reinventing the concept of production and work, and allow us to explore collaborative practices outside the Western ideal, taking as a reference other organizations installed in Africa, Asia and Latin America involved in social innovation.

TZ
Why should art be interested in community approach?

MB & OC
According to us, art should be interested in community because it is an approach that provides an opportunity to create and promote an artistic and cultural ecosystem based in a method that strives to improve the quality of the interaction of all organisms belonging to the same social ecosystem.

TZ
What kind of a model of auto-sustainability works for you?

MB & OC
A model of building a sustainable culture in communities where societies can develop in a direction towards a post-human perspective.

TZ
How would you like to continue with Anti-Symposium? And what kind of community would you like to build?

MB & OC
Continuing in the theoretical and practical development of the Anti-Symposium format, we would like to build a community in which a new scenario can be generated that would instrumentalize art as a social model for the common good. For this, we view the education of both children and adolescents, as well as the reeducation of adults as of the utmost importance. An example would be our educational project



Anti-Symposium, 2019, photo by Antti Ahonen.

where we teach narco-passivity classes, putting into practice Gene Sharp's 198 methods of nonviolent action.

TZ
Does it really sum up your mission?

MB & OC
It is part of our development, as an extension of our artistic practices, within the collaborative and the social.

TZ
Thank you so much for the interview.

Tereza Záchová is an art curator and art educator.

21–23 Cultural Decolonisation František Zachoval

External perspective defines us as Europeans. Despite the fact that we're going through different crises, we almost have a superstate, one identity, a bay of prosperity and a peaceful life. The digital borderlines have been erased and geographical boundaries are gradually becoming blurred. Internally, we are still anchored to where we were born, where we have created our cultural stereotypes, and where we are on firm ground. The situation in every country in former East Europe is slightly different and has its own genesis which influence our experience. We often somehow project or mirror this experience into our artistic practice. Romania is a country where – from the liberal perspective - almost everything has failed. It is the land with the highest corruption index, assault, death rate, road deaths, ineffective health care, bad inclusion of ethnic minorities, clientelism and nepotism. Women and men have the lowest income in Europe. Romania has been waiting and waiting on the threshold of the Schengen space. More than 3 million Romanians have fled the country in the last 10 years. It is the biggest, unprecedented exodus in Europe during peacetime. Absolute frustration. This is the context in which we should illustrate the condition of the art scene, public art collections and artists who deal with the basic issue of having a regular income.

If we scrutinize what is happening here in more detail, we will find many differences which have their own genesis and have created diverse art practices. Very roughly speaking we are observing two main sorts of approaches. The first is based on the mining of local specifics and is mostly limited to its field of language and cultural stereotypes and is more or less bound by local consciousness. Secondly, we have a group of authors who are inclined to use and create their own visual *universal* or *global* language.

Cultural production in Romania has been impacted by its failed system¹ where the position of the middle-aged and young generation of artists is suspicious. We have watched how the Romanian state has scuffed non-governmental organization live. We have been tracing the lack of the art institutions² competencies and lack of public financial support via various grants or regular acquisitions by galleries and museums. By circumstance this precarious situation pushes the whole scene - artists with art theoretician and curators - into a state where these groups act collectively. In this constellation these people have more potential to find a *temporary* solution from unfavourable conditions until the moment self-colonised³ and broken former East Europe finds the self-confidence to act independently. This means

not being reliant on the dominant West's diction, including the art market and looking for recognition from the Western part of the globe. One of the pioneering initiatives which goes beyond these words is the organisation Collective Collection. It is a culturally active collective based on membership. These people have also constructed a contemporary art collection.

To understand this phenomenon we need to briefly sketch the Romanian environment of collecting. Primarily it is the duty of the state and its cultural institution to push for public collection. The state should protect the substances of its own society for future generations. If we want to understand the present, we must know our past. The aims



Magda Stanová, *Sunset*, 2008, lithograph, 27 × 33 cm, photo: author's archive.

here are evident. But the current long-term exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary Art *Văzând Istoria – 1947-2007. Colecția MNAC* (Seeing History 1947-2007. Collection of MNAC) is an undignified overview of the cautious approach of the main Romanian institution. Apart from the fact that the whole 1950s are missing, the collection and the exhibition also disregard already locally established contemporary artists. Perhaps it will be helpful to explore the statement: 'What we collect, why we collect and what kind of condition do we have'. The private sector of collecting is inauspicious as well and has several layers and aspects. So far the majority of affluent Romanian businessmen haven't discovered that artwork is better than a poster from Ikea or that an artwork could slowly increase in value over time.

In this context the Romania Collective Collection emerged, critically responding to the lack of the public institutions' responsibility while reacting to the narcissis-



Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, *No Shelter From the Storm*, 2015, performance recorded on video (HD video, 5:43 min.).

tic possession of the private sector and its problematical moments such as the *domination* of a few selected artists. The Collective Collection is based on solidarity – all members are the collection's owners. A potential lender should therefore obtain the permission from all of the Collective Collection's members. In general, the organisation strives to de-privatise the collecting subject and institute the collective as the active agent and a collective socio-political tactic, commonly based on deep research, versus the individual taste of a private collection. If we attempt to summarize these characteristic attributes – under the condition that – visual art should contain complementary visions about us – then we could observe deeply rooted *universal* and *dominant* strategies discussed in the beginning in the whole of former East Europe, especially in Romania. These approaches are currently based on simplifying important thoughts. I guess that disposition to create *universal* work is connected with our tendency towards self-colonisation. Nonetheless, exports and imports of goods with Western EU countries are quite balanced, which is always valued positively in business and diplomacy. But on a cultural level, it is a one-sided relationship in which the Western world occupies the position of a picky customer interested in a few items (cheap labor, cheap goods, primary production, raw materials, services), while we have become consumers of a variety of material and ideological products. One of the obvious strategies of a picky customer is that the Eastern art world is completely parallelized. Only a few representatives have been selected into the worldwide circulation of visual art. The method of choice is based on the so-called patching of empty spaces, i.e. inserting and filling the thought or visual absence into the Western art 'international' or 'world' context.

In our context it is an everyday process of comparison with the culturally mature countries or states which have or virtually hold cultural dominance. The most recognized study about our position could be transferred from Edward Said's *Orientalism*.⁴ We could define our past as a history of the patronizing of the East by the West or the process

by which the West rules, restructures and manages the East. Euphemistically speaking we have observed cultural raping. In our Europe we are referring to a softened variant of voluntary and non-critical acceptance of goods coming from illusory mature centres. Parallely we are forgetting or repressing our inherited values. For some reason we perceive these values as lesser than western ones which have a broader acceptance, recognition and history. We call this non-critical acceptance self-colonisation, a process which has gone through former East Europe and where we can find a significant touch of the West. I am certain of keeping our marginal role until the moment we voluntarily refuse to participate on a dominant pole and educate our public institutions, art universities and collectors to focus on quality. This tendency is growing here, as exemplified by the Collective Collection and its demonstration of one method of cultural decolonisation.

František Zachoval is a cultural manager, publisher and curator.

1 In the 90s, the Czech Association of Fine Artists was completely dissolved, and we started from 0. This was quite a positive moment. The Romanian organization (UAP), on the other hand, kept their properties and members 30 years after the political change. Paradoxically, we can appreciate this moment because UAP became a social network for the oldest generation or a social meeting point for excluded artists. Nevertheless, this situation is hostile for the younger generation.

2 If we are talking about contemporary art, we have two wealthy cultural agencies in Romania: Arcub and Creart. And unfortunately they produce public events without any kind of vision. They are a sort of form of amusement similar to shopping malls. These city hall's organisations are responsible for a long-term vision in respect to culture. But the leaders of Bucharest and of the state are using culture for their electoral means.



Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, *No Shelter From the Storm*, 2015, performance recorded on video (HD video, 5:43 min.).

3 The metaphor of self-colonisation was invented by the Bulgarian professor of the History of Modern Culture at the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Sofia in "Notes on Self-colonising Cultures" published in the book *Cultural Aspects of the Modernisation Process*, Oslo, 1995. Later the concept was precisely formulated in *The Self-Colonizing Metaphor*.

4 *Orientalism* focuses on nations and countries in Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.



Martina Růžičková & Max Lysáček, *Basket of Deplorables*, 2017, wooden basket, scoubidou plastic wires, acrylic glass, photo: Martina Růžičková.

24–26

The Barrier of Unknown Names and Incomprehensible Works

An interview with Tereza Stejskalová: Biennale Matter of Art



Symposium, *Unlearning Biennial*, workshop, 2018, archive Tereza Stejskalova, tranzit.cz.

Next year, Prague will have a new biennial, founded by curators Tereza Stejskalová and Vít Havránek from the Tranzit.cz initiative. They have called it Matter of Art, and in many respects, it is similar to newly established biennials in other Eastern European cities. Flash Art correspondent Tereza Špinková talked to Tereza about what it means to hold a biennial adhering to the Codex of Feminist Art Institutions and the Art for Climate appeal.

TEREZA ŠPINKOVÁ
Who thought of organising a biennial? Why? And when?

TEREZA STEJSKALOVÁ
The idea of holding a biennial came to me and Vít Havránek about a year and a half ago. At the time, we were discussing various possibilities for the operation of Tranzit, and in the end, we found this way to be the most reasonable. Tranzit is a specific organisation with a specific audience, and we began feeling the desire to step out of our own shadow.

In the catalogue to this year's *Let's Organise Our Future* biennial in Warsaw, curator Paweł Wodziński writes that they primarily want to be "parasites" on this format of an art parade, while also stepping out beyond it and assuming a position politically towards the current activity of cultural institutions in Poland's capital.

It's certainly interesting that around the same time we started thinking in this manner, similar projects appeared, also taking up the biennial form. Similarly to the Warsaw Biennale, the Kiev biennial, or OFF-Biennale in Budapest, we don't want to do spectacular displays or follow in the footsteps of previous biennials in Prague. Through these activities, biennials in Eastern Europe present themselves as a space within which medium-sized institutions have the means and the will to put together a critical programme accessible to a broader audience. The similarity between the festivals in Warsaw, Budapest and Prague is determined by the local cultural and political developments. We all cooperate very closely. What we all care about most is creating a critical institution which does not stand or fall on one event every two years. We're cooperating with the Prague City Gallery, an existing institution, but we're also creating a new institution ourselves. We feel an ambition to hack the current format of the biennial; to give the word a new meaning.

TŠ
What is happening right now? How are the preparations going? Could you describe what the previous events were about and what we can look forward to next year?

25

TS
We at Tranzit keep thinking about HOW. This is what this year's programme was about. It helped us formulate several questions: how to grasp the entire project, how to cooperate, how to establish our relationship with an institution and how to behave in the environment in which we operate. It is more of an internal process, but one which influences its surroundings. During the event, one is under various pressures (time and otherwise) and it's important to define certain things clearly ahead of time. It's also important for me to intervene in institutional space and not just do a biennial which is successful in terms of visitor numbers, but which alienates the artists with its organisation and message, generally disrupting relationships. This year, we organised several events and invited a few people with both positive and negative experiences who attempted to find different positions towards the art scene. The art scene – or the part of it which is interested – took part; it wasn't really aimed at the general public for now. The events were signposts towards how we can think about a cultural institution at this time and in our region, what it should serve, to whom and with whom it should speak. All this, of course, is connected to the politics of a feminist institution, an initiative we are part of, led by several Prague cultural institutions (and two in Slovakia) and grouped around the Codex of the Feminist Art Institution.

The Matter of Art biennial itself will take place next year, in 2020, from mid-June to mid-September. Names will be published in January. Two exhibitions will take place in Prague City Gallery spaces: the Municipal Library and the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace. Part of the programme will probably take place in a non-gallery space, probably one related to the current trend of demolishing brutalist buildings. Vít Havránek and I are curating together. Discussion and cooperation is important for both of us. Thanks to this, I think the exhibitions will be heterogeneous.

TŠ
Could you expound on what organising an event like this involves if you follow the Codex of the Feminist Art Institution? Any specific and practical steps?

TS
We decided to set ourselves small goals, focusing on truly adhering to them. For instance, we want the biennial to be free and wheelchair accessible. It seemed like a trifle, but with a large event, this too turned out to be quite the task. We are devoting a lot of time and energy to these issues, time and energy we would otherwise spend preparing the programme. Practical, simple conditions suddenly turn out to be quite difficult.

TŠ
As far as I know, the Prague City Gallery is not a signatory of the Codex of the Feminist Art Institution. How do you work with that?

TS
It's about negotiation. The Prague City Gallery is a large institution and its employees try to meet us halfway so we can assure the two conditions I mentioned. They are understanding, and together, we try to find solutions. However, like Tranzit, Prague City Gallery has signed the Art for Climate appeal, so I hope that the principles of an ecologically thinking institution will leave its mark on the exhibition.

TŠ
So is your foundation in feminism as far as the biennial is concerned?

TS
The topics we take on are certainly linked to feminism. An exhibition might be fantastically ecological, but what about

if it's boring. We aim for balance. The question behind an exhibition is a question of relationships. How to create relationships and dialogue with the people who come and see the exhibition, and not only with those who are already part of the art scene, but also with those who have never heard of Tranzit.

For now, I can't mention specific names, so I'll talk about the three thematic outlines that will appear and interpenetrate at the biennale.

One is about relationships in society, which today are marked by incomprehension. We live closed off in our social bubbles and we often fail to understand what we disagree with. Of course the exhibition will be seen by a particular group of people, seeing as it's in Prague and in a gallery, but we'll try to address these problems through the positions and works of the artists.

Another closely related lineage is that of emotions. We understand them as a way of communicating which allows us to understand each other in matters we find difficult to speak of. People react with strong emotions even to certain words or phrases. When we mention sexuality, climate change, or racism, there is immediately colourful language. It's better to speak of anxieties, fears or frustrations. There is a desire to use art to speak of topics we could not otherwise speak of because they elicit the expected reactions.

An important topic we have been dealing with for some time now is sexuality. We're thinking about how our intimate lives change depending on the political and social organisation we exist in. Today, sexuality is a kind of symptom, even in relation to climate change – we think differently about whether or not to have children, which contraceptives to use and so on. We seldom think of sexuality as a symptom of societal problems, which is part of the reason why it's interesting for us.

TŠ
Who is the biennial for?

TS
Ideally, my mum should come as well – usually she'd only come because she's my mum. She's educated, she lives in Prague, she takes an interest in the world and thinks about it, but she's not part of the art scene. Of course, the events will take place in a very touristy part of Prague, so we're thinking about tourists too. There will be other locations too, less frequented and outside the centre. Then there are various communities we're doing long-term work with. Ideally, the exhibition should bring people together who would otherwise never meet. The biennial should be an exhibition which the visitor doesn't leave completely exhausted.

TŠ
What should draw people there?

TS
We've been racking our brains over that. A question that keeps coming up is how to resolve the barrier of unknown names and incomprehensible works? There are strategies, but what's crucial for us at the moment is the extent to which the result should be a spectacular as opposed to a critical exhibition. The biennials in Warsaw and Oslo were very radical – large exhibitions were nowhere to be seen. The art works were mostly conceived performatively, taking place at various locations at various times, which is difficult in terms of gathering an audience. Seeing as we hadn't put on an exhibition in a while, we decided to go a different direction – not to give up on the "large exhibition" format and to cooperate with an institution people are used to visiting.

TŠ
Will there be an accompanying programme?

TS
Yes, but we don't want to call it the accompanying programme – it should be part of the biennial. I can't talk much about the content, but we'll definitely continue in the work Tranzit has done until now, i.e. working with communities. An example I can give is the issue of parenthood and the accessibility of events for parents with small children. We have an experience of this, which is important – it helps us understand.

TŠ
What are your criteria for selecting artists?

TS
We will be exhibiting artists with whom we have worked for some time, but we also want to step out of our bubble – emotions are key for the selections. As I've mentioned, the biennial will follow on from our long-term activities, including research in Ukraine and Vietnam, where we have collaborated with local artists and communities.

When planning journeys, we try to adhere to the manual of art for climate initiated by feminist institutions. Following some discussions, we agreed on a set of rules for travelling and buying flight tickets. We agreed that up to a certain number of kilometres, we tell the artists that we'd prefer if they chose a mode of transport other than flying. But if someone comes from Asia, we try and get them to visit affiliated institutions in Poland, for example.

TŠ
In the short publicity text for Matter of Art, the following emotions are listed: contempt, irritation, fear, frustration, in-

comprehension, anger, aggression, exhaustion, apathy, indifference and anxiety. Are you interested in positive emotions too?

TS
We've been thinking about that too – these days, few things are optimistic, and I myself feel that this view is absent. Not even care, a key topic for feminist institutions, is particularly rosy – care creates complicated, often traumatic relationships. The feminist institution is not an institution of harmony; it is shaped by conflicts, but these are conscious and declared. But an optimistic vision is important, and I think it's evident in art, though the discourse around me is predominantly apocalyptic.

TŠ
My last question is for you as a curator: how important are stories for you?

TS
They're key. Perhaps we can find a way to speak of something intimate through fictional stories. I myself now return to images too – for a long time, they were something I did not understand. But through the storytelling I find in the images, I find a way to them. We are inspired by and think across literature, music and film. I studied literature and African studies, our new director Veronika Janatková is a documentary filmmaker. For us, visual art does not exist in isolation.

Tereza Špinková is an art critic and curator.

26

27–29 The Heterotopia of Place and the Context of Textiles Darina Alster



Magic Talk, 2018, Guimarães, photo: Darina Alster.

In her reflections upon the residency undertaken by two artists for Contextile 2018, the textile art biennale which took place in Guimarães, Portugal from the 1st of September to the 20th of October 2018 (www.contextile.pt), Darina Alster examines, amongst other things, the possibilities of relationships that contemporary art might establish with local traditions and the specific social roles they embody. Textile art is a domain in which there is often a social, physical or gender context, as well as many other local, national or ethnic links implicitly present thanks to a host of specific roles that textiles have traditionally played and still do in many societies. In this respect, the work of the two artists with the local women's community raised a host of questions. These started with the positive contribution involved in reviving a dying tradition and a closed female micro-world by means of contemporary art practice, and ended with the question of whether such activities could genuinely help over the long-term horizon, or whether they simply represented the musealisation of a dying art within the context of a monotonous globalisation.

Guimarães is a picturesque provincial town in Portugal around fifty kilometres from Porto. Preparations for the Contextile Biennale were fully underway when I arrived. In the early hours of Friday 20 July, we visited a folk market where they sold flowers, fruit, confectionery, salt cod (Bacalhau)

and live hens. Around the corner from the marketplace in an unobtrusive location there were large stone vessels containing water. A group of local women were washing clothes in them, chatting and singing. They formed a women's circle. Both old and young washed huge pieces of textile, rugs, mattresses, etc. that could not be washed at home in automatic washing machines.

In 2012, Guimarães was made a European city of Culture and local organisations used the funds provided to convert a small factory into what is now the Casa da Memória de Guimarães Cultural Centre. This was also the first year that the first Contextile Biennale took place. Casa da Memória de Guimarães, i.e. House of Memories from Guimarães, is a museum exhibition focusing on the town's memory. The exhibition there is divided into two parts reflecting the themes of *territory* (place) and *community* (people). The themes are charted using playful multimedia installations, and the entire exhibition has the feel of a contemporary artwork.

Cláudia Melo, the Portuguese curator of the international project Magic Carpets, a part of the Contextile Biennial, is originally an artist. However, in recent years she has focused on curatorship. She started her curatorial pursuits in 2013 by collaborating with the municipality of Porto, working on projects related to the requalification and dynamization of



Symposium, *Why Are We Talking With? What Can Institutions Learn From Artists?*, workshop, 2019 archive: Tereza Stejskalova, tranzit.cz.

voiding spaces through artistic practices. She also curated and coordinated the urban art program involving Porto communities. She has always been interested in the theme of community and the local context. Magic Carpets is her first international project.

Cláudia Melo described her curatorial project as follows: "We are organising Contextile because there is a strong tradition of textiles in the provinces. At Magic Carpets we selected two artists on the basis of their portfolios. Both of them, Ida Blažičko (Croatia) and Hermione Allsopp (UK), work with textiles, fabrics and installations in the public space".

Melo set out the basic framework within which the two artists would operate at the biennale. Her research brought together texts, photography and films contextualising the traditional process of the communal washing of textiles. "Here in Guimarães the community is very particular. The older women still do the washing in public tubs despite the existence of automatic washing machines. While working, these women chat, discussing various topics and creating a community".

Ida Blažičko first laid the foundations of her work with the old women washing clothes by spending a lot of time visiting them, chatting and asking them if she could conduct interviews, filming, etc. She brought them little four leafed clovers she found in the grass nearby, gifts, drew them and showed them sketches of her projects... The women got used to her presence and accepted her. They welcomed her into their circle and they have now become best friends. They sang, laughed and cried together while helping each other with the washing.

Hermione Allsopp was interested in the performative element of collective washing. She used the cement and stone from which the washing basins or lavoirs were made as the materials for her installation. She interpreted the cyclical



Ida Blažičko, *Traces of Time*, 2018, photo: Darina Alster.

process of the movement of washing by means of sculpture and installation. Her sculptural work captured the materiality of textiles. She created balls of textile impregnated with cement that became the embodied movements of washing and a paraphrase of the cyclicity of the entire process. The spheres were hollow, fragile, like the old women's stories.

Ida Blažičko recorded the sounds, conversations and singing of the women and created audio installations. She created forms from fabrics that reflected upon the time and memories concealed in textiles. She played her audiovisual installations in the lavoirs. She observed the women as they recounted stories of their lives and fears while washing, often giving vent to very personal themes that would not have been otherwise nurtured by another environment.

When cleaning these bulky textiles the women were in fact cleansing their own interior worlds. The lavoirs represented a kind of safe space where they were able to put aside their family duties and speak openly about whatever they wanted. Gran-nies did their washing alongside their granddaughters. Mothers explained the sensitive topics of women's cycles and sexuality to their daughters. For many women the time spent at the communal basins was the only moment they felt free. These were intergenerational



Ida Blažičko, *Traces of Time*, 2018, Guimarães, photo: Darina Alster.

women's circles with a tradition stretching far back into the mists of time. They met every Thursday and Friday. Many people from Guimarães worked in the local textile factories, but these were mainly men: the women tended to remain at home. Young people tended not to use the lavoirs. They lived according to a different rhythm, they did not need tradition or community. This is why many of the traditional washing points have been disappearing from the city.

Ida Blažičko's project was called *Traces of Time*. She took the element of water as her starting point. Symbolically water refers to life, feelings...

"We washed our laundry along with the local women. I have to say that it is no easy job washing huge textiles by hand. You need a lot of strength. In my work I am particularly interested in biometrics, i.e. learning from natural processes, and morphotex, i.e. textiles that are coloured by means of their structure and not using dye. I am interested in the dematerialisation of material, the visualisation of air and the surface of water. For *Contextile* I am creating an audio installation. I'm recording the women as they sing. I want to return their presence to the city centre and revive their sounds and traces to places where they have been wiped out by tourism. The lavoirs have been removed from the centre of Guimarães. I work with sounds and organza (a type of fabric) that I have prepared along with the women. They helped me wash the huge mass of fabric because they saw that I could not do it on my own", Blažičko built.

Hermione Allsopp built her sculpture in the garden of the *Casa da Memória*. She was inspired by the drapery of large pieces of fabric and the play of light in the water of the lavoirs. The gestural aspect of washing, the power of the laundry press, the relationship with water and the weather... The process of washing was very physical. Handling the heavy saturated fabrics required a lot of strength. She was also fascinated by the intimate relationships and the cyclicity of the women's movement as they washed their laundry in the basins. I asked Hermione to describe how she set about working on the project: "There's a saying in English: Don't wash your dirty laundry in public! Textiles and clothes are filled with symbolic value. They bear witness to our bodies, relationships and environments. Textiles are a map of our memories". Hermione wanted to capture these memories and become a part of the life of the local women. She was interested in laundry as material. Her project was called *Organic Matters*.

The residency of Ida Blažičko and Hermione Allsopp lasted three months and the outcomes of their work were included in the Biennale Contextile in Guimarães. Cláudia Melo's curatorial project recounted the city's memory, its metamorphosing traditions and places. The behaviour of the local women could justifiably be called a tradition. The gradual disappearance of traditions is a sign of the gradual loss of collective identity. Cities have begun to resemble each other and lose their genius loci. Artworks incorporating these traditions remind us of this spirit and help preserve local customs for future generations.

The *Casa da Memória* is a reconstruction of the memory of the city of Guimarães. This conceptually flavored exhibition tells of the local customs of

its inhabitants as well as of the deconstruction of memory as such. "The lavoirs represent a heterotopical place, a place of freedom for women within a traditional patriarchal society", added curator Cláudia Melo. "The strategy pursued by the *Contextile Biennial* is to connect territories and people and to recreate old trades such as textile production, which has a long tradition in this region. For us this is a hugely important way of capturing and preserving memories by placing traditional textiles within the context of contemporary art. We thus assist in the creation of self-confidence using themes of identity, territory and memory. The first biennial took place in *Casa da Memória de Guimarães*. This year *Contextile* is more international. Around eighty artists from around the world are exhibiting. The star of the entire biennale is the English artist Ann Hamilton", said Joaquim Pinheiro, the biennale's director.

On Thursday and Friday the water was changed in the lavoirs and the women began washing in the early hours of the morning. The artists mingled with them, influencing their everyday life by following them. The aroma of soap, laundry and freshly cut grass reminded one of childhood. The two artists gradually became an integral part of the women's everyday life. When they left, the women had a story to tell over their washing. From an aesthetic perspective, the old tradition of washing laundry in public has acquired symbolic significance. The question remains whether the context of contemporary art has contributed to improving the quality of the everyday lives of these local women.

Darina Alster is an artist, curator and an art pedagogue.



Hermione Allsopp, *Organic Matters*, 2018, Guimarães, photo: Darina Alster.

30–31
After Leaving, Before Arriving
 Kaunas Biennial
 Viktor Čech



Amalia Pica, *A ∩ B ∩ C (Line)*, 2013 Photos by Remis Ščerbauskas, Martynas Plepys.

In his novel *Changing Places*, British writer David Lodge presented a humorous take on the careless atmosphere – as well as the troubles – of the intricately connected work of academia and the academics' free flying between countries, universities and conferences. Much has certainly changed since then: the art scene has attained a similar mobility and once clear borders – particularly those which confined the eastern part of Europe due to geo-political reasons – are gradually dispersing, as are the contrails left by the planes artists and curators use to leap around from exhibition to exhibition and from residency to residency. For a long time, this feeling of limitless mobility was almost a matter of course, but in recent years, it has gradually been disrupted by a number of disturbing symptoms. Freedom of travel, as well as the possibility to freely express oneself through one's work, is being called into question with rising frequency in the parts of "new Europe" once so intoxicated with freedom. These borders, no longer extant physically or psychologically, have begun appearing like a spectre from the past. We can't help but remember the seemingly distant past, when these borders were not only barriers, but also labyrinths undergoing frequent transformations. These moved back and forth as part of the hasty rush of military and political developments, radically influencing the fates of millions of people.

Lithuania is among the countries whose population and culture spent almost the entire 20th century wandering through labyrinths of their own identity. And Kaunas, once the temporary capital city, is one of the sites that is still intensely permeated with this memory today. A mix of Han-

seatic Gothic-style brick work, lavish Lithuanian Baroque, and Tsarist architecture from the 19th century is completed by modernist architecture of the emancipated interwar republic and the legacy of a long Soviet occupation gradually disappearing behind the signs of current development. This incomparable *genius loci* could certainly also be perceived as a historical cliché, primarily useful for the development of tourism, but today's dramatic geo-political developments suggest that it can also be something more. It is partly these characteristics that make Kaunas an ideal spot for a biennial of contemporary art.

The concept of this year's 12th Kaunas biennale, prepared by a team of five curators (Elisabeth Del Prete, Daniel Milnes, Lýdia Pribišová, Neringa Stoškutė, Alessandra Troncone), is once again bound to the values of local context and memory. Its theme – curtly expressed by the phrase "after leaving, before arriving" – reacts on a more general level to today's situation, in which not only societies, but also individuals feel a constant, liminal uncertainty. The biennial exhibitions, spread among a number of buildings, including the local art and natural history museums, the bus and train stations and a number of other locations in the city's public space, attempted – in a steadily developing tradition of "local" biennials – to merge with the local context and everyday life.

In line with the provincial character of the biennial, a few striking older art works which had already garnered international attention in the past were shown – this included Amalia Pica's performative installations or videos by the legendary video-performer Bas Jan Ader, "discovered"

a number of times in preceding decades. But the curatorial principle itself – including works arising from contexts seemingly completely other in the local context – was successful. Confronting a number of specific experiences and problems of today's world opened a number of unexpected parallels for the spectator, allowing them to create a puzzle that fit surprising well – it didn't offer any solutions, but it revealed the unexpectedly fine-grained complexity that ties the contemporary world together. The constant tension between centre and periphery omnipresent at these biennials moved beyond the borders of formal artistic expression, particularly towards questions of human identity and intercultural reciprocity and mutuality. In his installation in a very "local" context, placed in the cargo trains at the Kaunas train station, British artist of Zimbabwean origin Tamu Nkiwane provided an intimate insight into his attempts to approach the African roots to which he had lost all connection to in his western home. Many other exhibited works rendered visible the subtle politics which constitute our everyday lives, their non-repeatability acting as threads in the broad fabric defining today's world. This language of the un-abstracted politics of the everyday in the work of most of the exhibiting artists certainly became the strongest feature of this biennial.

Two artists took part in the biennial within the Magic Carpets residency project – Ana Kovačić (*1986) from Croatia and Sonja Jo (*1992) from Serbia. The personal experience of Sonja Jo in getting to her residency is symptomatic of the situation in Europe. As a citizen of a non-Schengen zone country, the journey was like being lost in the labyrinth of constant border crossings and meticulous checks. For



Sonja Jo, *Without Ruins You Cannot See the New World*, 2019, Photos by Remis ŠčerbauskasPlepys.



Ana Kovačić, *Migrating Species – Reflections on Moving*, 2019, Photos by Remis Ščerbauskas.



Francesca Grilli, *The Forgetting of Air*, 2016/2019, photos by Marija Stanulytė, performance was happening 8th June at Kaunas Artists' House, video record is exposed in Kaunas Picture Gallery.

Ana Kovačić, migration became the central theme of the project itself. Her residency, culminating with the works exhibited within the biennial, focused on the migration of bird species and ornithological research in general. The artist's research, inspired by the heritage of Tadas Ivanauskas, took place in institutions founded by this famous Lithuanian zoologist: the Zoological Museum and the ornithological observation station. A comparison of avian and human migration certainly offers a number of parallels and differences, but here, it was most important as direct confrontation. This confrontation was rendered with the artist's video using material from the ornithological observation in the hall of the bus station, and also in the dialogue with other artists in dioramas arranged by Kovačić in the Zoological Museum, playing with the museum aesthetic. Her work in the ornithological observatory, on the other hand, had the character of live events including direct audience participation.

Sonja Jo researched the local context too, as part of her project *Without Ruins We Cannot See the New World*. She recorded the micro-histories of the workers in a local factory, linked to transformations in Lithuanian society. The second part of her project, however, was crucial within the biennial exhibition – an installation in the local art museum within which the spectator was placed into a symbolic (and yet physically intensively felt) position in the ruins of the past, from where they were propagandistically indoctrinated towards an uncertain future using performatives typical of televised news. Through ironic hyperbole, her parable revealed the mechanisms which allow mass media – even today – to hide historical memory and use manipulative methods anew in novel contexts. At a time of a renewed wave of nationalisms and the systematic construction of narratives of fear, alienation and aggression, Sonja Jo's video acted as an unveiling of the vacuous formalism of these tools of control.

An inner concern for the current social and political situation in Europe is apparent in the work of both artists, as well as in a number of realisations exhibited at the Kaunas Biennial. However, this concern does not lead to explicit and didactic output typical of traditional political art, but rather to an intimate communication with the spectator through the trivialities of the world we live in. These subtle social, physical and environmental stimuli, however, are all the more capable of making present the intensity and complexity of the dangerous everydayness of our current crises. A typical example is the staged performance of Italian artist Francesca Grilli's *The Forgetting of Air*, in which the performers and spectators all shared the air in an enclosed and steamy room; air breathed by migrants; air reminding all the participants of the mutual dependency of everyone inhabiting this planet. All those present became participants in the event, which took on strong symbolism in today's times of ecological crisis.

Viktor Čech is a curator and art critic.

32–33

Learning by Doing

Lexa Peroutka

In recent years, we have witnessed our European context become more structured and hierarchical. What has occurred is a normalisation of relationships within Europe's current borders. If we're talking about the sphere of contemporary art, this fact is apparent from the transformation of the EU's cultural politics, its real politics, and also trends within visual art. The artworld is more closely tied to economic factors, whether these take the form of its means of funding or secondarily in the economic conditions of the country in which the activities take place. The situation within Europe is confused because it is usually perceived locally, regionally, nationally or individually – both from the perspective of the future of the Union and the advantages and disadvantages it brings, again perceived economically and on the local, regional, national and state levels. There are also conflicting perspectives in the east and west of the Union, as well as beyond its borders.

The ZK/U centre was founded in the summer of 2012 on the grounds of a former freight railway station in the centre of Berlin, in the municipality of Moabit, near the Westhafen harbour. Moabit has been linked to the history of the workers' and revolutionary movements from the period of early industrialisation after 1820 through the emancipation of the working classes in Berlin after 1861. This history is automat-

ically complemented by the important prison history in this part of the city. In the post-war period, when Moabit was in the British sector and close to the border with East Berlin, the district was – similarly to the more popular Kreuzberg – inhabited by immigrants, and even after the reunification, it remained a neighbourhood with a high concentration of residents of non-German origin. Questions of society, politics, emancipation, and urbanism, as well as their local reflection, civic participation and, finally, specific realisations have been an important drive in the development, organisation and planning of this part of Berlin-Mitte – the central district of Berlin. Of course, with this many unanswered questions, confrontations and frictions have come about. These belong to the active operation of every European metropolis in our neo-liberal economic environment, where the interests of the public (the citizens), the state and private capital mix.

In this situation, the activities of ZK/U – the Center for Art and Urbanism – are a serious attempt at actively participating in the development of the city and planning for its future. The involvement of the diverse inhabitants of Moabit which ZK/U activates is also essential. Their rent contract for the former freight station will run out in 2052. Their agreement with the city of Berlin is generous, allowing for a completely different kind of planning, realisation and output than those

of similar cultural, artistic and social institutions elsewhere in Europe, where stable existence cannot be ensured in a horizon of ten years or less. ZK/U's programme takes various forms – from long-term residential artistic and research projects which run throughout the year to one-off events such as *Speisekino: individual artistic presentations connected to the culinary skills of the artist in residence at ZK/U*.

ZK/U's activities are structured following themes – “Discourses” – and the practical operation of the individual projects and their success or otherwise in the community of inhabitants in Moabit or other parts of Berlin where ZK/U is active (such as the House of Statistics on Alexanderplatz). Discourses direct activities towards global problems – cultural politics, politics in general, sustainable ways of life and civic questions in the urban environment: (self-)education, available housing, inclusive, participative, cultural, artistic, and educational activities, migration and so on.

Cities – urbanist environments – are specific places with particular problems and inhabitants. ZK/U thus connects global problems with local practice. Their approach is strictly horizontal and aims towards civic and cultural independence and engagement in an otherwise predominantly vertically organised environment.

Another of ZK/U's outlets are “Projects”, which are “artistic, research-oriented, socially significant, and often international experiments which can become Formats”. The “Fact-Finding Committee” and the “House of Statistics” are among these. I want to give more attention to the “Fact-Finding Committee” (UA; Untersuchungsausschuss), as its product is an “intermedia zine” of a representative character – a publication we can refer to and proceed from.

The UA's project is based on three months of work by a voted committee which applies itself to topical urbanist themes in Berlin. ZK/U selects topics it considers important and in the public interest. The resultant zine is a kind of working declaration; a manifesto, and is conceived as a recommendation for other interested inhabitants, politicians and active civic initiatives in the sense of “what is to be done?”. Three issues have been published so far. The first on the topic of the Green Commons (2018), the second on the year 2052 (2018–19) and the third on Solidarity (2019).

The 2052 issue focuses on the creation and retention of a common, open and inclusive public space in today's fragmented and divided society. The issue is, in fact, a summary of alternatives and possibilities with regard to the '90s and later. The scene of '90s unified Berlin is cited, with the simplified English title translating as “The First Ideals of Berlin”, or “The Ruined Days”, detailing the Tacheles club/cultural house and other such centres. ZK/U is the direct successor of these cultural, artistic and social activities, all of which were gradually stifled, transformed or recycled. We live in a period of recycling – waste, climate, vintage, hipster culture, coffee culture, consumerism, conservatism, etc. – dark humour. The 2052 issue is a compendium of the possibilities

of engaged socio-cultural work in the present, at a time when these efforts in the urbanist centres of Europe are practically impossible or exhausted. In most cases, a coexistence of culture from the ground up with current administration is impossible in European cities. With some exceptions.

One more distant European example is the *Cyklopen* project in Högdalen in Stockholm. It has no direct relation to the history of ZK/U. Even so, it is a project which adapted to



Studio Apartment of Zura Tsofurashvili, photo: Tanja Knaus.

the contemporary local European environment following more or less the same logic after several generations failed attempts at existence and social acceptance. Just like ZK/U, it is a space that is self-organised and open, not a priori restricted to any social or cultural group. It also appeared in a similar district (though in a different city). Högdalen is a neighbourhood which accumulates various generations of immigrants who later integrate, whether they are from Eastern Europe, the Near East, or another part of the world. It is therefore multicultural and inclusive. The *Cyklopen* project is the first place of cultural contact and social inclusion in its locality. In many respects, it substitutes for the apparatus of the state, city or municipality. *Cyklopen* is a unique project built on pragmatism, discussion and compromise. It is not radical within our central-European parameters – it is radical in relation to contemporary reality, where the “is or isn't” position is predominant. In the case of Prague, for example, projects such as this one have not survived and are currently non-existent.

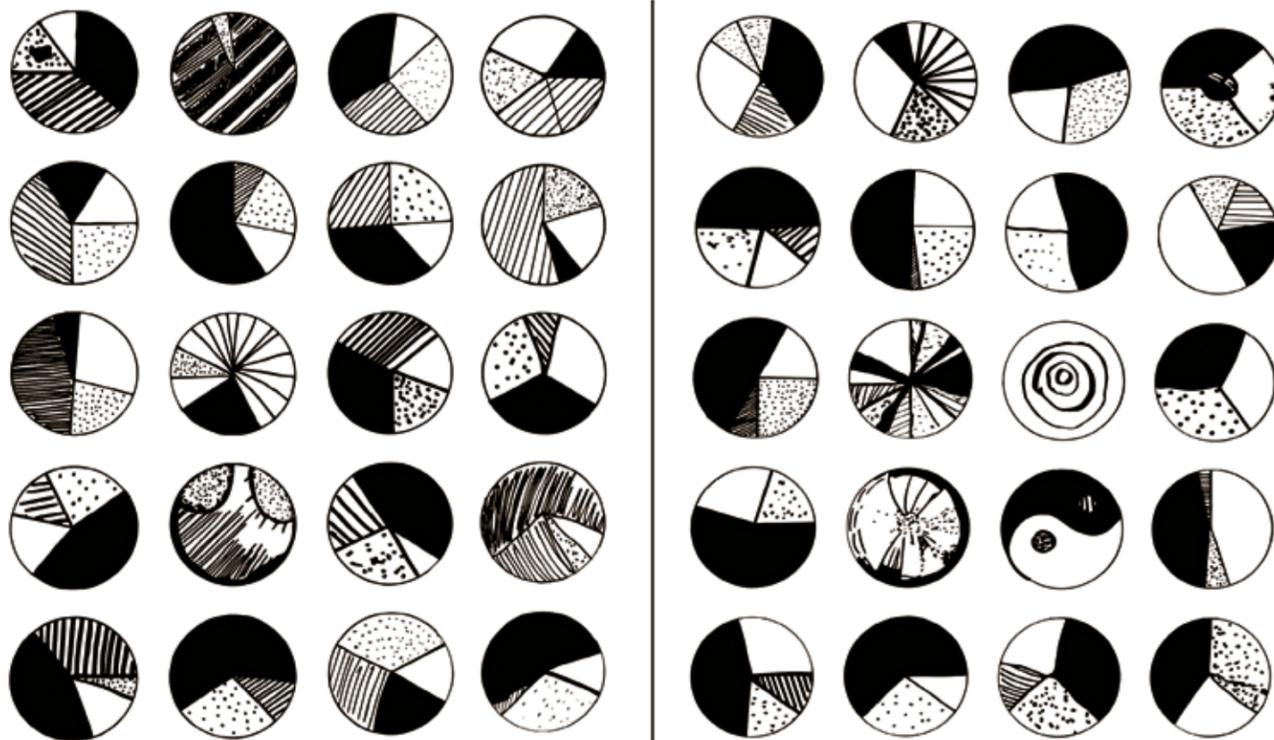
Back to the existence and function of ZK/U. In comparison with *Cyklopen*, it has much greater ambitions and operates on a much greater scale. With a view to the size and dynamic of the city of Berlin (and the district of Moabit), ZK/U is a meaningful and sophisticated project which has its own back door – it can dynamically change based on the transforming social and political situation, answering new and newer questions of a social, cultural and artistic character. Its rental contract runs out on the 29th of February 2052, but it can be extended. Art itself plays a dominant role. But according to statistics from ZK/U sources, artists are less cooperative and less resistant to the changing social and economic order of society. May ZK/U be active well beyond 2052!

Lexa Peroutka is a visual artist, curator and writer focused on critical art practices.

1 See Elena Mazzi's work within the Magic Carpets framework at ZK/U Berlin, “Solidarity” project zine issue, The artist, after all, is (not) working (ZK/U Press, 2018)

ACTUAL

IDEAL



PRACTICE

LIFE

SLEEP

WORK

LEGEND:



34–35 Folkestone Milan Mikuláščík



Ana Dana Beroš, *Landing Mirrors*, performance, 2019, photo: Milan Mikuláščík.

At the end of June this year, the English town of Folkestone hosted the Festival of Looking – an event which took place within the Magic Carpets European exchange programme. The admirably lively and active art scene of this small, but picturesque town was enriched by yet another contribution to its culture.

Folkestone, a town of fifty thousand, is located in the county of Kent on the southeastern coast of England, near the English Channel. The city neighbours Dover and its large port is located where the Channel is narrowest. On a good day, you can see the continent from the cliffs at the edge of town. Folkestone has a rich history. The area is interesting in its geology, and particularly the sediments near the shore promise any palaeontologist a rich bounty of ammonites, brachiopods and other such creatures. Records of human habitation also reach deep into the past – among the oldest records is a recently discovered Roman villa from the end of the 1st century BC. Another example of ancient architecture is the parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe, built in 1138, a reminder that there was a Christian monastery here in the 720s. The town saw significant development with the arrival of the industrial revolution at the beginning of the 19th century. From a small fishing town, Folkestone gradually turned into an important industrial and merchant port, once the largest in the south of England. In 1810, a new inner dock was built from stone, as well as a monumental harbour jetty reaching almost a kilometre out to sea. The year 1843 was crucial for the town's development – the railway station opened. Thou-

sands of tonnes of fish, wood, coal and ice now reached the harbour and were reloaded onto trains to be distributed around the country. Folkestone is a witness and an integral part of the radical transformation of society; industrialisation; modernisation. In addition to a thriving industry, the seaside town with its impressive panorama also became a recreation resort, with luxury villas being built on the shore. H. G. Wells is among the most famous residents from the beginning of the 20th century – he had the architect Voysey build him a beautiful villa in the spirit of the arts and crafts movement using the money he had made from sales of *War of the Worlds*. Only a few metres away, Sir Robert Baden-Powell – the founder of the scouting movement – found his retirement home. Folkestone was an important military port in both world wars. In the first, it was famous for being the port which all British units used to get to the continent. In the second, Folkestone repeatedly suffered heavy bombing – the extent of the damage to the harbour was similar to nearby Dover. After World War II, Folkestone became a harbour for passenger ships, with millions of tourists from continental Europe arriving each year. This new role, however, only worked until the Eurotunnel under the English Channel opened with great pomp and ceremony. The harbour closed, the historical railway connection was cancelled and the city ran into trouble. A local private investor then entered the game, buying up most of the large residua of industry and making them available to artists, renovating the jetty and turning it into a meeting place full of dining, live concerts, a beautiful view and also a source of

income for non-profit art projects. Since 2008, Folkestone has hosted a triennial of sculpture in public space. Thanks to a generously conceived acquisition policy, many of the works were purchased, so after four editions of the triennial, Folkestone is literally full of sculptures and installations by well-known artists: Tracey Emin, Mark Wallinger, Yoko Ono, Cornelia Parker and others.

The reason for this extensive retelling of the town's history is the fact that Folkestone's transformation was the central theme of the Festival of Looking, which took place during the last June weekend of this year. The non-profit Folkestone Fringe was the main organiser while Georgie Scott the main curator. The event was composed of smaller exhibitions, performances and installations in the public space of the town, as well as lectures and gallery performances, with several exhibition spaces taking part. The heart of the festival and home of the liveliest activity was a wooden structure near the historical harbour – Urban Room Folkestone. On top of the lectures and presentations, there were also two smaller exhibitions on show. Maps of the town's urbanist developments were comprehensively presented on the walls, including a hypothetical view into the future. There were also several installations by contemporary artists. A video installation on the topic of play by Gemma Riggs was the result of her stay in Zagreb. Daniel Tollady's *Urban Archive: Folkestone* presented a peculiar combination of archeological, geological and sociological research into the Folkestone harbour, also including the visitors, who could take away a sample of rock from the former freight railway earthworks encased in an elegant box. Only a few metres from the Urban Room, on the former railroad tracks, visiting artist Patrick Hubmann created his mobile site-specific installation *Grand Plaza Express* in collaboration with local artist Mitchell Bloomfield. Using construction material, the artists created a representation of a passenger car from the 19th century and let it roll down the remnants of the rusty tracks leading somewhere into the harbour. This improvised mode of transport also became a platform for a happening involving the local inhabitants (both underage and adults) in creative action. Hubmann, an Austrian resident of Portugal, was nominated by Ideias Emergentes, based in Porto, and he spent several weeks preparing his Folkestone installation. It is a bit of a shame that the relatively demanding realisation lasted such a short time. Another artist from abroad who spent a longer time in Folkestone was Ana Dana Beroš from Croatia. This versatile artist works with architec-



Daniel Tollady, *Urban Archive: Folkestone*, 2019, photo: George Cory. ture, action art, poetry and politics. Her happening, *Landing Mirrors*, took a group of participants on an adventurous pilgrimage through the suburban wilderness, interspersed with readings from Hannah Arendt and culminating on a chalk cliff with an enthralling view over the English Channel. At the peak of this cliff – at the finish-line of the happening – stood a remarkable technical heritage building: concrete parabolic structure ten metres in diameter, the remnant of an acoustic warning system from the beginning of the 20th century; a precursor of radar. A happening by a group of architecture students from Canterbury Masterhackers also took the form of a stroll – this time along the subtle and forgotten corners of urban space: heterotopias. The lecture programme in the Urban Room included a presentation by Diane Dever, a key figure in Folkestone's cultural life. Dever, herself an active

artist, helps run the non-profit activities of Folkestone Fringe and organise events in the reconstructed harbour. A lecture by former fisherman and Folkestone historian Alan F. Taylor was also very impressive. Taylor owns a collection of tens of thousands of historical photographs and postcards of the seaside town, which are his material not only for lectures, but also publications and – most importantly – a very cute private fishing museum located about fifty metres from the Urban Room. The diverse and inventively composed programme of the Festival of Looking proved that Folkestone is not only a town with a confident cultural scene, but also that there is a new generation listening intently to their predecessors, a generation hell-bent on maintaining and reinforcing the genius loci and transforming the old English port into a harbour of culture. Fingers crossed!

Milan Mikuláščík is an artist and curator.



Patrick Hubmann, *Grand Plaza Express*, 2019, photo: George Cory.

Gemma Riggs, *In our own time*, 2019, photo: Barbara Raad.

The central shopping street in Zagreb is called Ilica, and according to local curator Karmen Krasčić Kožul, the appearance of this street figuratively refers to a certain aspect of the contemporary world which she calls the Global Self. It is no different from other streets in cities anywhere else in the world with the same stores offering the same goods to the same customers. But all you need to do is go almost to the end and enter the courtyard of house number 37. You'll breathe in an entirely different atmosphere, one we also know, but from somewhere else: a little dirty, a little abandoned. We'd probably use words like "authentic" and "original" to describe it. This whole area must have looked something like this in the past, we say to ourselves. But not even that is true anymore – in the irregularly shaped courtyard, only a few store-workshops survive. The others are abandoned. If we so desired, we could visit an optician, look into a ceramics workshop, or have our keys copied. These craftsmen might have already been here for several decades, and we might say they come from a time *before*.

But what do these terms *in the past* and *before* mean? We could term this age the age of local capitalism, when fast fashion stores (and others of a similar nature) were in their infancy or did not exist at all. It is at similar locations where – according to curator Karmen Kožul – we find our Local Self. There are more of these half-abandoned places that seem to have once been more alive around Zagreb, and there are now various initiatives bringing attention to them and trying to involve them in the local community through cultural events. The most distinctive of these is Project Ilica, whose aim is to "transform, in the long-term, the urban experience through the social activities of artists, associations, universities, crafts, and community involvement".

The inner courtyard of number 37 is connected to this initiative, but even so, it still lives its own life. In addition to the workshops, several trees, a parking lot, and an abandoned garage, there is also a shop here, Bad Blue Boys, which offers the merchandise of Dinamo, Zagreb's most famous football team. The store also serves as one of the fan

Matthias Krinzinger, sketch for *Dinamo always wins (and loses)*, 2019, photo: Marija Kamber.

bases. In another of the garages, the pop-up gallery Garage Kamba has operated since 2017. Another community has developed around this gallery.

In 2019, Kamba partnered with the LAB 852 initiative in relation to the Magic Carpets project. Curators Karmen Krasčić Kožul and Marija Kamber organised events under the joint name Superorganism. The spring season saw several workshops for artists focused on pedagogic activities in combination with findings from psychology, and also an art workshop for children.

Two artists were then invited for a residency in Zagreb in April and May – Gemma Riggs from the United Kingdom and Matthias Krinzinger from Austria. Both artists were selected on the basis of their previous works. Among other topics, both take on the phenomenon of play, they work with communities, and also include a particular sense of humour which helps them find a detached view when working outside gallery spaces.

During her residency, Gemma Riggs worked with the Zagreb-based choreographer Martina Tomić. Their collaboration was not planned out in advance, instead being created *in situ*: Martina's father owns one of the shops in the courtyard. Both artists have a lot in common: an interest in the merging of artistic disciplines, the social aspects of play and education. According to Gemma Riggs, these collaborative and interdisciplinary methods allowed them to work with people who were not artists. Together, they made contact with local residents, involving a group of eleven- and twelve-year-old girls whom Gemma filmed during their games in the courtyard. Together, they explored the specificity of the site through play, creating a space in which they felt safe. Time spent in one place allowed the participants to slow down the rush of the everyday and be more in contact with themselves and others. For the artist, it was (and is) crucial to observe how our internal processes manifest themselves externally, what happens when our thoughts and emotions are given the time and space to show themselves.

The programme culminated on Friday the 24th of May 2019. The result of Gemma's residency was an installation in the Kamba gallery, *In our own time*. A 16mm film recording of the girls was screened, along with interactions from the courtyard recorded on a digital camera, objects and drawings by the girls, and a graphical explanation of the games played in the film. Gemma Riggs peacefully intervened in the local space, essentially leaving it unchanged, only recording the events and prescribing a different dynamic for a time. The refined work with site and people thus disproved Gemma's statement during a discussion on gentrification with Karmen: "The arrival of artists is not always a good sign". The film from the Zagreb residency was also screened at the end of June at the Festival of Looking in Folkestone.

Matthias Krinzinger also works with play, but in a different context. His work begins with the conviction that joint activities connect people. Through these, people have a similar experience which they can extend and share, build relationships on and create societies. According to Matthias, play is important at every age and also becomes a part of societal superorganisms. One can connect communities through play, the art world opens to other worlds and vice versa: through entertaining formats and the inclusion of people, Matthias refers to various models of functioning in today's society. In Zagreb, the Austrian artist took up the existence of Dinamo's fan shop. He called his first event *Heavy Metal*, taking inspiration from a quote by conceptual artist Tom Marioni: "the act of drinking beer with friends is the highest form of art".

*Superorganism*, workshops, 2019, photo: Domagoj Hmura.



Matthias Krinzing, *Heavymetal / Leichtmetall*, 2019, photo: Barbara Raad.

He invited – among others – visitors and fans of the Dinamo store. Together, they listened to heavy metal, drinking beer cans by the fire. They then let the cans melt in the fire, casting amulets and artworks out of them. These then became both a proof and souvenir of this meeting.

Krinzinger then organised a secret betting night, also involving the local locksmith. Friday the 24th of May was when the happening *Dinamo always wins (and loses)* took place. Matthias brought a foosball table to the courtyard, organising a tournament in which anyone could take part. All the players were painted blue – Dinamo's club colour. Everyone won, everyone lost, and everyone got a prize. The event, however, was not a critique or a mockery of football society – quite the contrary, for the artist, this strong community became a crucial inspiration reflecting the mechanisms of contemporary society. Identification and the desire to win were relativised, while cohesiveness and the formation of otherwise non-existent relationships remained.

What's crucial about the Zagreb projects is that they do not primarily try to bring life to the abandoned site through a cultural programme they bring from outside. They take into consideration the problem of gentrification in all its complexity. They involve the local communities, shops, craftsmen and their businesses. They do not chase them out with new models of culture and entertainment, they do not try to include them at any cost or transform their activities. They take them as part of the site, attempting cohabitation and dialogue, whilst also gently alerting society to their existence (and thus also their importance in the urban superorganism). Both artists left a trace, subtle at first sight, located somewhere between the global and the local. They provided themselves and several local

inhabitants with a new experience and, in a sense, a kind of adventure, which was and can be part of everyday goings-on. Play can also lead to considerateness and care for one's environment and oneself, as well as putting up a mirror and helping create critical thinking. Art steps out from its distant pigeon hole, and so together with the American curator and critic Nato Thompson, we can ask not what is and isn't art, but what art causes, what it does and transforms.¹

Tereza Špinková is an art critic and curator.

¹ Nato Thompson: Contributions to a Resistant Visual Culture Glossary, in: *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, December 2014.



Courtyard of Ilica 37, view of the exhibition, photo Lonac

39–40 *Homo Novus – In the City of Abandoned Buildings* Apolena Vanišová

Drawing on her personal experience with the local scene in Latvia, Apolena Vanišová introduces us to the international festival of contemporary theatre *Homo Novus* (www.homonovus.lv), which ran from the 6th to 12th of September 2018 in Riga. In her view, this cultural event was not an isolated phenomenon, but more like a mirror of the consequences of the broader social, economic and eco-logical context. The atmosphere of a city ensnared between a forlorn past, the dreamy, melancholic severity of the present and the insecurity of the future, is becoming a parable of festival's theme, toying with the interdependence between a natural world shaping humankind and a humankind shaping nature.

Krista Burāne, director of the *Homo Novus International Festival of Contemporary Theatre*, which takes place in Riga, Latvia, describes the theme as humankind in nature and nature in humankind, and the question of what remains in nature when humankind disappears. The day after I arrived I set off in the direction of the Eduards Smiļģis Theatre Museum, one of the festival venues, where I was to pick up a map of a route on which the locations of four site-specific audio installations by the British artist Jon Law entitled *Terrain Vague* were located. These

works were created by Law during a residency with Magic Carpets in Riga and dealt with the neglected details of public space. For *Terrain Vague*, he selected four architectural structures. Three of these involved the remains of buildings without any practical or aesthetic function, which now played host to an audio composition intended to reconnect festival visitors and random passersby with the otherwise overlooked locations in public space. The installations were set at some distance from each other, and so when the listener moved between them they came into close contact with an urban landscape that (as I discovered) came across as derelict, both during the day and at night. This is mainly due to the fact that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Latvia's entry into the European Union and during the subsequent economic crisis, the country's population dropped considerably, resulting in a huge number of abandoned places and buildings: in Riga this is true of around a third of all buildings. Although Jon Law's installations reacted to places that had been abandoned for far longer, moving between them made one painfully aware of a pressing problem (albeit attractive to the viewer) the city currently faces. In the evening, Law combined all of the sound compositions into one as part of a concert at the Eduards Smiļģis Theatre Museum. And so here, as the day drew to a close, all the visitors to *Terrain Vague* came together for a moment.

The problem of a depopulating city was dealt with by two other projects mounted at the festival as part of the Magic Carpets platform, namely a staging of *Leap Second* by the Latvian artists Māry Gaņģe and Kate Krolle, and the

installation *My Heart is a Void. The Void is a Mirror – Riga Episode* by the Italian artist Gian Maria Tosatti. The project *Leap Second* took place in the premises of a former publishing company in Balasta dambis Street, in a closed, high-rise building, whose spacious ground floor, basement and inner courtyard now operate as a second-hand furniture store. This space served the artists as the *mise en scène* for a surprisingly narrational production examining the relationship of humankind to time, temporality and life expectancy.



Image photo of *Homo Novus* festival 2018, photo: Kate Krolle.

Time was also the theme of *My Heart is a Void. The Void is a Mirror*, which took place in the now closed down Boļševička textile factory. In his immersive installation, Tosatti invited the viewer to look behind "Europe's well maintained facade" and posed questions relating to the contemporary state of our civilisation. In his programme notes the artist wrote: "Europe is typically perceived as a confederation of states in peace and prosperity. The truth is quite different... The continent still experiences, and is perhaps culturally disposed for war, ethnic cleansing and the destruction of cities. Is the delicate historical passage through which we are currently travelling simply a trauma or an opportunity? Is it the funeral of our civilization or its rebirth?" The possibility is held out of an optimistic response. The installation itself, located in a multi-storey abandoned factory, was visited by viewers one by one (literally – you could not enter until the person before you had come out), and was post-apocalyptic in character. The viewer walks past the porter's lodge to find a television behind a drawn curtain. Sliced apples are drying on storage heaters and the porter is asleep on an ottoman, his head to the wall. The viewer then walks up a staircase into a corridor on the first floor and passes through the former offices now bedsits housing entire families of immigrants. The viewer then sees the remains of breakfast on the table, a book that someone is reading, an open cupboard, clothes being sewn, homework being done... And yet there is no one here, something doesn't add up. The tea in the teapot has mould on it. It's the same in all the little households. How long has it been since the oc-



an economic crisis, and the organisers abide by this principle to this day. Riga has only five state theatre buildings, one opera house and two independent stages, i.e. nothing to write home about. And so theatre artists often resort to local galleries and museums (some of which feature a white cube or larger open spaces), the black box in the Latvijas Kultūras Akadēmija, and the multifunctional premises at RISEBA University. Artists appearing at the festival then seek out alternative spaces, often in derelict buildings.

The festival's creative directors place great emphasis on the overlaps between contemporary theatre, performance and artistic activism, and the festival forms a kind of experimental base for young artists in Riga. The artists who present their work here often have training in the visual arts and cre-

ate projects that could, for the most part, be characterised as visual theatre or theatre installations. This is the main reason why Homo Novus has entered into a partnership with the platform Magic Carpets.

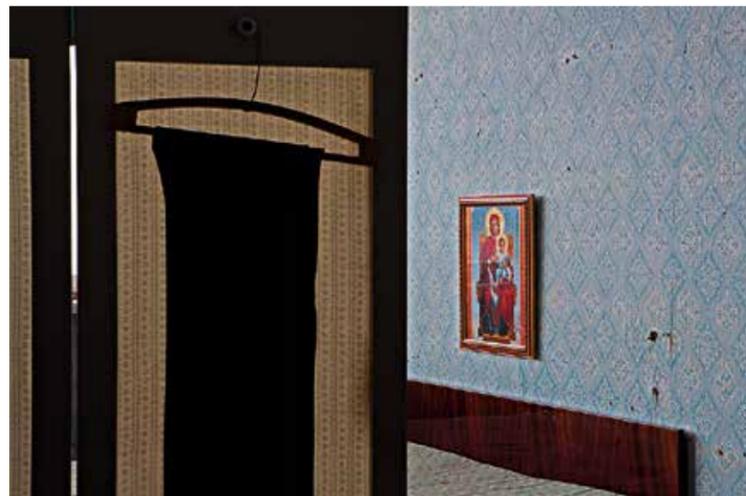
cupants left? Why did they not return? On the floor of the large, glass fronted hall, from which ferns grow, there lies a forgotten, perhaps deserted, white toy animal. The dark corridor leading from the hall and around a corner ends in a small room lit by a fluorescent lamp, where a bareheaded girl sits on a bed with her knees pulled up to her body wearing a white nightdress and watching television. And on the ground floor, beneath a coffered ceiling from which a tangled mess of cotton wool is sticking out, a dead person covered by a blanket is lying connected to instruments. There is a constant tone and a straight line on the monitor. How long does this moment last? Five minutes, an hour, a day or two, a week? Who pulled the deceased person's blanket over their head without switching off the devices they are connected to? The scene contains no hyperbole or any moment of relief. Only the theatrical layout of the installation provides relief and is the only thing allowing the witness of all this to sleep that night. Yet even then their dreams will be filled with the images of the young birches growing there and trying to survive between the two glass walls of the wall of the abandoned textile factory.

Apolena Vanišová is an artist and experimental theatre director.

A similar theme was dealt with in the opera *Unknown Unknown*, a collaboration involving the British composer Oliver Christophe Leith, the Latvian director Viesturs Meikšāns and the German playwright Kornelius Paede. The work reflected upon the transitional period from Anthropocene to post-Anthropocene, offering the viewer a factual, personal and artistic commentary on how civilisation has reached this turning point. The production brought together a number of aggressive video sequences of the contemporary world and long, calm images of the natural landscapes that enhanced the impression of the complex relationship between homo sapiens and nature. The script, based on the sophisticated coexistence of academic music and electronics, a live and artificial voice, interpreted our recent history with cruel irony and insight. The opera was performed in the concert hall Tu jau zini Kur on the grounds of the former car workshop in Tallinn Street which, by the way, is run by the movement Free Riga.

As well as the projects referred to, I also attended a dance performance entitled *Deepspace* inspired by a two-month research trip made by its creator, James Batchelor, to the Antarctic and the marvellous one (wo)man show *MDLSX* by the Italian actress Silvie Calderoni and the Motus ensemble (the Czech public has already had a chance to sample their work at this year's *4+4 Days in Motion* festival). All of these installations and productions, like most of the other projects presented at the festival, took place in venues not originally intended for the presentation of art. The festival began using these premises when Latvia found itself facing

All photos on this page: *My Hear is a Void. The Void is a Mirror*, Riga Episode by Gian Maria Tosatti at Homo Novus festival Riga 2018, photo: Gian Maria Tosatti.



41–42 Engaged Tbilisi Lexa Peroutka

In this account of his visit to the 3rd Tbilisi International Triennial in Georgia (1 October - 1 November 2018, www.cca.ge), Lexa Peroutka attempted not only to present the features specific to Georgia, situated between Europe and Asia and between the post-Soviet legacy and the search for a new place in the modern world, but also the consequences that this position has had for the activities of the local Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA-T), the organisation which organises the triennial. Understanding artistic creativity as an engaged attempt to come to terms with the ever-changing interplay of past and present could be very fruitful in this specific context, albeit a very complex task.

Arriving in Tbilisi is arriving in Asia. Geographically speaking, Georgia lies on the map of Asia, though its modern cultural and social activities and its town planning have a European, nay global, feel to them. However, this contemporary character is shaped (or curbed) by urban concepts of the past (the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union) as well as by the period lacking any concept of town planning after 1991, the period of the neoliberal market, national self-awareness, territorial breakup, political upheaval, and repeated economic boom and bust.

However, this does not mean that the European continent has been the sole driver behind modern developments in Georgia. The country lies in a strategic location as far as global trade is concerned and, in the past, enjoyed contact with dominant powers such as Persia, the Byzantine Empire, the Arab world, the Mongol Empire, the Ottoman Empire and Russia. These days Georgia stands at the trade and political crossroads of the European Union, Russia and China, and this fact influences both its politics and culture in general and its contemporary art in particular. It is also the basis of Georgia's diverse society and its social dialogue. It is impossible to identify the position, ambitions and potential of contemporary Georgian art if these circumstances are not factored in.

At a meeting with Wato Tsereteli, the founder and director of the CCA (Center of Contemporary Art) in Tbilisi, our conversation naturally gravitated to questions surrounding the identity of Georgia. However much Georgia may have its political aspirations focused on Europe and whatever the origin of the Georgian language, Tsereteli defines himself as a non-European. After his return to Georgia in 2005, Tsereteli created or initiated several educational and artistic organisations (e.g. the CCCD/Caucasian Center of Cultural Development, the Cumbo group, etc.), which replaced non-existent or dysfunctional state institutions. What might seem like a handicap was in fact an advantage if we deem freedom and ethics to lie at the heart of art and education. The state authorities began to take a more constructive interest in the activities of CCA Tbilisi.

The central idea of the last such initiative in the sphere of art education, namely the Center for Contemporary Art (CCA Tbilisi), founded in 2010, is *creative mediation*. CCA Tbilisi is a flexible, politically independent institution open to all mature personalities for further artistic research. It is therefore a *parallel grassroots* organisation of contemporary art that, as well as its educational modules spread over a nine-month cycle, since 2012 has been organising a regular Triennial in Tbilisi with a strong foreign component. The CCA



Nino Chubinishvili, 2018, installation view, Tbilisi, photo: Lexa Peroutka.

lays an emphasis on direct contact with social reality and environment, as well as community oriented work and research (a good example would be the programme Field Academy).

The aim of the CCA is not to undertake traditional art practice and create artefacts, but to encourage social innovation using the resources of contemporary art. The modern history of Georgia in an ever-changing global environment simply serves to consolidate this function and form.

The position of Georgia on the edge of the Euro-Atlantic space and its anchorage in Euro-Asia makes it the ideal place in the modern world for meetings and dialogue, as well as conflicts and new solutions. Georgia is part of a broader world that still speaks a language we understand well, and yet it can also access and has an experience of other concepts that we Europeans have lost touch with spatially, culturally and politically.

Alumni of the CCA are now involved in the creation and organisation of the contemporary art scene in Tbilisi and Georgia. Their projects include the artistic residency Block21 in the post-industrial environment of the city of Rustavi not far from Tbilisi, the future multimedia gallery in the upper floor of the concrete techno club *Khidi* in Tbilisi, and many others. These days, the CCA does not have its own premises but is a *nomadic* institution. It avails itself of the capacities of other institutions, e.g. the Fabrika multifunctional cultural space, an important meeting place for artists and other cultural and art projects in Tbilisi, the

premises of the redesigned Soviet factory Stamba, and many other premises.

The 3rd Tbilisi International Triennial 2018 ended with an exhibition by the artist Chubika (Nino Chubinishvili) entitled *5th Room Correction of Mistakes* in the tower of the monumental Stalinist building housing the Academy of Sciences. This building is located in the city's administrative centre on Rustaveli Street on the edge of developments dating back to the turn of the 19th and 20 centuries, with extensions made during the transformation period after the fall of the USSR. The Soviet city planning was replaced by a new economic system and the city thus acquired another historical stratum that represents a wild continuation of older strata. The tower is defined by a long, walk-through spiral with exits to different floors of the building and is extended by a staircase to two independent floors with a glorious view over the city. It is completed with a metal ladder to the less accessible, high-altitude passages of the building.

For her sculptural installation, Chubika availed herself of all the floors of the tower, including its basement space.

The uninhabited and derelict interiors were cleaned out and transformed into a stage inhabited by unidentifiable beings making reference to the archetypes of older cultures. The highest accessible floor housed the largest archetypal sculpture which was in contact with two five-metre crimson curtains billowing over the city. Archetypal creatures inhabited these forgotten interiors and imbued them with new, temporary meanings to replace those they had lost with the political and economic transformation. This is in effect a reference to the current state of a transformed society struggling to keep its balance and find its position in the modern world. Chubika used archetypal cultural motifs and intermediaries for communication with the Stalinist architecture, which remains a predominant feature of Tbilisi even after the turbulent changes of the last few decades.

The artist's sculptural works represented an intervention in a predefined architectural whole that is now more of a static landmark in the city centre alongside many other monumental administrative buildings dating back to the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. However, even today this architecture continues to define our perception of the dimension and function of the city, its modern layout and the activities of its current inhabitants, including the contemporary art scene.

LEXA

How did you arrive at sculptural forms on the interface of fashion and sculpture?

CHUBIKA

I created a work in both fashion and stage design. Fashion as I see it represents another reality, for instance a psychological reality. These archetypal forms arose spontaneously without any prior intention. I don't create a primary concept or even a creative outline. While working I enter an unknown environment that begins to communicate with me and answer the questions I ask



Nino Chubinishvili, 2018, installation view, Tbilisi, photo: Lexa Peroutka.

of it. It might be a collective unconscious. My work can be interpreted against the backdrop of a cultural unconscious inhabited by transient forms.

The author would like to thank Marika Jabua, Mery Tatarashvili, Wato Tsereteli and others from CCA Tbilisi.

Lexa Peroutka is a visual artist, curator and writer focused on critical art practices.

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Magic Carpets year #1 | 2018 Interview with Grossi Maglioni Giulia Pardini

GIULIA PARDINI

Francesca and Vera, you were invited to a residence in the city of Novi Sad by the Serbian partner Novo Kulturno Naseleje as part of the Magic Carpets platform. What was your first impression of Serbia? Tell us what your experience of this journey was like.

GROSSI MAGLIONI

In Serbia, we found very rich imagery, different from ours, with epic stories and mythologies often having to do with war and sacrifice, and an art historical scene related to interesting performances which we knew very little about. We were immediately enthralled by Novi Sad's urban landscape, which shows traces of the conflict and a community that has developed around unique rules of coexistence. The appropriation of public space seems to be happening slowly and the green hills that hide the many atomic shelters are silently part of the territory and common areas between residential buildings. For us, this was a chance to explore the need to look for a dialogue existing between citizens and the landscape and to elaborate on some traumatic aspects of recent history.

GP

Can you tell us about the project you worked on during the residence called *Occupazioni: Il Dialogo Perenne* (The Perpetual Dialogue)?

GM

Occupazioni is a project we started in 2015. It revolved around an installation made of ropes and curtains which had been modified many times. With the help of the public, through workshops and roundtable discussions, we explored the body's ability to occupy space and live in a community. Starting from the scenarios that arose in the installation, we wrote a story of a child that grows until the moment he/she meets other people to build a new village with.

The final chapter of *Occupazioni*, in Serbia, took place under a tent that we called *Tenda del Dialogo Perenne* (Tent of The Perpetual Dialogue), installed in a public space in the neighbourhood of Novo Naseleje in Novi Sad. We worked on rewriting the story with people from the area, in a sort of staging of the narration in its making. With a series of meeting-assemblies, we discussed themes like: the figure of the mother/beast, the creation of the landscape through a "magical body" and memory/the atomic shelter.

GP

Building a village, with carpets and curtains, inviting the public to take part, involves a willingness to discuss and an invitation to dialogue. How do you deal with these two elements in your artistic practice and in this work in particular? How was the work with the Novi Sad community carried out?

GM

We work in a duo, and this has naturally affected all of our works. Dialogue is necessarily at the base of the work, and this aspect has been coming out more and more over the years. From the beginning, with the performances, we sought out forms of interaction with the public, to overcome the frontal nature of the theatre and any ambiguity and reference to it. We wanted to get feedback, responses from the public that would determine the work's progress. With the passing of time, this quest for dialogue has been increasingly aimed at the definition of meanings and the construction



Grossi Maglioni, *Dialogues in movement*, final presentation day/meeting with woman from the neighborhood, 2018, Novi Sad, photo: Vojin Ivkov, Courtesy Novo Kulturno Naseleje of imageries, like we tried to do in Novi Sad. Our attention is on dialogue, in its making, on imageries and meanings that are not crystallised, that change and become history. So *Occupazioni: il Dialogo Perenne* is linked to the idea that community, as such, exists as a process.

GP

You are artists and mothers. In this large project, one can also sense a strong interest towards women, as the cornerstone of society: can you tell us about the mother figure within this project?

GM

In 2015, we worked on the first tent for *Occupazioni* at a residence where we brought Francesca's first child with us, at just 3 months old. On that occasion, we felt the need to build a caring tent that could welcome and celebrate this birth. It was the first time we shared this aspect of our lives at work.

We are exploring the prospect of being artists and mothers in an art system and society that excludes, confines and marginalises them at work, as if this experience takes something away instead of adding something. We have to struggle with ourselves as well to not cede to this thought. At the same time, we are forced into an imagery that refutes the most fearsome and bestial aspects of women and mothers. Aspects we wanted to explore as social functions of mediation with the other, in this case expressed in the relationship with one's own child.

Giulia Pardini is Magic Carpets' Emerging Curator on behalf of Latitudo s.r.l.

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Magic Carpets year #2 | 2018–2019
An Interview with Virginia Zanetti
Giulia Pardini



Virginia Zanetti's artistic process with the embroiders artisans from Oficina, 2019, photo courtesy Virginia Zanetti.

GIULIA PARDINI
 Magic Carpets partner Ideias Emergentes' suggested theme for your residence was memory in textile. How did you approach this?

VIRGINIA ZANETTI
 I considered the theme of memory from both a recent and historical perspective, generally. When I approach a new project, I try to stay open and listen, collecting lots of inspiration and information from people and places. I researched local history by visiting places of artistic and cultural value, and I tried to capture images of the collective subconscious. Both methodologies led me to choose materials and techniques already shared by the community. To create the work, I chose to use natural linen, combined with traditional Guimarães hand embroidery. The former was cultivated in the past by families and then became an industrial and exported product, and the second is the pride of local craftsmanship. I decided to embroider textile memories into fabric in the form of text, creating a short circuit with the etymology of the word text. Then I tried to give shape to the most storied iconographic vision of the country: the caravel, a strong symbol for the birth of Portugal as a nation in col-

lective memory. In my project, this ship, invented to sail even in unkind winds and a metaphor for exploration and overcoming limits and crises, became an expedient to creating multi-level collective action.

GP
 You live in Prato, famously linked to the textile sector: Guimarães, the city that hosted you for this residence, has a long history in the textile sector. Did you find a link and some correspondence between the two cities?

VZ
 I found many similarities with Prato: both cities were founded near a river, in a rural area, where the economy has changed from family-level to mechanical industrial production. They were both hit by the 2008 crisis, which led to the closure of several businesses, leaving Chinese companies responsible for businesses they speculated on. Other companies have reinvented themselves by moving toward computerization and innovation. Capitalism and, before, colonialism, with their exploitation of human and environmental resources, are the effects of human greed, and inevitably lead to a state of crisis that must be overcome in order to reimagine what is real.

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GP
 Your residence project involved a performance featuring elderly people from two nursing homes in Santa Casa da Misericórdia, some of whom had worked in fabric factories in the past. What can you tell us about the performance?

VZ
 The project included several workshops and performances, culminating in a final action: supporting two sails in the wind at the highest point where you can see the city and the hori-



Artistic process of Virginia Zanetti for the collective performance in Serra da Penha with the community of Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Guimarães & embroiders artisans from Oficina, 2019, photo: Mindaugas Drigotas - Nanook, Courtesy Ideias Emergentes.

zon and imagine the sea. I started in the two nursing homes, where I chose a room to weave a personal dialogue, where each person wrote a memory in one sentence. Then I found a public space where I spent ten days in a row embroidering the sentences on two sails with other women: on one sail, on the other, we transcribed the memories, maintaining the same handwriting for each one. The final part was to build and support the sails in the wind. The initial idea was to bring elderly people out of the nursing home, together with others, to take a little trip, but I had to alter the project to protect

them from the wind and cold. So, there were two parts: one in the garden of the nursing home and one on top of Pehna Mountain. There, the cold and wind were very harsh and the performance because a real act of resistance and challenge to the storm. The first sail had *Para onde estamos indo?*, embroidered in blue and various symbols of natural elements, followed by the second sail, with the community's memories embroidered in grey.

GP
 You've had the opportunity to work with elderly people, especially those affected by Alzheimer's, in the past. I'm thinking of your project, "Muri", at the Palazzo Strozzi Foundation in Florence in 2017. What role does memory play in your work?

VZ
 Memory is a key aspect to understanding human beings. I'm interested in investigating collective and personal memory. By caring for and being conscious of memory, we can live better in the present and imagine our future. There is definitely a strong autobiographical component in the work I did with the Alzheimer's patients for Palazzo Strozzi, and in the project Save Delete, which examined the phenomenon of the removal and deletion of memory, done with a group of minorities.

GP
 Will the research you started in Guimarães have any further development, in Italy for example?

VZ
 The project I've started will definitely be developed further. Each one of my projects comes out of the previous ones. Considering that I am in Italy now and that a month is a very short time to complete research, the project will continue to take form here.

Giulia Pardini is Magic Carpets' Emerging Curator on behalf of Latitudo s.r.l.

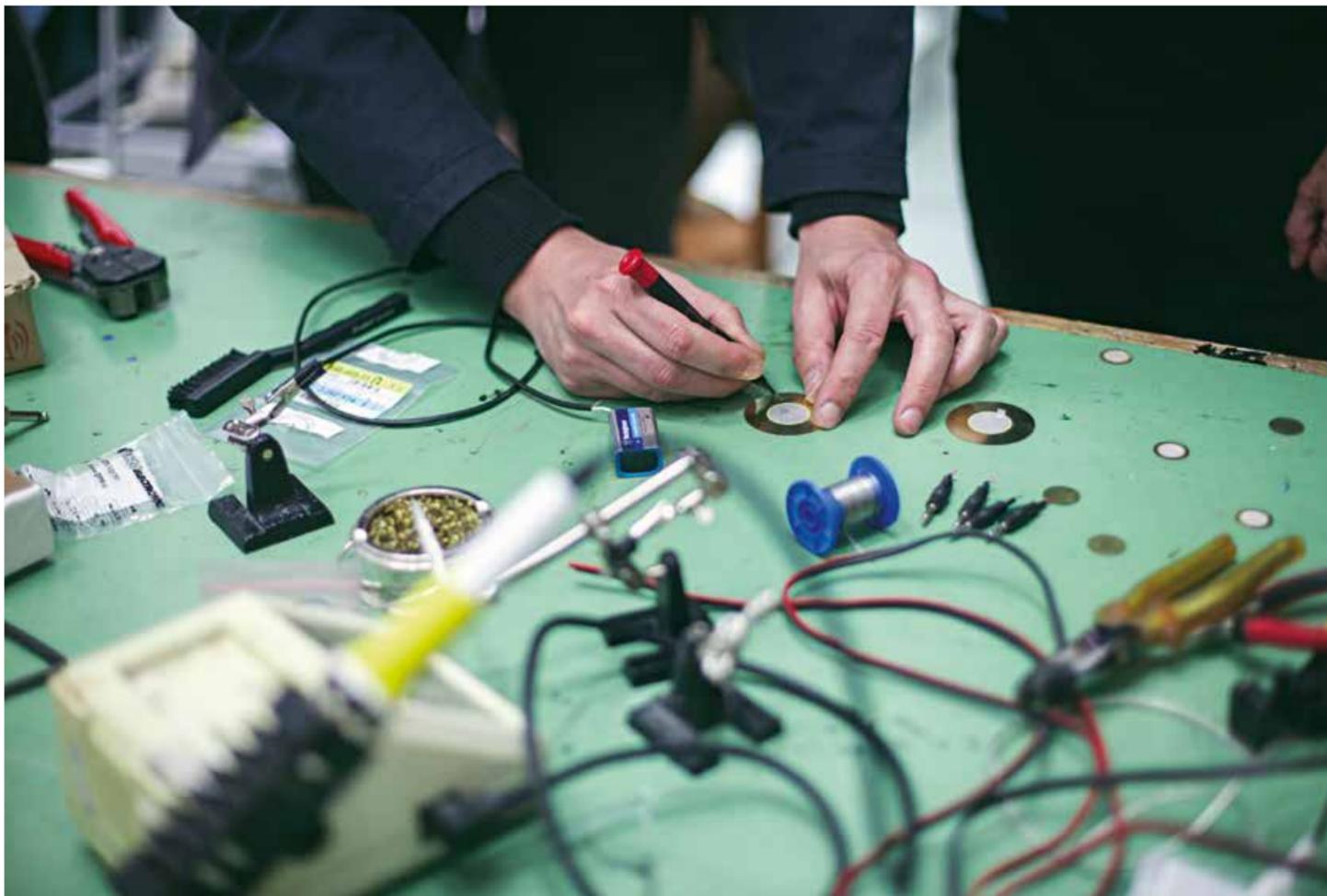


Virginia Zanetti, *Para onde estamos indo? / Where are we going?*, collective performance with the community of Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Guimarães & embroiders artisans from Oficina, in Serra da Penha Guimarães, 2019. Photo courtesy Virginia Zanetti.

Searching for the City's Sound in a Postcard

Interview with Jiří Suchánek and Danijela Oberhofer Tonković

Monika Svobodová



Jiří Suchánek, *Sonic map of the City*, workshop, Innsbruck, 2019, photo: Natália Zajačiková.

Jiří Suchánek is known for his creative manipulation of sound and light, which he uses as information bearers or data generators. He creates very particular installations and objects, often of a highly interactive nature. Movement and space play an important role in his works. All these physical phenomena are connected and run through various technical interfaces to their final form, most often playful “inventions”, but not only that. For an example of Jiří Suchánek’s many layers, let us look to the ATOM TONE project (music as a chemical reaction. Atomic music), within which Suchánek uses spectroscopy to transfer the properties of the electromagnetic waves of each atomic element into a specific sound.

In May and June of this year, Suchánek was one of the two resident sound artists at the Austrian platform for creative work on the boundaries of art and design, openspace. Innsbruck. The residency, *Sonic Worlds of Between*, was curated by Danijela Oberhofer Tonković. Suchánek was institutionally recommended by the Prague Biennale Foundation. The second participant was Mika Motskobili a.k.a. Vo Enz, from Georgia, recommended by the Georgian Centre for Contemporary Art. The residency took place as part of the Magic Carpets 2019 European project. Its aim was to

connect institutions and curators, and also, as the name suggests (let us remember the tales of the Thousand and One Nights and the magical mode of transport), to support artists’ travel to various parts of Europe. The selected artists should ideally work with the specific social and political context of the given location, aiming for a synthesis between the local and the international.

MONIKA SVOBODOVÁ

You both have many experiences with placements and residencies. Do you still consider them beneficial? Is “residency tourism” compatible with family life? If the artist is to be successful today, must they be a residency nomad?

JIŘÍ SUCHÁNEK

Only very few residencies are conceived as family-friendly – everything is directed at solitary artists with no commitments... I have a six-year-old daughter who’s going to school this year, so until now, she could always easily visit me. But I have to approach residencies as shorter or interrupted, or I just take my family along and subsidise it. But in reality, there haven’t been that many residencies – there were many more concerts, conferences, exhibitions. All these are short-term

affairs; it’s not difficult to arrange these with family life. For me, residencies are one of the few ways to concentrate purely on work, without the constant interruptions of the usual hustle and bustle of city life. Temporarily clearing my head, changing my environment, acquiring new contacts.

DANIJELA OBERHOFER TONKOVIĆ

Nomadism is nothing new in the art world. Nowadays, by using various support and promotion structures, artists are more nomadic than ever before. All of us who are working internationally, between and across the borders, have become a species of nomad. But, in fact, it’s in our DNA. I see that as a blessing.

MS

Did you ever address the ecological impact of frequent travel? Is this a frequent topic among internationally working artists and curators?

JS

Of course it’s a huge topic. Today, it’s tough being an artist without travelling – also because of concerts, presentations, exhibitions, but especially because of self-education. The internet is not enough. I didn’t quite go in that direction, but I know a number of people who are true artistic nomads – they don’t really even have a home, they just move from one place on the planet to another. My base is in Brno, and I (usually) like going back there. Choosing how to get somewhere – and whether to go at all – is up to everyone’s personal responsibility. It’s a dilemma. Being a global artist without air travel is practically unrealistic. Overall, however, I don’t think reducing activities is a solution – rather a gradual, quick and thorough adjustment of the means we use on a daily basis and a reduction of superfluities...

DOT

I actually haven’t done any intensive thinking about this before. But we are already going the right way as much as we can – for instance, by choosing train over air travel if the destination is relatively close. Jiří, for example, did not travel by plane, instead using the railroad and finally his car, which he combined with his vacations in the nearby Alps. At the same time, in our Magic Carpets artist pool, we have local artists who simply prefer trains (not traveling by airplanes at all) and residencies that are geographically closer or inclined to accept such a way of thinking.

MS

Danijela, why did you choose Jiří and Mika for the residency?

DOT

First of all, Mika and Jiří really fit into this year’s context and we needed artists for the residency in Innsbruck that work within the territories of sound and media, science, technology and society – feeling equally at home in all these fields. I very much liked their trans-disciplinary approach and the multilayered work they are doing. I also enjoyed our process of communication. Their ways of reflecting their surroundings, how they engage with society, and how both of them have this special, almost subtle, sense for (public) space made both of us – Charly Walter, the director of the openspace, and me – very positively curious.

MS

And why did you choose the subtitle *Sonic Worlds of Between*?

DOT

The original title I came up with was in German – “Klangwelten des Dazwischen”. “Sonic Worlds of the Between” is the translation that my colleague Marco and I liked the most. In our Magic Carpets journey, openspace strives to find, fill,

feel or point at spaces “in between” (diverse spaces – dysfunctional, forgotten, not well used, or not seen, beautiful, ours) and try to vitalize them, to increase their visibility, relevance, or beauty – by, for example, representing possible alternative realities. Detecting (new or existing) potentials and setting them up in a way that tells a story about the city (social, political, historical, etc.). We decided to utilise sound as a primary medium of artistic expression and for discovering the potentials of the audibility (of our surroundings) in this year’s project.



Jiří Suchánek, *OR-bits*, Innsbruck 2019, photo: Natália Zajačiková.

MS

Jiří, what works did you create and present in Innsbruck?

JS

I created a brand new interactive installation: *OR-bits*. It’s an object or instrument which uses a light pendulum moving above photo-sensors to play back (in a strange manner) field recordings from Innsbruck which we made during a workshop. Whenever the light goes by the sensor, it triggers the recording. Compared to what is usually understood by field recording, which, as a genre, is defined and anchored primarily in deep (and slow) listening and the context of acoustic ecology, this approach brought about quite a radical deconstruction of the material and an unexpected wildness that came out of the mosaic of recordings. I spent most of my energy on this project, and to be honest, I barely finished in time. It’s a beta-version and we’re certainly planning an after-life.

The second project was an electroacoustic composition for an 18-channel sound system placed among the trees in front of the Haus der Musik (incidentally, the building was nominated for the Mies van der Rohe Award). This was an absolutely wonderful occasion to create a sonic space in such an exclusive environment. Three old trees – pine, oak and



Mika Motzkobili, *Liminal Protocols*, Innsbruck 2019, photo: Natália Zajačiková.

beechness – in front of the glass-ceramic facade which mirrored the snowy peaks and old stone sculptures. The entire system was installed by the Klangbaume group, and I had three days for my sonic hallucinations during the Heart of Noise Festival.

And as a third piece, I brought an older installation, Pulse33 (synchronised lights and sounds generated in Max/MSP), which I also presented as part of the Heart of Noise Festival – it ran continuously in the Haus der Musik foyer.

MS
Do you believe that the synthesis between local and international mentioned above took place?

JS
It happens automatically, at least at the level of relationships and various forms of collaboration. As for the resultant work, I originally did not intend to weave this into it, because to comment – as a “foreigner” – on the context and situation in a city I barely know seemed imprecise. In a new environment, you have the ability to see the situation in an unburdened way, out of context, and you can notice many things the locals miss, but you also struggle to fully understand the local developments. Innsbruck seemed too perfect to me – a living postcard. So I started gravitating towards the dark side of the city and I tried to get this onto the recordings. And – somewhat unexpectedly – personal testimonies from people in Innsbruck also made it in, with selected words and sentences creating new meanings.

DOT
Definitely yes, in so many ways. One of the most important purposes of openspace within the Magic Carpets project is to create a network and merge the local and the international in multiple ways: artists, cultural organizations, institutions, knowledge, and audiences. So, in this year’s project – international artists were organically and very intensely connected to the local art scene (through the processes of collaboration, co-creation, co-working, and exchange) – especially with the local artist and scientist Johannes Payer (a.k.a. ludwig technique) and the artisan Christian Schwarzer. They also merged nicely with the local supporting network we offered, consisting of diverse local organisations from the field of culture, media, community, as well as diverse creative

centres, technology centres and entrepreneurial ecosystems (PMK, Spiellokal für Alle, Fablab, Heart of Noise, Hackerspace – IT Syndikat, Verschubu, Klangspuren, Werkstatt Wattens etc). Our three local artists, from our Austrian Magic Carpets pool, went on international residencies in 2019, experiencing a similar joy abroad.

MS
Within those few weeks, Jiří was very active as a resident, taking part in the Heart of Noise Festival, presenting installations, teaching workshops... It sounds like an enormous amount of work. Was it a coincidence, or is this the standard in European residencies?

DOT
As residency coordinators and curators, we try to provide the artist with information, topics, context. I try to indicate some importance and relevance and suggest a methodology. Openspace provides the framework, but we see our cooperation with the artist, and the artist’s intervention itself, as an open process which can deliver a variety of outputs. This time we had this opportunity to experience Jiří, and he was almost unstoppable in creating and launching ideas – he developed and implemented three of them. It was probably an intense time for him – but also a very beautiful and natural embrace. He knew what he should and could do.

We created a very good network of partner organisations (such as openspace, Heart of Noise, Hackerspace – IT-Syndikat, Fablab, Modular Music Academy, Spiellokal für Alle, Werkstatt Wattens, Wiltener Kultursommer, Haus der Musik etc.) which complemented each other perfectly and, as such, represented an extremely fruitful and creative basis for the selected artists and their work on the interface between sound, society, and technology (science). I imagine that this is very fertile ground for creating and implementing artistic ideas.

Monika Svobodová is an editor of artview section, art writer.



ludwig technique and Christian Schwarzer, *Transmographon* - final presentation of *Sonic Worlds of the Between*, Innsbruck 2019, photo: Natália Zajačiková.

Magic Carpets year #2 | 2018–2019

An Interview with Elena Mazzi

Giulia Pardini

GIULIA PARDINI

Elena, you were invited to participate in a residence in Berlin at the ZK/U as part of the Magic Carpets platform. Can you tell us about the theme that was suggested to you and about your research?



Detail of the work in process of Elena Mazzi, artist in Magic Carpets residency, 2019, ZK/U Berlin, photo: Mindaugas Drigotas - Nanook.

ELENA MAZZI

ZK/U invited me to carry out a reflection on practices of sharing and support within the cultural sector, mainly in the Berlin area. I found this project on the artistic community to be of fundamental importance, especially in a city that focuses greatly on cultural openness and artistic offerings. Not surprisingly, the community of cultural workers in the city is international and varied.

Already interested in the topic for obvious personal reasons, I decided to collect a series of documents already published on the topic with the help of Lotta Schäfer, the curator of ZK/U. At the same time, I started to interview cultural workers in Berlin (artists, curators, event organisers, directors of small and medium institutions, activists and managers of non-profit spaces), asking them how they were able to manage their financial situation, and what difficulties they encountered along the way.

GP
During your research in Berlin, you focused on the relationship between contemporary artist – work/ minimum wage. What did you understand from this research?

EM
Above all, I aimed for an inclusive perspective that went beyond the city of Berlin, comparing methodologies and possibilities to understand how to work best. What I found is that, unfortunately, there are difficulties present in almost all European countries and elsewhere, although in different ways. During the months of my research, I was particularly struck by the fact that cultural workers themselves lacked awareness and were ignorant of possibilities and their own rights. Thus, they accept unfavourable proposals and contribute to the poor management of the cultural sector. I decided to tackle this first hurdle by doing a practical exercise during the final workshop, where participants were encouraged to reflect on the management of their time, both real and ideal, and compare the two.

GP

From your point of view as a young artist who works in Italy but has had several work experiences abroad, how are artists treated professionally in Italy? Do you think the Italian situation is in line with what’s happening in the rest of Europe?

EM

The situation in Italy is pretty dramatic, but it’s not necessarily worse than other countries in Europe. During the workshop, we gave participants from around the world a small anonymous survey. Although the sample size was limited, it confirmed what I had seen in other statistics in my research: artists often do not break even minimally with the production costs of their work, nor do they often receive compensation for the exhibits they create, nor are they always reimbursed for expenses like the work’s travel, transport and setup. I think it’s necessary to rethink this working structure, which puts the artist in the condition of accepting any offer without any kind of critical reflection, personal or collective. Mostly I think we need to rethink the role of the artist in contemporary society. They are often not considered active subjects, but rather time wasters who would conduct their artistic activities for passion or personal need regardless of the compensation received. These are truthful conditions, but must be recognised by society as characteristics intrinsic to artistic practice, to be safeguarded and supported with cultural policies that are conscious of the fact that the artist is a professional, and not a hobbyist.

GP
During this research, did you have the opportunity to work with groups located in Berlin? What was the response from them?

EM
Two months isn’t a very long time to do research in an unknown place. The response has been active and interesting, although I didn’t manage to map out all the situations I would have liked, mainly because of time constraints. I would have liked more of an exchange with the group of activists that won the The Berlin Fact Finding Committee, in residence at ZK/U, who were working on the same themes in those months but weren’t as active as proposed.

GP
Do you foresee further development on the research you started at the ZK/U in collaboration with working groups in Italy?

EM
I’m doing this research out of personal interest, and the exchange with colleagues in Italy is more frequent within circles of friends. I would like there to be more debate and dialogue about this. Actually, many artists and workers are hesitant to talk about it, and I think this comes from a sort of shame in dealing with financial topics, as there has historically been in the cultural field. But, with a typically Italian attitude, it’s easy to complain. I think we should all commit ourselves to legally working on our rights and on the possibilities provided to us, without shame. Only in this way, starting to refuse unfavourable situations that are degrading to our work, can we improve our status. Let’s learn to say no.

Giulia Pardini is Magic Carpets’ Emerging Curator on behalf of Latitudo s.r.l.

Images from Slon, Bucharest and Roşia Montană

written by Viktor Čech and Michal Kindernay

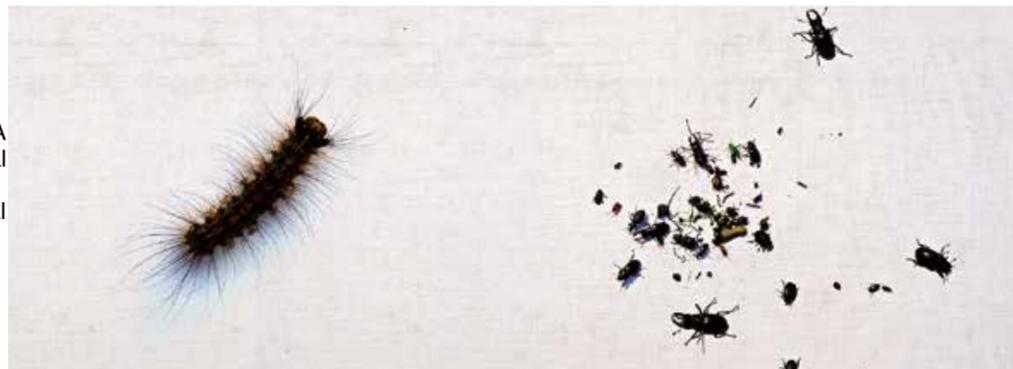
Michal Kindernay spent his creative residency as part of the project Magic Carpets in the idyllic Romanian countryside in and around the village of Slon. His residency was part of the local META Cultural Foundation. The artist's personal impressions, featured in this text, reveal something both fundamental and general regarding contemporary society's relationship to and distance from the natural and cultural context of the traditional landscape and life within it.

"Slon is a small village in the Prahova Valley. I climb up a muddy path with a deep channel through which Larisa Crunţeanu, a co-resident and Romanian artist who now lives in Warsaw, will climb in a few days' time. I climb up beautiful, aromatic, wet mud, along a path surrounded by lush meadows with freely grazing horses, mountains in shades of green, grey and blue, I climb beyond the entrenched images I had of Romania".

However, as part of this visual research into the local environment on the basis of which he created his videos, Kindernay gradually zoomed in on the microcosmic environment of insects. This pervasive structure, concealed beneath the routine of the human quotidian, became a parable of the surrounding macro-world and the existential implacability of the degradation of social structures.

"I return to the hills every day for three weeks. I am greeted by shepherds and gypsies who are bringing wood from the mountains. They speak Romanian to me even though I do not understand. I listen to the daily sounds of solitary trees, whipped by the wind in winter and burnt by the sun in summer, I listen to the sounds of the grass, cicadas, crickets and horses, cows and sheep, birds and stray dogs. I listen to the echoes of the encrypted calls of gypsy wanderers from the hills far into the village in the valley and the responses they receive."

Here the romantic cliché of escaping from civilisation to an unspoiled and authentic rural landscape in Eastern Europe forms the backdrop against which the author observes the social, environmental and biological structures that point to the irreversible breakdown and chaos of the ecological and social order on both a micro and macro level.



Michal Kindernay, from photo series *Images from Slon, Bucharest and Roşia Montană*, 2018.

"At dawn, at noon, in the evening, the shadows on the left or right side of a centuries-old well in the countryside, in the overwhelming heat, in the rain, in storms... I film this landscape. Every day at the same time the cows return home, one after another, along a winding path. As dusk falls I too return home, accompanied by the baroque clouds of the largest studio in the world".

The theme here is not that which the traditional anthropocentric narrative would suggest, but represents a far more nuanced view of the situation under investigation. The insect, part of an otherwise inseparably interconnected natural process, is presented in the video as a stuffed element rid of its surrounding context. Removed from its functional framework, during the course of the video it gradually submits to the process of entropy.

"A simple, cleansing concept with the clear goal of breathing the nuances of the landscape's movement. Every day I walk to the hills. In a rhythm of alternating legs and arms, in the rhythm of my heart and breath. The native Indians believe that walking on the ground means accepting its energy. They like to walk barefoot, the earth gives them strength. It ignites the collective fire in their hearts, it links them to their ancestors. Only later do I realise that I am walking a path that was once the Roman trade route and formed the border with Transylvania".

In Kindernay's video *Inseccion* this miniature drama associated with the extinction of the artificially deracinated and spoiled fragment of the insect ecosystem is presented in sharp contrast with the intense natural idyll of his primary experience. The extraction, isolation and diversion of this process into the neutral void of the white background holds up a critical mirror to the possibility of any escape from the ecological catastrophe that, by all accounts, is irreversible. Not even the refuge of virgin nature and primitive civilisation will allow for the possibility of forgetting. The ecological and social catastrophe invoked by the artist in chamber form becomes a critical theatrical scene where those responsible, i.e. people, can no longer be actors. The situation has long crossed the humanist model of individual responsibility and become a question appertaining to all of life and death.

Viktor Čech is a curator and art critic.



Michal Kindernay, from the series *Images from Slon, Bucharest and Roşia Montană*, 2018.

51–52

Limerick View – An Interview with Director of EVA, Matt Packer about the 39th EVA International 2020

Tereza Záchová

Matt Packer is the director of EVA- Ireland's Biennial in Limerick. He was the Director CCA Centre For Contemporary Art Derry at Londonderry and he co-curated the Lofoten International Art Festival in the North of Norway. We sat down to ask him a few questions about his long time curatorial practises and the forthcoming Biennial in Limerick.

TEREZA ZÁCHOVÁ

Let's start a little generally. You are the director of EVA International – Ireland's Biennial of Contemporary Art in Limerick and you focus only on commissioned artwork. Could you explain why you have decided to focus on new artwork?

MATT PACKER

We don't solely focus on commissioning. It's only relatively recently that we've introduced initiatives and directives that put a focus on commissioning. This includes our *Platform Commissions* programme - open proposal process for artists based in Ireland to produce new work – which we launched in late 2018. We also commission work through partnerships with other organisations and networks, such as through the Magic Carpets network or through direct collaboration with IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin), for example.

Commissioning is obviously about working closely with artists to bring new ideas into the world and creating opportunities for artistic response within the specific context of Limerick; the process of new work development (and especially site-based work) also becomes socially woven within this context.

TZ: I like your strong statement concerning EVA's vision very much: "To lead in creating experiences and encounters of world-class contemporary art that activate Limerick as a place of creative endeavour and cultural destination". However, don't you think it's problematic for the Biennial that Limerick isn't the capital of Ireland?

MP

I don't agree with the problematic that you describe. Venice, São Paulo, Istanbul, Gwangju – many of the most established biennials do not take place within the capital city of their respective countries, in fact.

A biennial is an opportunity to provide a temporary catalytic framework to a particular context, and in this sense there's some logic in the idea that the biennials are often better suited to contexts where there isn't already a developed artistic infrastructure.

In an Irish context, there have been previous projects that have proposed a biennial type structure in Dublin (ROSC, Dublin Contemporary etc), and I'm sure there will be again.

TZ

How might the psychical spaces of the Biennial invite greater audience engagement and inclusion?

MP

I'm not sure what you mean by psychical spaces? We work across a number of different venues for each edition – some of them institutional partnerships, such as with the Limerick City Gallery of Art and the Hunt Museum, but also a wide variety of ex-industrial and ex-commercial spaces. This approach is partly out of necessity in developing a large-scale



Sanja Ivekovic, *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg*, Croatia, Installation view at EVA 2018, photo Deirdre Power, Courtesy the artist, Casino Luxembourg, MoMa and EVA International.

project that out-scales the exhibition infrastructure in the city, and it's also partly of course about creating encounters of interest to artists and publics. Each edition of the biennial is different, and we're often vulnerable to the whims of the property-development plans in the city in terms of what can be made available to us.

TZ

How does the exhibition of the Biennial integrate to the accompanying programmes for educational projects?

MP

Yes, the educational and public programme is a large part of the biennial programme. It's also something that we're increasingly doing beyond the duration of the biennial itself. A good example is the Better Words project that we developed throughout 2019 (effectively between biennial editions). The project has involved working across five schools in the Limerick region and over 150 school children aged 8 – 12, toward developing an experimental child-led vocabulary for contemporary art and culture. The project developed by thinking through the issue of language that is commonly identified to be a barrier for so much broader public access to contemporary art and yet so important to art's own development. Following the workshop process, which was

completed in May 2019, we are now preparing a publication that will be released in October. Each biennial is also developed with a concurrent programme of talks, seminars and screenings typically designed to extend the thematic of the biennial and particular artists.

TZ

You are also a part of an international project called Magic Carpets. Could you tell me how you integrated with choosing artists to work in the EVA International?

MP

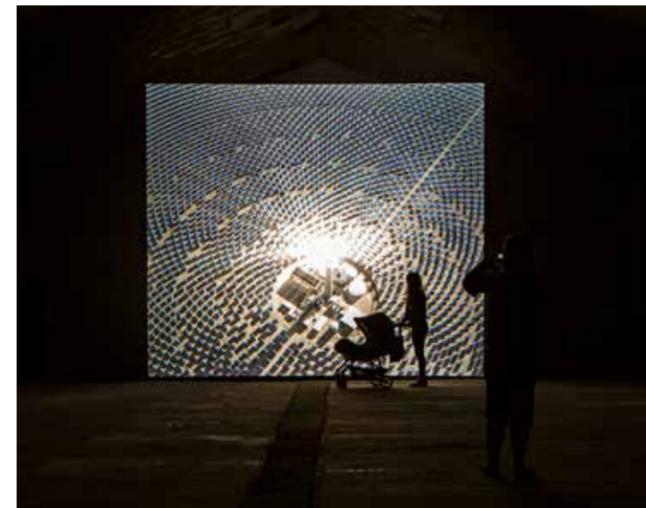
We're used to working through partnership and the different processes that can often be involved in that partnership, so in the case of Magic Carpets it's not so different. Each edition of the biennial is developed through a thematic framework of reference, so we have sought to work with artists through the Magic Carpets network that could extend these ideas in interesting ways consistent with their ongoing research interests.

TZ

As I am well aware, you always invite new young curators from abroad to work in Ireland. For instance, the forthcoming Biennial curator is from Turkey, a totally different context concerning country and culture. What key element do you use to invite young curators or why are you interested in them?

MP

We don't necessarily invite 'young' curators, and many curators in our recent editions have very well established international careers and profiles.



John Gerrard, *Solar Reserve* (Tonopah, Nevada), 2014, Simulation Installation view at EVA International 2018, photo: Deirdre Power Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery, Simon Preston Gallery, and EVA International.

Our programme model has changed ahead of the 39th EVA International so that the appointment of the international curator is one central channel of programme within a broader biennial programme that we've called the 'Guest Programme' (as opposed to it being the *only* channel of programme). It means that there's more we can do directly as an organisation to initiate particular projects and partnerships for artistic and strategic reasons. It also means that the task of the invited curator can be more specified.

I think the important thing is that we use this invitation to open up new lines of international research and network, and also as a way to introduce a curatorial methodology that we're perhaps less familiar with in an Irish context.



Sam Keogh, *Integrated Mystery House*, Installation view at EVA 2018, photo: Deirdre Power, Courtesy the artist and Kerlin Gallery.

TZ

Do you also want to show the problematic threat of fast consumption?

MP

I don't think that there's been an edition of EVA since 1977 that hasn't in some way been critical of consumerism in some form or another! The upcoming 39th EVA International uses the 19th century reference 'Golden Vein' as a reference point.

Golden Vein was coined in the 19th century, prior to Ireland's independence from the United Kingdom. It was a term that was used to identify (and promote) the agricultural bounty of the Limerick region.

The upcoming biennial is not so much using this reference as a premise, but more as a kind of compass-point for a variety of artistic positions and concerns that relate to the environment, land-use, future agriculture and resource exploitation. Any consumerist criticisms that are likely to emerge in the biennial programme are going to relate to these specific ideas and trajectories.

TZ

My last question for you as EVA's director is how would you think now about the environmental threat in regards to the forthcoming Biennial? Would you change anything?

MP

Do you mean that the Biennial itself is a model that produces environmental damage? I think that's true to a certain extent. There's a cliché of biennials being excessive projects where artworks and artists are mobilised across the world, and though I'm reluctant to generalise biennials in this way – I think that we're at a stage where some of the assumptions of international 'best practice' are now being understood as unsustainable if not actively detrimental.

EVA is part of a small network of biennials called 'Occasional Groundworks' with LIAF, GIBCA and Contour. We convened the network precisely because we didn't really feel ourselves reflected in the broader 'biennialization' types of conversation that were really being led by biennials at an entirely different scale of resources. The focus of Occasional Groundworks is precisely to re-think the biennial model, toward sustainability (both economic and environmental) and better ethics of what it means to work internationally.

Thank you Matt for your answers. We are looking forward to the forthcoming Biennial!

Tereza Záchová is an art curator and art educator.

53–54 SURVEY Among Emerging Curators

1. HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE A COMMUNITY?

Sara Dowling

Any community is a collective or gathering of people who share circumstances or a set of similar values in some way. I feel most authentic communities are created specific to place, time, organised or traditional culture, public or common interest.

2. WE ARE LIVING IN DIFFICULT TIMES SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS. DO YOU THINK THAT THIS PROBLEM CAN BE RESPONSIBLY REFLECTED IN THE WORK OF ARTISTS AND IN THE ART-WORLD IN GENERAL?

Sara Dowling

The 39th EVA International is being developed in relation to the "Golden Vein" – a 19th century descriptor encompassing the bountiful Limerick/Tipperary pastures in Midwestern Ireland. Industrial agricultural production, commercialisation and global trade have all heavily affected this area and the industries it has included. The Golden Vein is in essence a starting point for ideas of land, and its contested values in Ireland today.

Karmen Krasić Kožul

Artists that I'm in contact with are all extremely aware and responsible humans and professionals. But I'm afraid that's not enough. I think we have reached the point when we need a revolutionary approach, and I don't see this among artists. But I do see their transformative power and I feel their pain and frustration about these issues.

Marko Jozic & Tatjana Mateša

If responsibly means this threat is being taken into consideration not only in our home, legislated by state law and is transferred from topics "to talk about" into everyday action – then art should not be different than other fields. I don't think it's a question of whether or not the environmental challenge can be addressed through art. If it were, we'd tremendously reduce the significance and urgency of the existence of this life threatening problem. Of course, this also must be addressed through art, especially when it comes to the usage of materials. It's also very important to consider the events where art pieces are presented (or even when the art piece is the event itself). There are many opportunities to stress this subject through various sub-levels. Even

though ecology might not be the focus point of the artist, it has to be included in the atmosphere of the events that present them in the same way that we don't forget to serve water to the audience or install a light installation.

Danijela Oberhofer Tonković
Climate change, which politics and world economic forces deny, and many of us choose to ignore, threatens the survival of Earth as we know it. Of course we should contribute with our projects and through working with other artists.

Yes, we should definitely support more artists and processes exploring the intersection of arts and climate change.

Giulia Pardini

Of course artists are influenced by the environment and they should pay attention to all the exchanges and problems related to it. Artists have the capacity to show the world and problems in a different manner, with several and sometimes unexpected tools. They have the ability to tell the truth in a very direct way, without filters, giving people new meanings and interpretations of the world.

Georgie Scott

I believe that the work of artists and the art world in general can responsibly reflect the difficult times we are all facing. Through art, we can challenge ideas and ask questions which sometimes words cannot convey. These ideas and questions are often open and leave the viewer to consider their own response. This encounter, between the artist and the audience, might bring us face to face with issues we weren't aware of or are beyond our control.

In 2018, artist Olafur Eliasson and geologist Minik Rosing teamed up to create *Ice Watch* at the Tate Modern in London. 24 enormous blocks of ice, weighing between 1.5 and 5 tonnes each, were taken from Nuup Kangerlua Fjord in Greenland after becoming detached from the ice sheet as a result of global warming. The ice blocks were then installed outside the front of the Tate Modern on the banks of the River Thames and left to melt. This allowed the public to come face to face with, and even feel the ice melting through their fingers. They were confronted with a truth that is undeniable and which we are all a part of. As witnesses, we are all responsible for bringing about the necessary changes.

Neringa Stoškutė

In my opinion, nowadays we live in a state of continuous change, where everything is becoming more advanced and/or more modernised. I don't believe that art has the power to change the way we live. However, it has the power to draw our attention to and highlight certain issues or problematics of the contemporary world. Art is not a tool/method/vehicle, it is more of an expression/opinion that influences people through its visual form. I believe that art has the power to change the way we see the world and other people, but not by showing us what we should do. Rather it creates a projection – a mix between imagination and reality – that offers a different/new perspective on certain things, it moves people or offers them new experiences which, in turn, influence the way we think and live. For me, art evokes certain feelings and emotions that lead to thinking and reassessing, and sometimes engaging in certain issues or problematics which can subsequently lead to actions.

Elis Unique

I believe that environmental issues are of significant importance nowadays. As the curator of this project I have taken on the mission of reflecting them, not just in everyday routines, but also on institutional and political levels. For me, environmental issues are one of the symptoms of modern Western culture, which has drained the ecosystem of our planet and deprived humanity of the essentials of a fulfilling coexistence. I strongly believe art has the power to initiate a shift in the paradigm of society.

3. WHAT WAS THE MAIN FOCUS WHILE WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES AND WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED?

Raluca Elena Doroftei

The main focus of the Meta Cultural Foundation residency is the Slon surroundings – tradition, history and nature, through a contemporary perspective. Working with a community from a village has its peculiarities. It is necessary to gain their confidence, to be honest, to speak in their language and sometimes to use intermediaries, people they trust. They are guided by hierarchies, mentalities, are conservative, critical and can be slightly suspicious, although they are generally very open, generous and curious. There are limits that you cannot pass, and subjects that you

cannot approach. It is a reality you must consider.

Karmen Krsić Kožul

The main focus was to make all the participants feel welcome and safe during the whole process. Nevertheless, at certain points, an open end situation creates feelings of destabilization. This “we’re together in this shit” feeling is a turning point when we start to support each other to adjust to new conditions and where togetherness is born. We hear a lot about stepping out of comfort zones as individuals, but until we step out of it as a community, no bigger changes can be expected. The development of community life is as important as personal growth and there are some skills which we can learn, instead of complaining about living in an isolated world and waiting for it to happen.

Neringa Stoškutė

I would say that I took quite a liberal approach in allowing the artist to control the level of their engagement with the communities they were working with. My intention was to introduce the community to the artist, and vice versa, and not to further control the process. However, I understand now that some control should be maintained, especially if the artist is not used to working with communities or developing their project in a socially engaged way. It requires constant encouragement and searching for opportunities to engage the artist in working with the community.

The main focus, for me, is to make sure that those who are included in the project are considered equal contributors on the same level as the artist or curator. It means that everyone who contributes stories and/or ideas should be acknowledged (at least) and paid (at best). One of the main tasks, for me, is to establish a common understanding between all of the participants and explain the purpose of the project in order to manage the expectations of everyone involved. I also strive to involve members of the community in the planning and decision-making process of the project. I feel that, in this way, people are unconsciously willing to take more responsibility/ownership for the results of the project and also ensure the sustainability/legacy of the project and/or artwork, because it lies in their best interest to maintain it. In this sense, the project becomes sustainable into the future.

Elis Unique

Working with communities is a long-term process of building a relationship with community members, based on personal experiences and mutual understanding. This is very much like becoming a member of the community, a process that can hardly be embraced

within the project timeline. In order to facilitate co-creation emanating from mutual interest and willingness to explore and experiment which, by the way, is one of this project’s key objectives, my endeavour was to recognise a common goal which would be meaningful for both the artist and the community.

4. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT AUTHORSHIP?

Raluca Elena Doroftei

I think that the questions of ethics and authorship are very relevant in art production today. When communities are involved in artistic projects, things seem to be more unclear. As a curator, I see the artist’s work in a community as a musical play “x artist featuring y community”. In the case of a movie, there is the director and the whole team that worked to finish the film, mentioned in the end credits. The author of an art piece is the artist, but I think that artists should give more credit to those who inspired them and helped create the art piece.

Marko Jozic & Tatjana Mateša

The crisis of values all around the world and in all spheres of human activity and thinking is quite noticeable. In the same way we can see how art has not been spared this trend. From personal experience we can see how the relationship between artists - art piece - community is defined differently and is constantly changing. It seems that a lot is left to be agreed upon concerning organisation and artists, although some replication in the absence of ideas can be seen (especially in defining the authorship of an art piece). We still don’t know where to draw the line and countable/contracted are mostly the things that can be measured. Nowadays, when the “superstar” tag is available more than ever, it seems that the question of authorship is raised from the personal feelings and attitude of the artist in regard to what is valuable, to be protected and rewarded. There are also many cases where the tricky notion of the “common good” can be used as an empty phrase for not valuing the artist’s work enough, where the volunteer position of the artist is implied. This is just a rough notion of some of the basic problematics of the art created for/in a community. In practice, these problems are created and solved in the personal relationship between artist-organisation.

Cláudia Melo

When working on and agreeing on a project with premises like Magic Carpets’, everyone involved should be aware that project authorship is co-created or authored collaboratively. Of course I fully defend the copyright

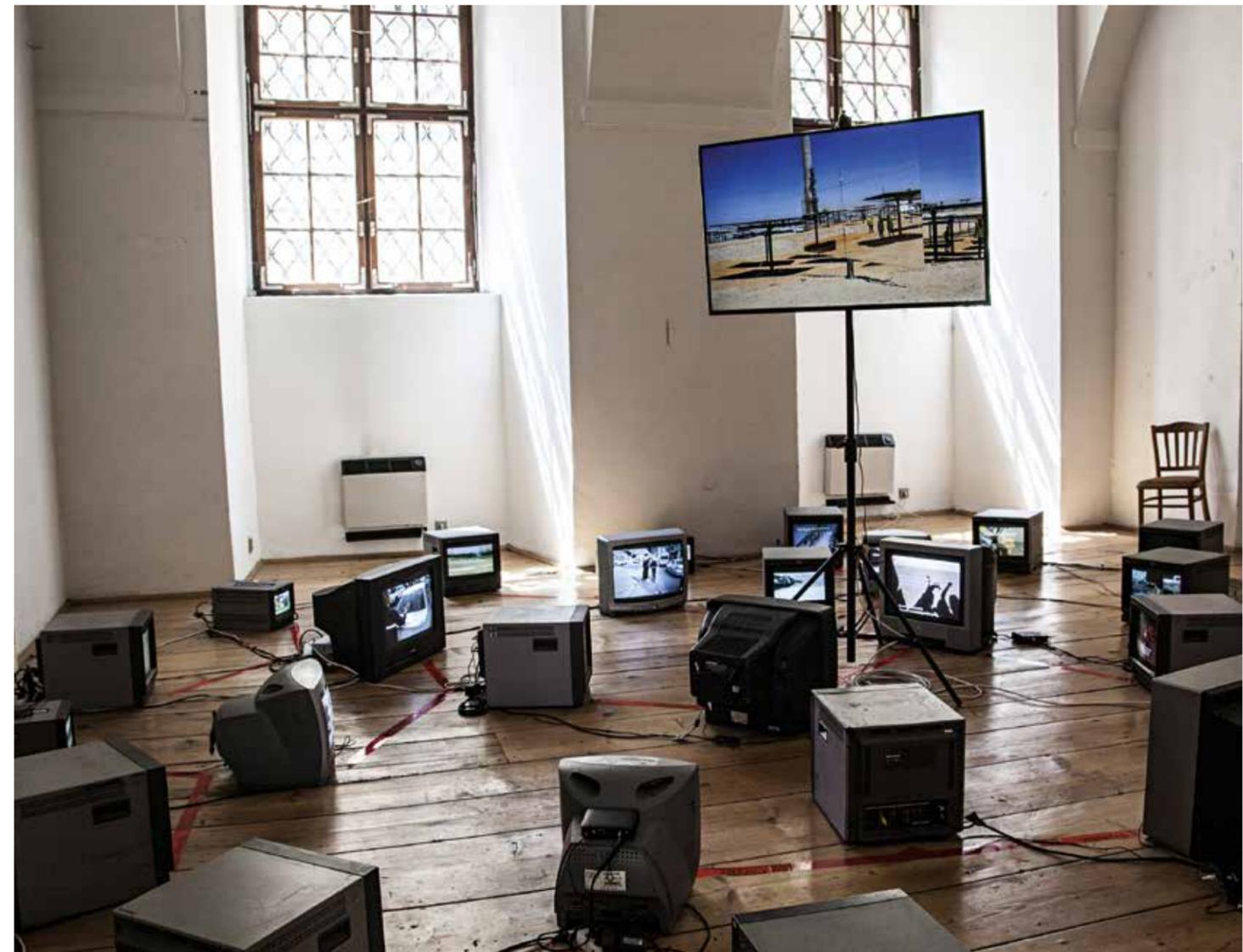
of artists and creators and I think that one cannot work globally on a form of individual authorlessness, although the issue of the dissolution of authorship is nothing new. However, this project can and should serve to raise pertinent questions on this subject through reflections, also empirical, that come from the experimental methods of the work processes themselves.

How can you define the authorship of a project that has so many involved in its creative, conceptual and artistic structuring? There is the figure of the curator, the figure of the artists and the figure of the community that is intended to be collaborative and co-creator.

5. DO YOU PERCEIVE THE MAGIC CARPETS TEAM AS A COMMUNITY? WHAT VALUES AND MERITS DO YOU ALL SHARE?

Georgie Scott

Yes, I perceive the Magic Carpets team as a community of curators and directors who are all dedicated to producing genuine and embedded art projects within their own contexts. By inviting emerging artists from all over Europe to take part in the project we are working together in a joint vision to encourage mobility, openness and collaboration across the continent. Through sharing our previous knowledge and experiences, as well as what we are learning along the way, we are growing together as a community of arts professionals and European citizens.



1 The Bizarre Transformations of Cities, 2 The Migration of Experiences, 3 Compilation of Realities, 4 XXII Triennale di Milano, 5 Flowing Cities, 6 Grandmas. Who Are They, and for Whom?, 7 Life in River’s Magic Garden, 8 Fiskars Village Art and Design Biennale

1 THE BIZARRE TRANSFORMATIONS OF CITIES
Clam-Gallas Palace, Prague
Jiří Machalický

The exhibition *Urban Skanzen* (Urban Open-Air Museum) in the Clam-Gallas Palace in Prague was about the city and its changing structure. Under communism, the backstreets of historic cities used to be dark and neglected, perhaps a little dangerous yet perversely enticing. When countries liberated themselves from one-party rule and cities opened up to different ideas and plans for the future, there was an explosion of diversity. Visitors from all sorts of places began to arrive in search of a city's elegance and charm. Some people were fascinated by the history of a city, its architecture, the layering of different styles and influences from all directions. Others came in search of cheap thrills and had no interest in a place's beauty. Many cities have gradually become open-air museums pandering to the lowest tastes. As the French author Benoît Duteurtre wrote in his book *La cité heureuse*, by coincidence inspired in part by the development of Prague over the last few decades, the local populations have virtually become "employees" of tourists arriving in droves in search of meaningless pseudo-experiences.

In this project, the curator Elis Unique reflected upon a current phenomenon that sees the meaning of travel transformed ad absurdum and the elegance of cities destroyed by the scourge of a tourism that no longer even fulfills its original purpose, namely broadening the mind through an acquisition of a knowledge of the idiosyncrasies and beauties of individual cultures. For too long, travel has not been about a romantic fascination with faraway places, but simply a relocation from A to B in order to fill up time. Elis Unique has selected several artists, each of whom, in their own way, is concerned with the way cities are being transformed.

In her installation, Daniela Baráčková sketched out a strange urban labyrinth in which we could lose ourselves as though in Kafka's Castle, wandering about hopelessly without ever arriving at a destination. In this way the artist suggested that intentions can sometimes be so complex that their implementation is beyond the power of those who make the attempt, and that in the end all that is left of an original plan is a fragment that nonetheless must be pursued.

David Možný created an impressive installation of wheeled suitcases that ploughed ruthlessly through the centres of cities at any time of day or night. The installation became a symbol of the absurd raids on historical monuments in which every participant takes a selfie and then ticks it off a list in their journal before moving on to the next monument.

Jan Pfeiffer looked at how the atmosphere of a particular city changes when its local population is forced to leave under the pressure of unfavourable situations or events. He reflected upon how its meaning could be lost over the course of time

and how easy it is for its culture to be forgotten, but also how under certain circumstances it could be revived. However, things would never be quite the same again, and relationships inexorably change as time passes. Pfeiffer took the story of the family forced to abandon the Clam-Gallas Palace and applied it to his own, which has lived in the city centre for many years but is beginning to leave because the conditions for a normal life are being lost. The charm of the place is disappearing, though the traces of history remain to those with an eye for unobtrusive detail.

The videos by students of Pavel Sterec's Intermedia studio at the Arts Faculty of the Brno University of Technology have explored a concept, the basis of which was a word that the participants had to express through video. The words were then grouped together and directed towards the central video, which aggregated the meanings of all the preceding words. The installation as a whole reacted to the structure of a technical object, to the system of solar panels in the landscape and the transformation of solar energy into electricity.

The British artist Daniel Tollady created a cosy little room out of one of the exhibition spaces. Visitors were able to bring presents and leave them anywhere in the interior. A strange collection resulted of just about anything possible, from books to sweets. This is a nostalgia for that which will never return but can nevertheless be evoked in our recollections.

The exhibition examined the problem of the constant displacement of people and the intertwining of cultures, something that can be positive and enriching while causing an unhealthy erasure of the originality of life in cities, which are gradually losing their specific profiles. Elis Unique and the exhibition architect Miloš Marek arranged the individual installations to naturally follow one another.

2 THE MIGRATION OF EXPERIENCES
Album Arte, Rome
Viktor Čech

The magic carpet that features in *One Thousand and One Nights* allows its user to travel instantaneously from one place to another. Today, the way migrating artists travel from one international residency to another would appear equally magical to our predecessors. This mobility is often driven by the need of creative souls to seek out new cultural contexts. While awareness of this fairy-tale means of transport arrived in the West at a time when cultural forms tended to travel, these days one of the reasons for travelling is the need to acquire experience and break down barriers and stereotypes by sharing places and situations. If artists have become welcome cultural nomads, other people following their dreams are perceived by many as a dangerous cultural virus threatening the local community. The Magic Carpets residency network is one of those that supports artis-

1 Intermedia atelier of FAVU BUT, Last Word, 2016, Urban Skanzen exhibition view, photo: Elis Unique.
2 Melanie Garland, *Liminality*, 2018, Photo Courtesy Latitudo for Magic Carpets Platform and AlbumArte (Partner Year #1, Rome).
Photo ©Luis Do Rosario.

tic nomadism, while also, as part of the current project *The Others*, enables artists to experience the situation of migrants in Italy. Rome is where these two planes cross. It has a tradition of cultural pilgrimages and a mix of cultures. However, things at present are tense, as shown by the wave of migration and the rise of local radicalism. Between the tourists wandering the streets of Rome and refugees awaiting an uncertain fate in a centre on the periphery there lies a sharp mental boundary. In the projects presented in the gallery Album Arte, participants of the Magic Carpets project - Hrvoslava Brkušić from Croatia and Melanie Garland from Chile - did not simply offer a distanced commentary on the problem of the refugees, but rather ensured that the very focus of their work was engaged in direct contact with specific individuals. Hrvoslava Brkušić devoted her energies to the search for sounds immigrants associated with home. The resulting presentation deployed sensory stimuli, work with the association of visual and audio inputs, and drew on research into the landscape of Roman civilisation. Melania Garland, on the other hand, encouraged immigrants during personal conversations to recount their experience of the trip leading to their current insecure liminal situation. Their descriptions became the inspiration for the creation of an artist's book, a parable of their experiences in a series of drawings, collages and texts. Her work, often combining paper as material and conceptualised schema, reflected on the parallels between human migration and biological and geological migration, while representing an elegant contrast to the sensual realia of Hrvoslava Brkušić within the framework of the



installation. The overall impression of the presentation in the gallery was not a didactic commentary on the contemporary socio-political situation. Thanks to the intensity of autonomous creative synthesis in the work of the two artists it acquired an immanent political charge which is, on occasion, capable of communicating more deeply than a more vociferous and demonstrative style.



3 COMPILATION OF REALITIES

Kampus Hybernská, Kasárna Karlín, Jedna dva tři gallery - Petrohradská kolektiv, (A)VOID Floating Gallery, Prague
Lexa Peroutka

During two sweltering weeks at the turn of May and June 2019, Prague saw a programme put together by the Magic Carpets platform, whose activities cross European borders, facilitating artistic and cultural mobility within Europe. This mobility gives artists a chance to respond to the shared cultural and public space within the confines of the continent and its real and imagined borders. This space finds itself constantly undergoing change and demanding our participation on cultural, civic, political and other levels. On the partially abstract cultural level, it is a space of encounters, communication, dialogue, sharing, presentation, perception and observation. According to the programme's curator, Elis Unique, this event is a "discussion on a broader public space".

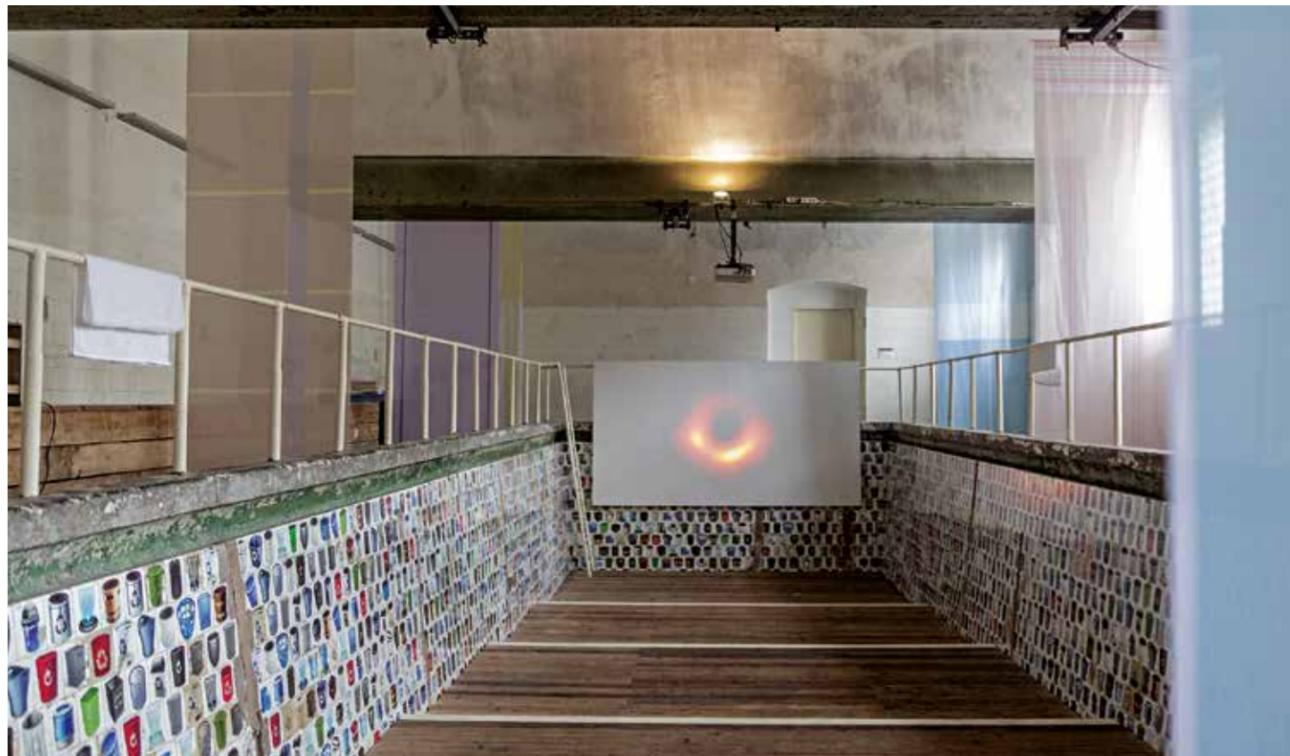
The exhibition programme itself took place in the centre of Prague, an area which has seen a number of changes in the preceding decades. Such changes include the uncompromising tourist business, gentrification, investments into commercial spaces and the related redevelopments and demolitions and plans for the transformations of the metropolis which take into consideration financial sources more than the city's civilians in their diversity.

The programme's theme - public space - is an extremely important topic today, one belonging not only to the fields of art and culture, but to all of society. In fact, it concerns the future operation of society, its centre and periphery, whether these be class-based or geographical. This theme might be considered by some to be worn out



and over-done. But quite the contrary: today, we physically feel a veritable scale of societal transformations which affect us personally in our individual quotidian lives. Magic Carpets' programme in Prague wants to put this contemporary reality of the city and society back into our centre of attention, personal engagement and participation.

Part of *Compilation of Realities* took place in an emerging underground space at Kampus Hybernská, in the very heart of tourist Prague. The exhibition by Jolana Havelková, Michal Kindernay and Deana Kolenčíková, Tereza Bonaventurová, Pavel Karous, and the Intermedia Studio at FAVU VUT in Brno was precisely installed in the historical cellar. The individual works, some of which were of a multimedia character, worked with the topics of specific sites, people, visual space and the logic of power. Performances and presentations by artists and researchers working on these topics (Kurt Gebauer, Tomáš Ruller, Pavel Karous, Petr Vašát and others) were integral components of the programme. Kampus also saw a performative ad-



3 Jolana Havelková, Pod naším okýnkem (Beneath our window), Installation view Compilation of realities, 2019, Kampus Hybernská, Prague, photo: Tomáš Souček.
Milan Mikuláščík, Bin-pool, Benjamin Tomasi, Moons can have moons and they are called Moonmoons, Installation view Compilation of realities II, 2019, Kasárna Karlín, Prague, photo: Elis Unique.

dition to the programme running in parallel to the exhibition - Darina Alster's magical staged performance *String Figures* emphasised the parallel worlds of politics and true being. The programme also reflected community questions of the present, both in the programme at Jedna dva tři Gallery, with the Mothers Artlovers collective, and in the A(VOID) Floating Gallery.

Another part of the exhibition programme took place in the Classical-period building Kasárna Karlín, a former barracks near the centre of Prague. Its former pool hosted an exhibition by Benjamin Tomasi and Milan Mikuláščík. Mikuláščík works with our civilisation's archeological material, using references to social developments and mass and digital culture. The military pool was covered with two thousand stickers, each of them bearing an icon of a rubbish bin as found in computer environments. His instal-



lation, *Bin Pool*, was completed by a static projection of the recently published first real photograph of a black hole. In the upper part of the pool space, Benjamin Tomasi, a Magic Carpets resident, realised an installation reminiscent of Data Spa and freely connected to Mikuláščík's installation: a prototype of Trump's wall on the Mexican border was presented, together with ambient audio and further performative accompaniment. The image of the border wall and the audio were sourced from the internet, where the author recycled available internet data, which thus represented - following his selection - the significant social and political questions of the present.

The programme in Karlín was based on information sharing, on history and therefore archeology, including digital sources and their further manipulation with a view towards the reality of contemporary social problems.

The exhibitions, performances, and presentation-discussions titled *Compilation of Realities* were unambiguously focused on the real topics of the cultural and artistic space of today's Prague. The composition of the entire project was complicated, and cer-

tain forms of artistic engagement are still in a process of formation - even as finished artworks. This is a process of confronting both the reality of today's everyday life and the general public with cultural and artistic spheres. It is a pan-European phenomenon - the formation consists of the current/future cultural and artistic scene searching for its position within the rapidly changing conditions of European society. These topics are partially taboo, but *Compilation of Realities* gives them the form of real questions and answers.

4 XXII TRIENNALE DI MILANO Milan Stella Succi

XXII Triennale di Milano, entitled *Broken Nature: Design Takes on Human Survival*, refers to a matter which is now at the centre of both public and cultural debate: the Anthropocene.

Looking at the thematic exhibition, which includes more than 100 projects, the feeling is that curator Paola Antonelli has tried to offer an as-much-as possible complete overview of the opportunities within the relationship between humans and nature. The most addressed subjects are the experimental use of biomaterials and restorative design techniques, but also more lateral issues like borders and migrations.

The most discussed feature is undoubtedly the Plant Pavilion, for which Stefano Boeri invited the worldwide famous scientist Stefano Mancuso as the curator, whose research on vegetal neurobiology focuses on the ability of plants to communicate. Unfortunately, the display controversially includes panels where plants talk about themselves just like humans would, and this specist point of view is confirmed by many other installations in the Pavilion. When talking about science, simplification is required, but oversimplification is dangerous.

Beyond the laudable initiative of putting nature at the core of the Triennale, the selected way to tell this (trying-to-be) inspiring story looks mutated by the familiar and full data green-washing language of late capitalist companies, a conflict of interest which sadly comes as no surprise when design industry is at stake.

Last of all, the winning project, called Teatro della Terra Alienata (Australian Pavilion) is welcomed as a breath of fresh air: its radicality puts into question the recurring references about ingenuity and utopia mentioned in the curatorial text. But radicality doesn't equate to naiveté, and maybe that's what design needs now: to actually feel the agency of designing a new future.

4 Broken Nature, installation view @ Triennale Milano, photo: Gianluca Di Ioia.

5 FLOWING CITIES

Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma, Roma
Tereza Záchová

The second Italian edition of Magic Carpets was presented on purely artistic grounds: in Rome, at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma. The project titled Flowing Cities was to refer to two architecturally spectacular Roman peripheries - Nuovo Corviale and Laurentino 38. The invited artists, Yves Mettler (CH) and Patricia Geraldès (PT) worked with the local communities living in these utopian centres from the 1970s.

The exhibition itself brought three layers of reflection and questions. Among the first were the featured artists. More or less, they worked with traditional media they were close to. Yves Mettler presented group output from a comics workshop with children which, seen together, drew a picture of the relationships in Laurentino 38 and the children's perception of these. More than that, he adapted amazingly fast to the new environment, getting to know every corner, every piece of street art and all the colours of chipped concrete.

Patricia Geraldès' works were different in atmosphere. Although they were, in a way, parallel to her colleague's work executed in another environment, Patricia focused on the ephemerality of a site as opulent as Nuovo Corviale. She wrote the people's stories with them, mapping the transformations of this spectacular idea over time.

Another layer was the artistic products themselves and their presentation. As I outlined above, most works were in the form of a paper comics or a diary entry, often in

documentary form. Together with these workshop products, there were two video projections installed in front of the Academy. Unfortunately, this installation was entirely inadequate, particularly in the context of contemporary presentations of media art. Having two videos screened one above the other was not the best solution.

The third layer was somewhat intimate and may have remained hidden for many spectators. But at this moment, it is the most important. It rests in the creation of trust in interpersonal relationships, shifting the project further, beyond the borders of its visible outputs. Time plays a part here too: it is often more important to spend some time with someone; to give them one's time. And I think the artists managed that wonderfully. This reflects the strength of the entire project - the aim was not simply to point out the issue of peripheries and how we think about them, but also to spend time together, consciously and valuably.

At this moment, the only thing that comes to mind is whether this social activity and its generosity in enriching relationships is not more important than the necessary one-time outputs? This question, however, rests with the entire Magic Carpets project. Is it truly necessary to present the results in a documentary form without the context of location, all this implicitly placed above the form that creates worlds - the human element?



5 Exhibition view, photo courtesy Latitudo for Magic Carpets Platform © Luis Do Rosario.

6 GRANDMAS. WHO ARE THEY, AND FOR WHOM?
A Land of Grandmothers, Cēsis
Jana Orlová

Feelings of nostalgia, compassion, and sadness. During her Magic Carpets residency, Romanian documentary photographer Odeta Catana opted to work with a strong social theme. The exhibition of photographs was introduced together with a semi-documentary theatre performance, *A Land of Grandmothers*, by Kvadrifons, an independent group based in Riga. The premiere of their joint project took place on the 29th of June 2019 at the LAMPA Conversation Festival in the Latvian city of Cēsis.

These weren't old women in the spirit of poet František Halas, but grandmothers - an archetype of those who live for others and often desire for nothing more than a little love, love that is lacking due to the hectic lives of their loved ones, or even a simple lack of interest. The entire project was a clear invitation to spend more time with our grandmas; to respect them. In the theatrical performance (which was of a traditional, conversational type), the desire of grandmas to care and sacrifice themselves for their families was heavily accented. The script arose from the actors' experiences with their own grandmas. The songs used, sung by a children's choir in grey wigs, were also the favourites of the actors' grandmas. Playwright and dramaturg Justīne Kļava attempted to sensitively remove our mythologisation and taboos about the women's old age, but she portrayed this only from a kind, idealising position. And there aren't only nice and selfless grandmas in the world - this is a myth too. Where were the domineering, evil grandmas who terrorise their loved ones? And so the taboo of the evil grandma, the hag, the terrifying and therefore powerful old woman unfortunately remained unspoken. Although I understand this project's pro-family focus, I was missing (particularly in the theatrical component) a more critical position, or at least a variety of views.

After the performance was finished, the audience was directed to the photography exhibition in the next room. Three rows of heavy, black wooden panels (220x150cm) were hung on wooden beams with black ropes in this raw space. Each of them was dedicated to one of the Kvadrifons actors' grandmas - some of them alive, some of them already deceased. Odeta Catana took these between the 16th and 29th of May 2019. Curator Sandra Lapovska also played an important role, acting as a mediator and interpreter. At the beginning of their encounter, Odeta would always ask the grandmother about the things that were important to her, which she then recorded. This was often on a mobile phone, which

became the visual link binding together the entire photographic series. Even though there was sentiment here too, it was not as clear of an appeal to the emotions. The unifying motif among the panels was a strong atmosphere of isolation, of life that is at its end but not quite over yet. This necessarily brought up questions about our own end, or rather about the living out of life; about waiting for the end. What do the



yellowing photographs of their family line really mean to the elderly? What do they really think and feel and what do we simply attribute to them? What are our ideas of old age? Will the millennials' old age be different to those born after World War I?

Only one of the nine panels featured a grandma with a hobby (a greenhouse). The other images portrayed empty lives immersed in memories. The question arises: why? And could it be otherwise? In the Czech environment, a project for a retirement home for artists is slowly developing led by Kristýna Kašparová. Her idea is to avoid the isolation of pensioners, creating a stimulating environment a little like a studio; an environment offering possibilities for mutual inspiration, and for creativity. Kašparová expects art to be such a strong shared interest that it'll allow pensioners to form new friendships and maintain their position in society. She is proposing the creation of a system of social ties outside the family, which is an absolute alternative to the *Land of Grandmothers* project.

Odeta Catana's residence was organised by the New Theatre Institute of Latvia, a Magic Carpets partner. The Kvadrifons group wanted to create a semi-documentary performance on this topic and Catana was approached given her previous works featuring older people. She also works consistently with the strong wave of Romanian migration to various European countries. Interpersonal and inter-generational relationships are an important topic for her, one which was also reflected in the project under review.

6 Odeta Catana, exhibition view Land of Grandmothers, 2019, Cēsis, Latvia, photo: Jana Orlová.

7 LIFE IN RIVER'S MAGIC GARDEN
Mtkvari Right Bank
Elisabed Zhvania

Draining the South slopes of the Greater Caucasus (northern Georgia) and North slopes of the Lesser Caucasus (north-east Turkey), Mtkvari cuts through Georgia, flowing east through Azerbaijan, into the Caspian Sea. Tbilisi, accommodating about half of the Georgian population has been built on the two coasts of Mtkvari. While the initial "city-developers" relied on Mtkvari and the surrounding hills to guide them into ways of habitation, maximally relying on the natural resources - using water for irrigation, cleaning, washing, bathing purposes, the urban development throughout the past century, especially the last decades, has followed different motives of infrastructural development, polluting the river and rendering its shore

basically inaccessible to people. Mtkvari is guarded by highways on both sides. While this infrastructure facilitates the transportation flows, it denies access to the riverside to pedestrians or fishermen. Overpowered by the rationale of economic greed, demanding transportation efficiency, the infrastructure surrounding Mtkvari sets this natural resource - which implies the cross-border continuity, as well as connectivity to Tbilisi's urban history, beyond the cognitive realm of the inhabitants.

River's Magic Garden was set on the shore of Mtkvari, close to the transportation center of the city - with highways crossing over each other. The exhibition space stretched to the point where "Verarechka", flowing from Tbilisi's south bordering hills and acting as a sewage system, enters Mtkvari, flowing under one of the highway-bridges. The wooden staircase led pedestrians from the embankment, down to the shore filled with trees that had been growing there for decades.

The stairs were barely accessible to pedestrians, as there was no cross pass on the highway guarding the shore. Despite this, they acted as a portal to the time-space measured by the slow and steady pace of the river and the height of the trees. The experience of the visitor was paradoxical and full of contrast. The natural and historic essence of the city became tangible, as people could access the river. Yet the strong smell of the river, as well as the heavy traffic, flowing parallel to the river's flow on the surrounding highways, strengthened the awareness of the contrasting context. The symbolic access to the "natural", more than offering the promise of reappropriating Mtkvari as a natural resource, was effective in its juxtaposition with the surrounding infrastructure.

For two weeks the Mtkvari shore - filled with site-specific works, a great selection of diverse documentaries projected on the river-bank wall and the central space of gathering - *Place of Knowledge*, became a social hub - a space for sharing, exchange and reflection. Providing space for the communi-



ty's necessity for connectivity, reflection, curiosity and self-expression - this portal picked up life with a natural pace.

Collaborating with Tbilisi City Hall, the CCA team cleaned the shore and provided electricity and light to the exhibition site from the city lighting system. In this way CCA acted as a mediator between city resources and the inhabitants' need for a space to create and share. The intention behind many of the works created for this exhibition has been a certain kind of care, an offering of treasures to the community. Some works suggested different functions of the given space, while others stressed the subversive character of the paradoxical context.

The arena-like stage, made of long wooden stools, hosted many local and international artists and musicians for talks, performances and presentations. *Place of Knowledge* was the center for exchange, reflection and joy.

Filtering Mtkvari water, Mariam Kalandadze created a spring - symbolically returning the cleansing function to the river water which had been used for bathing, washing and cleaning by Tbilisi inhabitants for centuries. With a half-cut Qvevri (ancient Georgian vessel used for making wine) as the spring basin, the work invited visitors to experience the water, bath and wash. In a way the work suggested the possibility of reclaiming the river's historic function. Surrounded by salt, this installation brought the access to water to a symbolic realm - securing a cognitive space, rather than making a political statement. Bringing magnetic sand - traditionally praised for its healing powers - from Ureki (village on Black Sea shore), Gala Eristavi offered visitors natural treasures, inviting them to play. Collective work by Ariali created a circular curtain, made from thin coin-like circles of brass. Hanging this sculpture from a willow tree, artists invited

2. Narendra Ragunath, Introduction to Vastu - holy principles and methods of Hindu architecture, Book Presentation, photo: Zura Tsosurashvili.

the visitors inside for a magical view. Mamuka Japharidze, cutting small holes through tree logs provided "nesting" for the local ecosystem of water-side insects.

On the shore where "Verarechka" enters Mtkvari, Zura Tsosurashvili placed an aircraft-looking wooden structure. Offering visitors an "office" to sketch, work and dwell, eventually this sculpture got appropriated by local fisherman. Closeby, Ilia Makharadze opened *A Store for Everything* where visitors would write what they desired. Afterwards Ilia led workshops with other visitors to create these objects from scratch and leftover materials.

Gocha Jgenti's sculpture stretched a vessel used for carrying construction materials from the highway-bridge to the point where polluted "Verarechka" enters Mtkvari. The vessel provided the base of a sculpture and resembled trash carried by the river. This work was a snapshot of the complex infrastructure processes surrounding Mtkvari. With a similar subversive attitude, Austrian artist David Prieth stretched a banner between several trees, showcasing caricatured versions of the political posters which cover Tbilisi streets. This social oasis, the river's magic garden, served as a space for diverse impulses and exchanges. Starting from works delicately treasuring the natural resources, the exhibition ended with a performance by *Caddamkvana* - a collaboration between musicians and an artist chanting mantras:

"having lived like a dickhead
living with a dickface
haunted by messiahs
om na my so good
om na my so new"

8 FISKARS VILLAGE ART AND DESIGN BIENNALE
Fiskars Village, Finland
Tereza Záchová

This international display in the small Finnish village of Fiskars, about an hour's drive from Helsinki, is hosting its first "biennial". The village has a strong local context mostly tied to the iron industry - it is traditionally the home of household goods, garden tools and craft items (everyone will surely now have a mental image of knives, axes or scissors made by the eponymous brand). Fiskars Village has turned into a display both of design and fine art, with both exhibition blocks presented at the same time, giving visitors the advantage of a broader selection.

Local curator Jenni Nurmenniemi was the main curator. The exhibition, titled *Being With*, reflected on fem-

inist positions in relation to the threat of ecological crisis. These were not radical works - rather, the exhibition was about uncovering certain layers and creating a symbiosis or internal dialogue sensitively hidden in the works of the twenty presented international artists. The artists work in various media from painting and sculpture to new media. The curator had worked with many of them before on solo exhibitions for HIAP (Helsinki International Artist Programme). Here, she had the opportunity to place the artists into the context of a group exhibition.

The exhibition was installed throughout the village. It was presented in the two central wooden houses which were not, however, intended primarily as exhibition halls. Finding an architectural layout for the works that would not rob them of sensitivity was therefore more of a challenge than usual. The artists were not only presented inside - their works made their way into public space. Many of them were hard to find, but this involved the spectator even further into the local game of being an attentive observer, creating a potential inner dialogue with one's surroundings. Works in the park, on the meadow, next to the river, or on the bridge were part of a processual situation. Nature enveloped some of the works in tall grass making them practically invisible, their being thus gaining a second dimension. This authenticity underlined the curator's important idea - ephemerally arisen from this accident - about coexistence and respect.



8 Tove Storch, Untitled, 2019, outdoor installation, photo: Tereza Záchová

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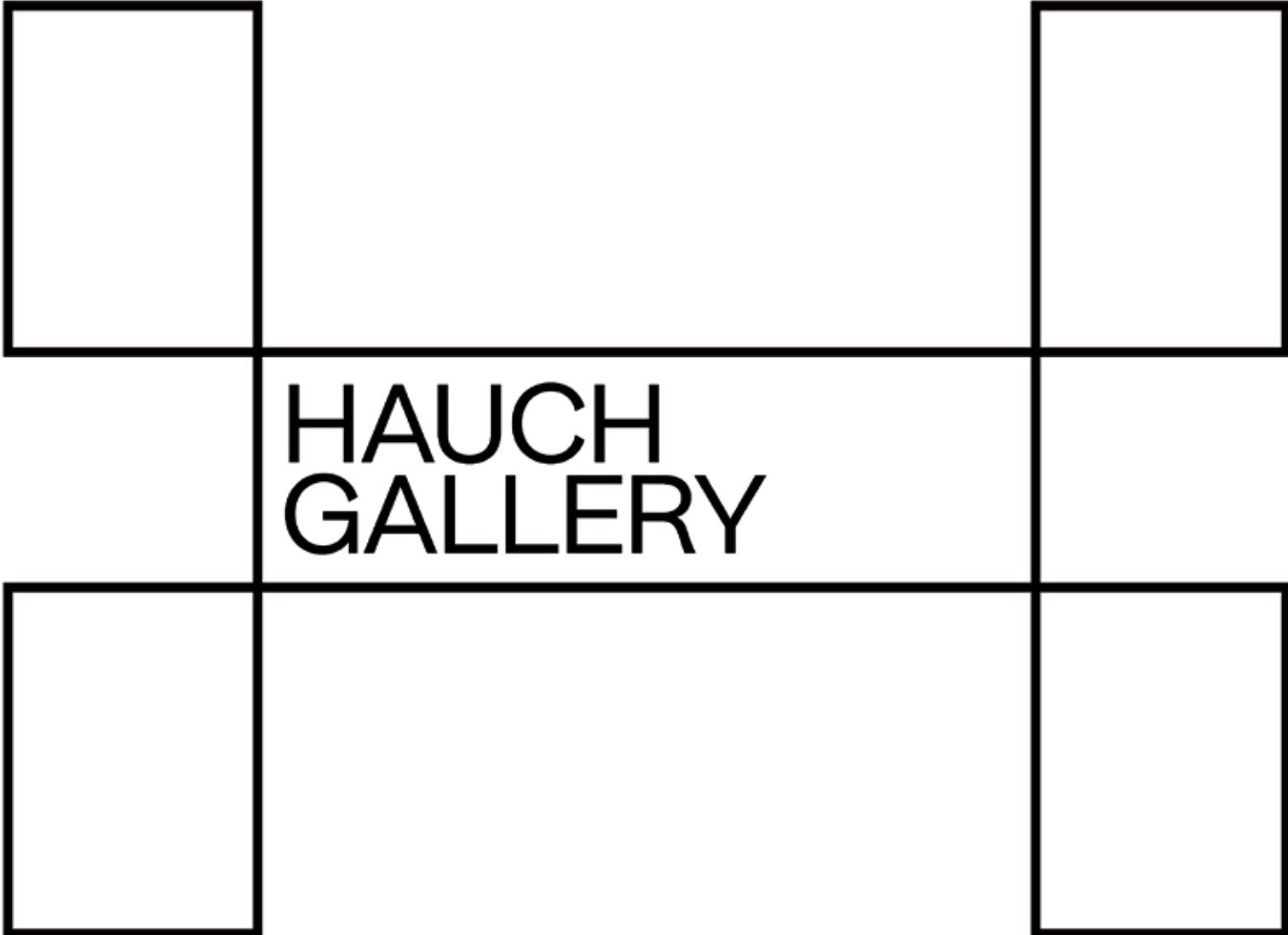
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