



framework

contents 10/June 2009:

- 6 Editorial. Locating: Chuck Dyke, Michel Bauwens, David Elliott, Miina Äkkijyrkkä, Ásmundur Ásmundsson, Antoanetta Ivanova; Alternative Artistic Proposals: Kim Levin, Elena Sorkina in Conversation with Oliver Ressler, Morten Goll & Joachim Hamou & Tone Nielsen, Marita Muukkonen in Conversation
- 48 with HeHe. Focus. Finnish Pavilion in the 53rd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia: Foreword by Berndt Arell & Marketta Seppälä, Sven
- 73 Spieker on Jussi Kivi, Jonni Roos on Jussi Kivi. Opinions, Analyses & Letters: Raul Zamudio, Martina
- 81 Corgnati, Henk Slager, Ilya Budratskis & Alexandra Galkina. Features: Yrjö Haila on Jan-Erik Andersson, Suzana Milevska on Sasha Huber, Hans Fässler on Sasha Huber, Maxine Kopsa on Jani Ruscica, Kari Yli-Annala on Jani Ruscica, Juha-Heikki Tihinen on Antti Laitinen, Poka-Yio on Antti Laitinen.

Marketta Seppälä

Rescue Plan

Infinite malleability of the world under human, purposeful control is an underlying belief upon which the modern world is built. Malleability and human control are key elements in the equation of progress that was adopted as a postulate in the western society some two and a half centuries ago. Modern science, technological innovation, and the establishment of market-based, capitalist world economy, with colonisation and conquest of the rest of the world as its essential element, were the main pillars supporting this dream of progress. The world has not always concurred with expectations, but deviations have been successfully explained away as aberrant exceptions which do not matter in the long historical perspective. This type of history belongs to the winners; in fact, the winners can define the very characteristics that they have successfully adopted as the diagnostics of progress.

There are basically two alternative ways to get prepared for accidents and losses: to make a rescue plan or, if this is not feasible, to find a way to compensate. In terms of compensation, insurance is the key word. The institution of insurance originated with early modern seafaring in the Mediterranean world. Seafaring required from the very beginning large investments in risky undertakings; in fact, the word “risk” is etymologically derived from the Italian word for dangerous, shallow seas. In the old Mediterranean world, there was no way to get to the rescue of ships that were threatened by peril. The ships just vanished without a trace.

In the modern world we would like to count on the possibility of rescue, whatever the threat. There are, indeed, amazing examples of successful rescue of, for instance, sailing crews from boats riven apart by the destructive storms of the Southern Seas. With luck, the technology required for the rescue of threatened individuals may be close at hand. In early spring this year, two hikers came across a brown bear with cubs in a national park in southern Finland, not far from Helsinki. They caught a fright and called the emergency response centre by a cell phone they had with them, and a few minutes later they were picked up by a coast guard helicopter that happened to be cruising nearby. (1)

However, blind faith in rescue whatever the threat has been challenged by many recent events. The media are filled with news about situations in which rescue efforts fail. Recent examples include the wildfires in Australia and California which have destroyed whole communities. Similarly, the melting of mountain glaciers all over the world subjects large populations to the imminent threat of running out of potable water, and there is not much anybody can do about it.

In older times, human actions affected only relatively small parts of Earth. For instance, the world ocean was perceived as unlimited. This was with some justification: given the seafaring technology of past centuries, most parts of the world ocean were pure wilderness. This all has changed: human influence has a global reach,

(1) In fact, the ground was still covered with snow at that time, and the only footprints found on site belonged to a lynx with cubs.

and we are faced with serious environmental threats which nobody can escape from. Wildfires destroying properties and killing people in the most affluent parts of the world give testimony for this change. But the main tragedy is elsewhere: the poor are most seriously subjected to threats they cannot possibly cope with.

The international financial crisis adds an urgent flavour to the demise of the dream of safety within the modern industrialised society. Trust on the ability of the international economic system to self-regulate has crushed, in parallel with the plummeting of the values of bonds and shares. Credit has a critical role in market economy, but the credit institution requires trust concerning the future. The credit has to be paid back with interest. The drop of share values threatens to curb credit. This undermines the ability of the public sector to maintain vital infrastructures, and eats off savings that ordinary people have been collecting for a secure old age. The public and the private are closely connected together.

The theme of this issue, *Rescue Plan*, speaks to the situation we are facing after the burst of the financial 'bubble'. At the time of collecting the material for this issue, the crisis has deepened for well over a year. It is fundamentally uncertain how deeply the "real economy" will be damaged. It is, in any case, already apparent that the consequences of the crisis are not restricted to the financial world. So, a natural question to ask is: What is being rescued from the chaos of the crisis? This is an essen-

tial question when we are facing global environmental threats. Are car and oil industries more important than the health of the planet?

Keeping in mind the complexity of the situation, as well as the demise of the neoliberal ideology which has been guiding the economic "wisdom" of the global financial powers in recent years, the contributors to this issue attempt to sketch out alternatives. A common theme is the potential role of art in constituting an extended field of cultural practices which aim at more than merely mixing or mediating between individuals, collectives, fields and traditions.

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The situation described above provides context for the project by Jussi Kivi, *Fire & Rescue Museum*, arranged on the occasion of the 53rd Venice Biennial. The materials preserved in *Fire & Rescue Museum* have their origin in the artist's long-standing passionate interest in everything that relates to firefighting. He grew up in Helsinki in the vicinity of a fire station and was captured by an irresistible admiration for the firefighters who were always ready to leave for rescue operations, day and night.

Jussi Kivi's accidental encounter with an underground nuclear bomb shelter constructed by the Soviet army in eastern Estonia brought a new dimension to the thematics of firefighting and defense. In the shelter, the artist found piles of posters and information boards about how to prepare for the fallout of a nuclear explosion. The original person-

al nostalgia was lifted to a new plane. The artifacts from the Soviet times have a tinge of the heroism Kivi has always associated with firefighting, but this is in stark contrast with the absurdity of the didactic message of the material. A new type of conflict between the private and the public is brought into light. Of what use would the personal bravery of firefighters be if they were really facing a nuclear fallout? In a sense, the material in the bomb shelter brings forth the contrast between two worlds of the near past – the West's commercial mass media and the Communist East's manipulation technologies. Childhood adoration for rescuers turns out to be a thin dream when it is faced with the threat of massive destruction.

Jussi Kivi has obtained some of the material in his *Fire & Rescue Museum* from friends who have been aware of his hobby. Nevertheless, the material collected on the initiative of a single person cannot fulfill the expectations of modernism's archival obsession which serves administrative purposes and aims at constructing an image of linear societal progress. The material does not serve purposes of formal classification or archival or museological order; nor does it match with the purpose of objectifying the past and offering sources for historical research. The meaning of the collection lies somewhere else.

Fire & Rescue Museum presents a fragmentary collection of material objects without regard to the past or future. In this it follows the tradition launched by the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century. *Fire & Rescue*

Museum's precarious position between the artist's personal need for order and safety and the disorder and chaos of the surrounding reality presents in miniature the situation we are facing in the world at large. The collection is characterised by a feeling of ephemerality and contingency as regards its contents and composition. By doing so, it purposefully challenges classificatory ambitions for rationality, and gives rise to a very concrete question: What is worthy of being preserved, documented and remembered, either on the personal or on the collective level? This question is all the more acute in light of the exponential increase in the amount of information. Everything cannot be stored. On the other hand, no institution can alone stay true to its history. The public record needs the help of private interests and visions. The question is: How to separate useful records from useless garbage?

The institution of firefighting dates back to Imperial Rome, but it fell into disorder after the collapse of the Roman empire. Not until in the Age of Enlightenment did Europe reinvent institutions that are responsible for public safety. These were – paradoxically – tied to cycles of new types of crises and catastrophes. But how far does the capacity for rescue reach? What could, for instance, be salvaged after a nuclear catastrophe? Is it possible that also the current stage of human cultures, instead of being able to maintain well-organised stability, might be subjected to violent convulsions, similarly as so many cultures of the past? +

Locating: Resque Plan

In the cover image of this issue Miina Äkkijyrkkä guides her cattle through the forest.

Through her long career as a sculptor, performance artist and cattle keeper Miina Äkkijyrkkä has offered an excellent example of crossing borders to an extent where it is not, per force, important or even possible to draw a line between art and life. However, as respectful as her decades-long efforts to salvage an endangered Finnish native cattle breed (*kyjytö*) are, they have ended up in a sort of public drama that astonishingly well illuminates a single person's possibilities and constraints in doing what one finds necessary to do within hierarchical societal structures. First of all, the conflict between the artist and authorities is a case study on prospects in processes where just a pure

problem of prestige can turn out to be the major factor of influence.

There have been formal reasons, for example, for the justice system to doom the artist with a sentence of 7 months of conditional imprisonment. In November, 2008 the Helsinki District Court gave its decision on the dispute over Miina Äkkijyrkkä's lease on a city-owned farm and ordered her, by threat of eviction, to vacate the farm and remove her cattle within a few weeks' time. This would have meant putting down the cattle. Miina Äkkijyrkkä complained about the decision to the Supreme Court. Only a couple of weeks before the final eviction date, the Supreme Court called a halt to the eviction for the time being, but the battle of authority continues.

On the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

in December 2008 Miina Äkkijyrkkä gave an interview in which she stated:

"(For me) the greatest loss of freedom was a letter from the City of Helsinki in which it terminated the lease I had on my long-time home. I have felt paralysed ever since. I am like a rotten skin of bark on a dead stump. I never existed. I function like a robot with a brain stem. It has been the hardest trial of my life, and it still isn't over. You lose your freedom when you don't have a home. Or you have too much freedom, you don't know where to go." (1)

Miina Äkkijyrkkä's personal crisis merges together with the destiny of the endangered native cattle breed of which there are only a few members left. Her experiences have led to personal uncertainty and helplessness in a situation where she literally has to ask:

Where can we go?

Similarly, the prospects concerning the future of the global society merge together with the ongoing financial crisis, the fastening climate change and its impact on the global environment. Even if the consequences of the current developments are still unknown and unfurling, they can already prove that science or technological development do not alone lead to real development and welfare – on the contrary, the course of events may take quite an opposite direction. If the 'world balance' can only depend on economic growth, how do we rescue the home for the human race?

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(1) *Helsingin Sanomat* -newspaper, 14 December 2008.

8	-----	Chuck Dyke	<i>Not Just More of the SOS</i>
14	-----	Michel Bauwens	<i>The Economics of P2P</i>
22	-----	David Elliott	<i>Guerillas and Partisans: Art, Power and Freedom in Europe and Beyond 1940-2012</i>
28	-----	Miina Äkkijyrkkä	<i>Crucifying the Pilgrim Realists</i>
30	-----	Ásmundur Ásmundsson	<i>Capital Capitulates</i>
33	-----	Antoanetta Ivanova	<i>Impact by Degrees</i>
Alternative Artistic Proposals			
36	-----	Kim Levin	<i>On 'Notes and Itineraries': A Statement</i>
40	-----	Elena Sorkina in Conversation with Oliver Ressler	<i>How Do the Fittest Survive?</i>
42	-----	Morten Goll, Joachim Hamou and Tone Olaf Nielsen	<i>'Asylum Dialog Tank' as a Social Art Intervention</i>
44	-----	Marita Muukkonen in Conversation with HeHe	<i>The Riddle of 'Green Cloud'</i>

Miina Äkkijyrkkä (born in 1949) is an artist and a cattle keeper, whose both professions intervene with each other. Her original name was Riitta Loiva ('loiva' translates as 'gentle' or 'gently sloping'), but in 1976 she changed it to Miina Äkkijyrkkä ('äkkijyrkkä' translates as 'abrupt'). During the 1960s she studied at two schools of household economics specialising in horse and cattle breeding. In 1969-73 she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki.

As a sovereign master in various fields of art practices, ranging from drawing to performance and design, she has had cows and calves as her primary topics.

Since the 1970s Miina Äkkijyrkkä has acted as an active advocate for the Eastern Finnish indigenous breed of *Kyjytö* cows. She acquired the cattle from the heirs of the late Helvi Tossavainen, one of the last farmers to keep this original stock (see the artist's statement on p. 28).

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Miina Äkkijyrkkä's sculpture. Photo by Juha Metso, 2004.



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Chuck Dyke Not Just More of the SOS

My advice has always been that if you've been living life in a closet, and decide to get out of the closet, then you ought to stride boldly out. It makes a much better first impression than inching your way out backwards. For example, I write this as Obama's first budget lies, still smoking, on the table where it landed a couple of days ago. The President strides boldly out of the neo-liberal closet our country's been in for, when you think about it, more than a quarter of a century. Not likely to do much good: the budget is now in the hands of the U.S. Congress, whose habitual posture is inching, crouching, and resolutely retrograde.

Oh well, the Presidential posture makes (even if only as gesture) a nice change.

The big trouble, though, is that there are so many closets. For instance, Obama is striding straight into the closet of welfare liberalism, chock full of entitlements, regulations that don't regulate, redistribution schemes that don't redistribute, and big bills to pay. Lately we've been surprised to see the closets of monetary and fiscal socialism fly open. Beyond that, there's the closet of *apparatchik* socialism, locally attractive many places on the globe; and even the closet of fascism, which a surprising number of Italians still recall with nostalgia as a (qualified) national success. With the advantage of hindsight (as it were), we can recognize all the closets as closets in the house of world capitalism, and, for that matter, colonialism. Rummaging around in all these closets got us where we are now, so we have a right to be unenthusiastic about the

chance of them being able to rescue us from whatever it is we need to be rescued from.

The lack of enthusiasm is especially justified if what we need to be rescued from is massive environmental collapse: open up any of the closets of world capitalism and you find a recipe for economic growth. The recipes vary; the reliance on growth doesn't vary a bit. Yet economic growth remains the problem, not the rescue from the problem, as more and more people point out. Carlo Donolo, for example, entitles his recent book "Sustaining Development: Reasons and hopes beyond growth" (*Sostenere lo sviluppo: Ragioni e speranze oltre la crescita*, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2007); the phrase "beyond growth" is due to Herman Daly.

Obama can hardly be blamed for giving welfare liberalism another whirl. Under the present circumstances, he really has no other choice. The possibility space offered by American and world politics is terribly narrow. But succeed or not, the result will be the exacerbation of environmental problems; and this is true despite the fact that he sees these problems as his predecessor never could. As a variation on a theme, there's a wonderful old *Far Side* cartoon: Three goldfish are out on a table next to their goldfish bowl. Inside the bowl the traditional castle is ablaze. One goldfish says to the others: "Well, thank God we made it out in time. 'Course now we're equally screwed". 'Course in the real world we're not *equally* screwed – at least not for a while. The distribution of wealth and privilege sees to that. In any case, we all have a stake in joining

Donolo in exploring reasons and hopes beyond growth.

I hope nobody is going to suggest that we ought to back out of the mess we've gotten into. As the saying goes, we either have to go head first or feet first. Head first would make a better impression. We'll just have to learn to use (not lose) our heads.

The memory of dreams

We can start by noticing that our socio-economic system is like our art. Both are a dizzy combination of our memories and our dreams. For our society, the most important is the memory of our dreams. We, the privileged, bask in the enlightenment dreams of wealth and freedom. (The less privileged chase the dream of sharing our dream). We paint our history with the memory of that old dream, seeing it as the pursuit of that dream, the march of our old aspirations. That, we say, is what the last centuries have been about: that's what we and our society are still about. Here lies one of the major reasons why we can't back out of our current circumstances. To do so, we'd have to recast our history as the history of mistakes. Otherwise, we couldn't account for the magnitude of our current problems. In the extreme, we might have to question the dreams themselves; less radically, we'd at least have to ask where we went wrong. It would be really hard to *back* out of those dreams, especially in the US, where the dreams are internalized as patriotic ethos. We're children of those dreams: in most cases adopted children. But the dreams aren't confined to us. Practically the whole world

has adopted some version of the oneiric fantasy as well.

The remembered dreams of our enlightenment roots have a dark side as well, just because they're dreams of progress. By and large, we really don't want to be what we were before the dreams began to be translated into the reality of the modern world – what we were when the dreams were just dreams. We remember that too. Consequently we should be led to reflect carefully about the way in which the dream became reality. That will mean decoupling the dream from the painted history for a moment. The payoff will be that we'll see why we couldn't back out of our problems even if we wanted to.

When the dream was first dreamt, no one had a clear picture of the system of world capitalism they were on the threshold of building. Even at the time of the discovery of the "New World," the consequences of the discovery were obscure. The same can be said for the wave of economic theorizing that hit stride in the 18th Century. In particular, the economic world Adam Smith evoked was a world biased toward the scale of independent individual enterprise. The dreams of wealth and freedom were (despite his title) personal and private: dreams of liberation from the political frameworks of mercantilism and cameralism.

Life growth and equilibrium

The bankroll was infinite for an industrious world of rational economic men. Individual initiative, played out in the context of free trade and Lockean plenty, was imagined to produce a perpetual

(1) For example: “What are self-organizing polymers? These materials will also be formed from monomers using secondary interactions, but the polymerization will be far from an equilibrium process – in self-organizing structures, external energy is required to maintain a steady state, along with an open system that allows a continuous inflow of monomers. In theory, such a material would display both spatial and temporal order, on a much larger length- and timescale than seen in structures formed under equilibrium conditions. Self-organized polymers will thus mimic the dynamic behavior of proteins such as tubulin.” From Tom F. A. de Greef and E. W. Meijer, “Supramolecular

polymers”. *Nature*, Vol 453, 8 May 2008, 173.

(2) Genetic variability probably comes to mind in this regard, but the full story of plasticity involves gene regulation, gene/environment interaction, etc. We use Mary Jane West-Eberhardt, “Developmental Plasticity and Evolution”, Oxford, 2003 as our benchmark in this area.

(3) The standard work to correct that view is probably, at the moment, Lenny Moss, “What Genes Can’t Do”, Cambridge, Bradford Books, the MIT Press, 2003. But the far better alternative is to read *Nature* and *Science* regularly to see the current first-order work.

(4) See, for example, N.S. Keenlyside, et. al.,

“Advancing decadal-scale climate prediction in the North Atlantic sector,” *Nature*, Vol 453, 1 May 2008, 84; and Aaron Clauset, et. al., “Hierarchical structure and the prediction of missing links in networks,” *Nature*, same volume, 98.

(5) The arguments to this effect at the time seem all to have assumed, usually tacitly, that macro-economies are simply scaled up micro-economies. In fact, it makes more sense to think that macro-economies emerge from micro-economies through processes of self-organization.

(6) Schumpeter, Joseph A (1992). *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, London and New York: Routledge, 82.

equilibrium of prosperity and justice. There’s no denying that the dream of such a stable and abiding equilibrium, created “as if by an invisible hand”, and perpetuated by rational self-interest and an endless bounty of nature was a seductive one. At the time, it certainly looked like a dream that could come true. But the dream of equilibrium can be a disastrous illusion.

The fact is, every living thing exhibits “equilibrium bookkeeping”. That is, there are always quantities, like temperature, that stay at a fairly steady value. Various rates, such as heart rate, metabolic rate and so on, give us further examples. We could go on to find other similar cases in which the steady state involves not just a single organism, but rather, a fairly steady relationship among organisms, or organisms and their “environment”. All this tends to give us a picture of a life in equilibrium as the best of lives. But the fact is, all organisms survive and thrive by maintaining states *far from equilibrium*. This is true also of ensembles of organisms, ecosystems, and it’s true of the biosphere as a whole. (1) The equilibrium bookkeeping is, in that sense, very misleading with respect to the active processes of constant change that are taking place.

Organisms and other systems of sufficient complexity don’t always “stand pat”, locked into a particular rigid pattern of organization. They explore a space of possibilities afforded by their particular capacities. This gives them a flexibility, plasticity, that allows adjustments to the contingencies they meet. (2) Just as the equilibrium focus

produces illusions, so do dogmas of linear causality, like the causal gene. (3) This point is spectacularly underlined with the realization that chimpanzees and humans are *genetically* very nearly identical. The organization of their genomes, and especially the organization of their developmental regulation system are very different. That is, the way the “genes” interact with one another in a temporally organized process, and the way that process, in turn, interacts first with the uterine environment then the extra-uterine environment are what make all the difference – not the “genes” themselves, thought of as independent agents.

There are no genuinely closed systems in the living world; and very few isolated systems, usually transient. Normally everything exhibits constant interaction across whatever systems boundaries may be chosen. Spatio-temporal integrity is maintained; but not by isolation and stasis. The normal pattern is one of constant adjustment. Fairly often the adjustments produce characteristic behavior – and patterns of interaction – significantly different from those that prevailed before, as when seeds become plants, or infants become adults. Evolving, developing non-linear systems are hard to study – especially when compared to something like a ballistics system, where predictable outcomes follow on specific initial conditions. Non-linearity restricts the range within which precise predictions can be made, though characteristic patterns may become expectable. (4) So the results of mutually responsive interactions can often be quite surpris-

ing. Configurations that look as if they ought to be robust turn out to be fragile – and *vice versa*. Processes under the regulation of negative feedbacks can, with minute changes, flip into positive feedback regimes ratcheting them into catastrophe, and so on.

Two kinds of growth

According to the dream, perfect markets are conceived to be peopled by many small equals. The orthodox claim is that perfect markets are optimally productive, and that imperfections in the market are bound to result in sub-optimal productivity. (5) But the enormous growth, in all respects, within “imperfect” economies in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries gave the lie to this empirical claim. The question remaining was how this colossal deviation from theoretical expectation was to be accounted for. The two possible alternative explanations for the deviation are that exogenous contingencies caused the growth despite the imperfections, or that the theory behind the orthodox claim is wrong. In a sense, both explanations are correct, but the heavy burthen falleth on the theory, for contingencies are always to be expected. In the end, the central difficulty for the orthodoxy is to figure out how a system can be in equilibrium and in a growth regime at the same time. Joseph Schumpeter, writing in the 1920’s, observed that “The essential point to grasp is that in dealing with capitalism we are dealing with an evolutionary process.” ... “Capitalism is, then, by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can

be stationary”. (6) This should lead us to distinguish two kinds of economic growth.

The first is the conception implicit in the equilibrium based theories: scale invariant quantitative growth where the quantity of everything quantifiable simply increases. The second is structural growth, where scale invariance is supplanted by self-organizing and re-organizing processes that allow quantitative growth unattainable by scale invariant accretion. This is actually the appropriate framework for the continuing discussion. A decent analogy here is that multi-celled organisms aren’t just big single celled organisms. Single celled organisms can have effects at the macro scale only by being incredibly numerous. Multi-celled organisms have effects at that scale by themselves, because their structural organization has opened up modes of action and interaction unavailable to micro-organisms.

This sort of scenario isn’t by any means limited to organisms. Atoms aren’t big quarks; galaxies not big stars. In fact, atom sized quarks are impossible, as are galaxy sized stars. In the latter case, gravitational accretion couldn’t proceed to the point of achieving a galaxy sized star without encountering tremendous instabilities arising to blow the whole thing to smithereens – with the creation of smaller stars, perhaps black holes, and parsecs of gas.

Non-linear systems don’t grow by the addition of quantity to quantity to produce a bigger quantity of the same sort. For systems dominated by non-linear interactions, causes and effects

don't chain, but interloop. The typical pattern is that action in response to a given structured set of circumstances restructures the conditions of subsequent action. Perhaps the mechanization of agriculture is the most convenient paradigm. (7) The restructuring of the world agricultural economy: the emergence of industrial agriculture at unprecedented scales, and the consequent restructuring of markets occurred in less than a century – amazingly rapidly when measured against the prior history of agriculture. In the United States, for example, the disappearance of the family farm (and the yeoman farmer) was completed within two generations, with only a handful of survivors. (8) And the remaining small farmers obviously don't face the market conditions envisioned in the classical theory: a large number of rational equals competing at the same scale.

By a ratcheting process, increased agricultural productivity increases population, hence manpower, but also additional mouths to feed, hence limits on the possibility of an agricultural surplus. Times ripen for “innovations.” (9) Any given ripening is a result of reaching a scale discontinuity. Given ambient technique, it's impossible to bridge the discontinuity. Predictably, in agriculture, this is a simple consequence of the work capacity of available organismic sources of power: human or domesticated animals. (10)

Mechanization couples agriculture to the ambient industrial process, with its given capacities for innovation, and

with its evolved system of capitalization. (11) In the modern period, this meant the internalization of agriculture in the structure of the capitalist world, with the inevitable restructuring of the market conditions of agriculture. (Hence the transformation of American farming mentioned above.) The restructuring, involving “the new consumer goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization,” bridges the scale barrier, and ends (perhaps forever) the viability of the preceding structure of the agricultural world. State ownership and “private” farmers' cooperatives are obvious alternatives. The point is that mechanization enables new social structure as a means of access to the mechanization.

The contrast between scale-invariant growth and structural growth generates tensions between equilibrium and growth with respect to systems of many kinds; not just economic systems. It's endemic, for example, in biological evolution, where, as Darwin said, “descent with modification” is what needs to be explained. “Descent” requires reliable reproduction: like must beget like. “Modification” requires novelty: variant offspring must be different enough to explore a significant space of adaptive opportunities. The first requires conformity to the sort of equilibrium bookkeeping familiar in Mendelian genetics; the second requires the system to be operating far from equilibrium. It has been thus since the origins of life on the planet.

In every case we've talked about, a detailed dynamics is involved: particular to the scale and other conditions of the system. Yet structural growth is present in every case. Capitalism is, in this regard, no different from anything else. But after saying that, it's necessary to get right down to the details of the dynamics. So, what, then, is the evolutionary dynamic of capitalism? “The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumer goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates.” (12)

Now, in the old days we would proceed to wrangling about whether Schumpeter has identified causes or effects: trying, in our deterministic zeal, to identify the course of linear determination. We now know that it would be silly to retrace that line of thought. Instead, we can start with the hypothesis that Schumpeter was basically right in his identification of the “fundamental impulse,” except in the implication of linearity his formulation suggests. Further, we've seen a number of structural analogies that show us that capitalism as a system falls into line with other evolving systems we understand pretty well. So the question arises: What is distinctive about capitalism?

The answer to that question has to come from an examination of the characteristics of the possibility space capitalism occupies. This possibility space has evolved on the basis of the

earlier systems out of which capitalism emerged, plus the modifications of the possibility space that capitalism has itself made. The system then has to be traced through a trajectory of states. The states will be identified dimensionally, with each dimension of the space being identified, in turn with a way in which the system can change quantitatively. Not surprisingly, the possibility space articulated by orthodox economic thinking is two dimensional, “wealth,” and growth rate. This assignment doesn't, by itself, distinguish capitalism from any of a number of other systems, all of them thought of as pursuing wealth, but is sufficient to account for the illusion of pure quantitative growth established for capitalism. It obscures the structural framework: the pattern of control of the means of production, the system of private ownership, and the establishment of price in the market. The entire structural framework of the dream has been altered over the last three centuries. It is this structure that the “fundamental impulse” of capitalism operates within and upon. This rubs harshly against the ideology of *laissez faire* that capitalism continually draws upon for morale purposes. Freedoms become highly structured freedoms.

Clearly, obscuring the framework makes it easier to hang onto the traditional dream and its nostalgic imagery. Indeed, the standard theory would have it that the *impulse* at the root of capitalism is precisely individualistic pursuit of wealth. Correspondingly, of course,

(7) In fact, this can be understood rather precisely, in terms of the energy budget of agriculture. See, for example, Smil, Vaclav (2008). *Energy in Nature and Society*, Cambridge: The MIT Press. Especially section 6.3, 155ff.

(8) The U.S. farm labor force “went from about 64% of total labor force in 1850 to less than 2% by the year 2000”. Smil, op.cit., 302.

(9) A common theme in the literature is that technology is invented, sometimes several times, and lies unused, only to be rediscovered or re-invented

yet again and coupled into a production ratchet. In every case, the precise conditions for entraining an “innovation” have to be appreciated.

(10) Here again, Smil, op. cit. is an essential source. For example, “Matching the power of US tractors in the year 2000 with horses would require building up an equine stock of at least 250 million head, about ten times the record number of horses in 1918. At least 300 million ha, twice the total of U.S. arable land would be needed to feed the animals.” (p. 305).

(11) Agriculture often had to be *de facto* capitalized over the course of history, if only for the provision of seed stock and access to water; and various schemes, involving various authoritative structures, were continually being devised.

(12) Schumpeter, op. cit. p. 83.

(13) Schumpeter, op. cit. p. 84.

(14) As for the apparent injustice in the world: there’s always a story available to account for it – in any of the standard ideological frameworks. It’s prosperity, however distributed, that we’re concerned with here.

“the new consumer goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization” are not causes, on the orthodox view, but effects. Here is where we have to be very attentive to the interactive non-linearities, and the network of feedbacks. Once the system gets going, it’s no longer possible for any particular activity to have a linear cause assigned to it that’s not itself a “product” of structural circumstances exactly like the ones it also produces. This is the core story of self-organization.

However, the point here is to see that the events of the century weren’t the evil travesty of a noble ideal, but business as usual – when business is examined correctly. Structural growth is essential for quantitative growth at historical points where scale discontinuities are reached. Then, in its turn, the structural changes that ratchet the economy to new scales produce a new set of conditions. In fact, it’s structural change that makes capitalism historical rather than quasi-static. “In other words, the problem that is usually being visualized is how capitalism administers existing structures, whereas the relevant problem is how it creates and destroys them. As long as this is not recognized, the investigator does a meaningless job.” (13)

Denouement

An essential part of the dream was an infinite bankroll theory. But we’ve found out that the bankroll is finite; and, in

fact, that the point of bankruptcy is well within reach. The most obvious possibility, at the moment, is that the thermodynamics of the biosphere limit the rate and quantity of waste products of the system that has evolved, through a series of stages of structural growth, to provide the current level of wealth. Greenhouse gases are currently the best example.

We’ve slowly become aware, in a truly practical sense, of these bounds. We have to be clear that the problem being generated isn’t peculiar to capitalism or to any one of the closets of capitalism, but common to *any* economy, socialist, mixed, communist (whatever that might mean), or other that depended on quantitative growth for its viability. But suppose we were convinced that the virtues of capitalism ought to be preserved – consistent with the existence of life, including human life, for a reasonable time in the future. Could we expect processes of self-organization and self-restructuring to emerge within the capitalist framework to rescue us?

Well, here, of course, Adam Smith turns around and bites us. For, the self-organization of the capitalist system we now have is *self-organization* in the Smithian mode. Smith’s claim, after all, was that prosperity and justice (14), driven by self-interest and guided by the market, would *automatically* emerge. This is the force of the metaphor of the invisible hand. That’s the basic practical scenario from which both the quantitative and structural growth of the last

three plus centuries have themselves emerged. The trick is how to imagine the retention of these ideological roots under conditions where both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of growth have to be tightly controlled. You have to imagine a system *explicitly* designed for growth producing the conditions for satisfactory contraction. From the Smithean point of view, the whole point of a successfully operating economy is to promote wealth. The whole point of capitalism is for people to get rich (the whole point of socialism is for all people to get (moderately) rich). In our present scenario, the job has to be done without the infinite bankroll.

Quite obviously, the situation is not without precedent. The world is full of organisms that have had to accommodate deterioration of the environment within which they evolved. The survivors of deterioration are the ones that had the plasticity of repertoire; the others died off. In many cases, the deterioration of environment was the direct or indirect result of the activity of the organisms themselves – eating themselves out of house and home, and so on. Our scenario puts us in the same boat as many organisms past and present, though we may never have imagined that such a thing could happen to us. An exactly parallel scenario turns out to be our actuality. It remains to be seen not only whether we end up with the survivors, but also what we can salvage of the way of life that we’ve destructively created. What we know for sure

is that we have to look for a rescue plan based on “reasons and hopes beyond growth.” Continued pursuit of growth is a recipe for slow painful suicide. Do you see world politics affording us that opportunity?

Well, we’ve seen that development over the last few centuries has been qualitative and structural, not just quantitative. Neither has it *always* been exploitative. So maybe if we rescue the old dreams from the nostalgic memories we habitually bury them in, and if we resolutely turn our backs on the traditional political closets of the Enlightenment, instead of turning our backsides to the future, we may have a chance. Of course we’ll have to stop trying to put out the fire we’ve started by pouring oil and heaping coal on it. That’s obvious. We really will have to get out of the infinite bankroll mode, and into a cooperative relationship with the biosphere. That’s where possibilities for qualitative and structural development lie. In particular, we’ll have to learn how to let the environment restructure our reasons and hopes.

Fortunately, nature speaks. In particular, the biosphere let’s us know when it’s getting to the limit of its capacity to sustain the conditions of life for us – if we’ll listen. Moreover, in certain ways, we actually have been using our heads during the last few centuries. We understand enormously more about ourselves and our world than we did when the dreams were first dreamt. It’s just not clear that we’re ready to use what we know. +



Miina Äkkijyrkkä's sculptures. Photo by
Juha Metso, 2004.



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<http://p2pfoundation.net>

Michel Bauwens

Peer to Peer Economies and the Revolution in Values

I: The Economics of P2P

Peer to peer social processes are bottom-up processes whereby agents in a distributed network can freely engage in common pursuits, without external coercion, i.e. 'permissionlessly' undertake actions and relations. This requires not just 'decentralized' systems, but 'distributed' systems, through which individuals can cooperate. Distributed networks do have constraints, forms of internal coercion, that are the conditions for the group to operate, and these may be embedded in the technical infrastructure, the social norms, or legal rules. Despite these caveats, we have a remarkable social dynamic here, one that is based on voluntary participation in the creation of common goods, which are made universally available to all.

Peer to peer processes are emerging in literally every cranny of social life, and have been extensively documented in the 9,000+ pages of documentation at the Foundation for Peer to Peer Alternatives, and many other places on the Web.

P2P social processes more precisely engender:

- 1) peer production: wherever a group of peers decides to engage in the production of a common resource,
- 2) peer governance: the means they choose to govern themselves while they engage in such a pursuit,
- 3) peer property: the institutional and legal framework they choose to guard against the private appropriation of this common work; this usually takes the form of non-exclusionary forms of universal common property, as defined through the General Public License, some forms of Creative Commons licenses, or similar derivatives.

Peer governance combines free self-aggregation of individual skills and universally broadcast tasks, processes for communal validation of excellence within the broader pool of input, and defence mechanisms against private appropriation and sabotage. Peer governance differs from hierarchical allocation of resources, from allocation through the market, and even from democracy, as these are all mechanisms for dealing with scarce resources. Peer governance essentially aims at, and often succeeds in, making sure that no formal 'representative group' can take decisions separate from the community of peer producers.

These new property forms have at least three characteristics:

- 1) they are aimed against the private appropriation of the commonly created value,
- 2) they are aimed at creating the widest possible usage, i.e. they are universal common-property regimes,
- 3) they keep sovereignty with the individual.

The third aspect is why peer property fundamentally differs from both private property and collective property. Private property is individual but exclusionary, it says, what is mine is not yours. But the state, i.e. collective property, is also exclusionary, but in another sense: it says, this is ours, but it means that you no longer have sovereignty. It is from us, regulated by a bureaucracy or representative democracy, but it is not really yours. The collective has taken over from the individual and, more often than not, coercion is involved. But the General Public License or Creative Commons licenses are different. Common property is not collective property.

Using these, the individual gets full attribution, i.e. recognition of his personal property. You are freely sharing your sovereignty with others. This is especially clear in Creative Commons licensing schemes, in which the individual gets a whole gamut of options for sharing. You remain fully in control, i.e. "sovereign", and there is no coercion involved.

It is important to note that peer production is a form of "generalized", on non-reciprocal, exchange. It is not a gift economy, based on direct exchange or obligation. So peer production is not to be equated with cooperative production for the market: participation has to be voluntary, there is no direct reward (but many indirect rewards) in the form of monetary compensation. The process itself is participative. And the outcome is similarly free, in the sense that anyone can access and use the common resource. In reality, most peer-production projects are bound up with a smaller core group of people who may get paid and use the finances to create an infrastructure so that the peer production may occur.

If we look at peer production as a mode of production, as a process involving an input, 'processing' and output phase, then we can say that it requires the following:

- 1) Open and free raw material that can be used permissionlessly. Thus, peer production either requires the creation of such open and free raw material by the producers themselves, or materials that are in the public domain or in a commons format already;
- 2) The process is participatory with a design that is geared towards inclusion and *a posteriori* validation, not exclusion through *a priori* filtering of the participant;

- 3) The output is universally available and therefore, uses peer-property formats, or in other words: a Commons.

As the Commons-oriented output creates a new layer of open and free input for further transformation and processing, we have the requirements for social reproduction of the system, called the Circulation of the Common by Nick Dyer-Witheford (1). Looking at these three inter-related paradigms of open and free participation, and the Commons, we can then easily understand why movements striving for these conditions and social practices are arising in almost every single field of human activity.

The conditions for peer production to emerge are essentially: abundance and distribution. Abundance refers to the abundance of intellect or surplus creativity, to the capacity to own means of production with similar excess capacity. Distribution is the accessibility of such abundant resources in fine-grained implements, what Yochai Benkler has called modularity or granularity. (2) Again we could talk about the distribution of intellect, of the production infrastructure, of financial capital.

It is important to distinguish between two spheres. In one sphere, our digitally-enabled cooperation, reproduction of non-rival knowledge goods, such as software, content and open designs, takes place at marginal cost, and there is no loss by sharing, but actually a gain, through network effects. Such free cooperation can only be hindered 'artificially', through either legal means (intellectual property regimes) or through technical restrictions such as Digital Rights Management, which essentially hinder the social innovation

that can take place. In this sphere, a non-reciprocal mode of production becomes dominant, since there is no competition for resources, and you do not lose, but gain, through giving. In the sphere of material production, where the costs of production are higher and we have rival goods, we still require regimes of exchange, or regimes of reciprocity. Notice that in a sphere of virtual abundance, where copying is trivial, there is no tension between supply and demand, and hence no market.

Post-capitalist aspects of peer to peer
Peer production, though embedded in the current political economy and essential for the survival of the cognitive forms of capitalism, is essentially post-capitalist. Essentially because it exists outside of wage dependency, outside of the control of a corporate hierarchy, and does not allocate resources according to any pricing or market mechanism.

Similarly, peer governance could be said to be post-democratic, because it is a form of governance that does not rely on representation, but in which participants directly co-decide; and because it is not limited to the political field, but can be used in any social field. Peer governance is non-representational, and it is essentially so because what the networked communication affords us is the global coordination of small groups, and therefore the peer to peer logic of small groups can operate with global scope. Hierarchies, the market, and even representative democracy, are all just means for allocating scarce resources, and do not apply in contexts where abundant resources are allocated directly through the social process of cooperation. However, since pure peer to peer logic only functions fully in the sphere of abundance, it will al-

ways have to insert itself into the forms that are responsible for the allocation of resources in the sphere of material scarcity. Peer-governance-based leadership seems to be a combination of invitational leadership, i.e. the capacity to inspire voluntary cooperation, and *a posteriori* arbitrage based on the reputational capital thus obtained. However, the process of production itself is an emergent property of cooperating networks.

Finally, peer property is a post-capitalist form of property, because it is non-exclusionary and creates a commons with marginal reproduction costs. There are two main forms of peer property. One is based on individual sharing of creative expression, and is dominated by the Creative Commons option, which allows an individual to determine the level of sharing. The other is applied to commons-based peer production, and takes the form of the General Public License or its derivatives or alternatives, and requires that any change to the common also belong to the common.

The hyper-productive nature of peer to peer

Pre-capitalist class societies are based on coercive extraction of surplus value and hierarchical allocation of resources. Capitalism is based on the part-real and part-fictional process of equal exchange of value. In other words, we can say that coercive societies are based on the extrinsic motivation of fear, while capitalism is based on the extrinsic motivation of self-interest.

Peer production structurally eliminates extrinsic motivation and replaces it with intrinsic motivation, or in other words, passion. It is psychologically the most potent and productive form

of human motivation. In addition, the market only allows, at best, for win-win scenarios of mutual interest, but is structurally designed to ignore externalities. Corporate firms can only strive for relative quality in a competitive environment, but peer producing communities strive structurally for absolute quality. As an object-oriented sociality based on the construction of universally available common value, peer production inherently strives for positive externalities, and lacks much of the motivation for creating negative externalities for the sake of profit.

The combination of all these characteristics creates a hyper-productive mode of production, and asymmetrical competition with pure, for-profit firms relying on wage labor and closed intellectual property.

This allows us to formulate the bold hypothesis of the Law of asymmetrical competition, which states that:

1) Any for-profit company based on closed IP, faced with the competition of a peer producing community, a for-benefit association managing the infrastructure of cooperation, and an ecology of businesses based on a commons, will lose that competitive race. (This hypothesis would explain the gains of Linux over Microsoft, the rise of Wikipedia as compared to Britannica, as being models for many other examples of asymmetrical competition.)

An entity based on innovation-impeding intellectual property, appropriation of common social value that discourages free contributions, and striving for relative quality (hence consciously substandard products), cannot in the long run survive the challenge of an open competition based on peer production. However, there is an

important corollary to this first law, which explains the necessity of hybrid forms, and why peer production can be embedded within an overall capitalist context.

The corollary law is this:

2) Any peer production community, which creates a sustainable management for its infrastructure of cooperation and an ecology of businesses which can fund it, will be more competitive than a community which fails to do so.

Pure non-reciprocal production can only occur within a sphere of relative abundance, characterized by the free aggregation of human brains, ownership or easy access to computers, and socialized access to the networks, such as the internet. However, if peer production is collectively sustainable as long as it can maintain a similar level of volunteerism (offsetting departures with newcomers), it is not so for the individuals concerned. In addition it also requires a additional infrastructure of cooperation, which may have to operate on top of the internet. For example: it may need costly servers in case of success. Peer production cannot therefore fully escape the monetary sphere or its requirements, demanding hybrid formats.

We will detail this below but in short, we can observe that successful peer projects combine:

- 1) The freely self-aggregating community;
- 2) A for-benefit association, usually in the form of a nonprofit Foundation, which funds and manages the infrastructure of cooperation;
- 3) An ecology of businesses that practice benefit-sharing, returning part of the profit obtained from selling added

value to the market, back to the commons on which their value-creation is based. Such businesses therefore fund the infrastructure of cooperation, hire many of the participants, and thereby maintain the viability and sustainability of their respective Commons.

Adaptation of cognitive capitalism to peer to peer

So far, empirical evidence suggests three emerging forms of adaptation between the sphere of peer to peer cooperation, and the institutional and market fields.

- The sphere of individual sharing, think YouTube, where sharers have relatively weak links to each other, creates the Web 2.0 business model. In this model, an ethical economy of sharing, co-exists with proprietary platforms which enable and empower such sharing, in exchange for the selling of the aggregated attention.
- The sphere of commons-oriented peer production, based on stronger links between cooperators, think Linux or Wikipedia, usually combines a self-governing community, with for-benefit institutions (Apache Foundation, Wikimedia Foundation, etc...), which manage the infrastructure of collaboration, and an ecology of businesses which create scarcities around the commons, and in return support the commons from which they derive their value.
- Finally, crowdsourcing occurs when it is the institutions themselves which attempt to create a framework, where participation can be integrated in their value chain, and this can take a wide variety of forms. This is generally the field of co-creation.

There is a mutual dependence of peer production and the market. Peer production is based on the achievements and surplus of the existing market-dominated society, and on the income that can be generated through participation in the market; on the other hand, market players are increasingly dependent and profiting from social innovation.

Because of the law of asymmetrical competition, i.e. the hyperproductive nature of peer production, corporations are driven to adapt substantially to the new practices and new players emerge that are based on an alliance with peer production. The companies that do so

are more competitive than those who do not, creating a new sector of 'netarchical capitalism' which empowers and enables social innovation and peer production to occur. Corporations have a dual role in this, because of their contradictory nature. They have to sustain cooperation and sharing, i.e. the openness that creates value, but also have to enclose part of the value, as they are competing with others in a scarcity-based marketplace.

We must note that monetary value that is being realized by the capital players, is – in many if not most of the cases, not of the same order as the value created by the social innovation processes. The user-producers-participants are creating direct use value, videos in YouTube, knowledge and software in the case of commons-oriented projects. This use value is put in common pool, freely usable, and therefore, does not consist of scarce products for which pricing can be demanded. The sharing platforms live from selling the derivative attention created, not the use value itself. In the commons model, the abundant commons can also not be directly marketed, without the creation of additional 'scarcities'.

What does all of this mean for the market sphere? It is now possible to create all kinds of use value without, or with only a minimal, or with only *a posteriori*, intervention of capital. We are dealing with post-monetary, post-capitalist modes of value creation and exchange, that are both immanent, i.e. embedded, to the market, but also transcendent to it, i.e. operating outside its boundaries. Capital is increasingly dependent, and profiting in all kinds of ways, from the positive externalities of such social innovation.

So the challenge can be described as follows: 1) we have a process of social innovation which creates mostly non-monetary value for the participants; 2) we may have an increasingly huge gap between the possibility of creating post-monetary value, and the derivative exchange values that are realized by enterprise; 3) the participants engaged in such passionate production and innovation, mostly cannot find in such processes an answer to their own sustainability.

Hence, the impossibility to realize more than just a small partial monetary value, from the point of view of

most commercial players. Increasing precarity for the participants of social innovation. In other words, the current market model does not have a reverse process of redistribution for the value that is being created.

This might of course be a temporary crisis, but we do not believe it is. The reason is that the market can only indirectly and partially provide monetary compensation for processes which are not motivated by such compensation. What we need therefore are more general redistributive processes that allow society and the market to give back part of the value that is being so created.

One possibility is the further development of transitional labour market measures (protect the worker, not the job), which recognize the flexibility and mobility of contemporary careers. But this needs an important add-on development: the realization that contemporary workers are moving not just from job to job, but also from jobs to non-jobs, and that in fact, what is most useful and meaningful for them (and the market, and society) are not the paid jobs for the market, but the episodes of passionate production. It seems to me therefore that a more general measure, not linked to the job, but conceived as a repayment for, and enabler of, social innovation, is needed. The name of that general measure is most probably some form of basic income.

Likely expansion of peer production principles to material production

Peer production naturally occurs in the sphere of immaterial production. In this sphere, the access to distributed resources is relatively easy. Large sections of the population in the Western countries are educated, and can have a computer at their disposal. And the costs of reproduction are marginal. The expansion of peer production is dependent on cultural/legal conditions. It requires open and free raw cultural material to use; participative structures to process it; and commons-based property forms to protect the results from private appropriation. Hence is a circulation of the common obtained (the concept is from Nick Dyer-Witthoford), through which peer production virally expands.

However, peer production is not limited to the sphere of immaterial production. First of all, any physical pro-

duction process needs to be immaterially designed, and open design is not fundamentally different from, though it is more complex than, collaborative knowledge or free software production. So, peer production can work for the design phase of physical production, provided a good infrastructure is available for such co-design. Physical resources can be shared, if they are available in a distributed format. For example: computers and their files and processing power. Cars can be pooled. Money can be pooled, as it is in P2P financial exchanges such as Zopa, or through mutual credit systems. (3) Wealth acknowledgement procedures can be the basis for the creation of complementary currencies.

Rapid tooling and prototyping, desktop manufacturing, personal fabricators and 3D printers, multi-purpose machinery and other similar developments may and will lower the threshold of participation, creating more modularity and granularity in new fields. In fact, we may observe that the same tendency to miniaturization, which led to the networked computer, is taking place in the domain of physical machinery. Given the decrease in the cost of physical capital, it becomes easy to imagine the combination of open design communities, with cooperative forms of relocated physical production.

Such expansion is not just a natural extension of technical evolution, but has structural, and therefore political, impediments. The centralized capital formats of contemporary neoliberal anti-markets obviously impede such expansion. But even with such constraints, the scope for the expansion of peer production is significant.

Again, we will make the following caveat. In the immaterial sphere, non-reciprocal peer production is likely to become dominant. In the field of scarcity, we will see the rise of peer-informed modes of production. This means that market forms are starting to change, changing from a logic of pure capitalism (making commodities for exchange so as to increase capital) to logics in which the logic of exchange is subsumed under the logic of partnership. Think about fair trade (a market subject to peer arbitrage), social entrepreneurship (profit used to sustain social goals), base-of-the-pyramid inclusional capitalism, and the many

political-social movements that aim to divorce market forms from the infinite growth logic of capitalism, such as the natural capitalism movement in the U.S.

In the last two to three years, we have witnessed the renewed emergence and rapid growth of craft communities, a maker movement, distributed desktop manufacturing through commercial platforms, and a free and open hardware movement. Open hardware is growing very fast, with companies such as Arduino and Buglabs being living exemplars and role models, and inventing their own platforms and infrastructures such as the Open Source Hardware Bank. The latter is particularly significant as it shows that open hardware producing communities, such as those around the Arduino electronic circuit boards, are creating their own business ecologies. They are combining the existing triarchical commons model (community, foundation, business), with a solution to the cost-recovery problem typical of physical production. Because of this, they are emerging as viable alternatives to the traditional corporate models and, thanks to the inherent hyperproductivity that we have argued for above, are slated to play an increasingly dominant role.

To prosper, and expand beyond the current confines in the sphere of immaterial production, more distributed infrastructures will be necessary, complementing the already existing communication infrastructures:

- Distributed energy: this requires a move away from centralized energy production based on depletable fossil fuels, and towards a home and neighbourhood-based infrastructure producing renewable energy.
- Distributed and multiple-currency systems: meta-currency platforms will allow local and virtual (affinity-based) communities to produce exchange mechanisms that are not based on compound interest and fractional reserve banking, and can promote specialized in-community exchange, protect from globalized dislocation, and create an alternative infrastructure of inter-community and inter-individual exchange.
- Open and distributed manufacturing: distributed capital goods with radically lower thresholds, such as those being developed today, need to be recon-

figured and integrated into a vision of relocalized production, in the context of global cooperation with open-design communities

II: The Politics of P2P

P2P theory as the emancipatory possibility of the age

Our current political economy is based on a fundamental mistake. It is based on the assumption that natural resources are unlimited, and that nature is an endless sink. And this creates an artificial scarcity of potentially abundant cultural resources. This combination of quasi-abundance and quasi-scarcity destroys the biosphere and hampers the expansion of social innovation and a free culture. In a P2P-based society, this situation is reversed: the limits of natural resources are recognized, and the abundance of immaterial resources becomes the core operating principle.

The vision of P2P theory is the following:

- 1) the core intellectual, cultural and spiritual value is produced through non-reciprocal peer production,
- 2) it is surrounded by a reformed, peer-inspired sphere of material exchange,
- 3) it is globally managed by a peer-inspired and reformed state and governance system, a "partner state which enables and empowers the social production of value".

Because of these characteristics, peer to peer can be said to be the core logic of the successor civilization, and is an answer and solution to the structural crisis of contemporary capitalism. Indeed, because an infinite-growth system is a logical and physical impossibility with a limited natural environment, the current world system is facing a structural crisis in its extensive growth. Currently consuming resources at the rate of 'two planets', it would need four planets if countries like China and India were to achieve equity with the current Western levels of consumption. Because of the ecological and resource crisis that this causes, the system is ultimately limited in its extensive expansion.

However, its dream of intensive development in the immaterial sphere is equally blocked, since the sphere of abundance and direct social production of value through peer production cre-

ates an exponential growth in use value, but only, say, a linear growth in the market opportunities on its margins.

The current world system is facing a similar crisis to that of the slave-based Roman Empire, which could no longer grow extensively (at some point, the cost of expansion is greater than the benefits of added productivity), but could not grow intensively either, since that would require autonomy for the slaves. Hence, the feudal system emerged, which refocused on the local, where it could become much more productive and grow 'intensively'. Serfs, who were tied to the land, but now had families, could keep a fixed part of their production, and who were subjected to a much lighter taxation load, were substantially more productive than slaves. The domain-based lords took a substantially smaller part of the surplus. Today, extensive growth is ultimately blocked, but intensive growth in the immaterial sphere requires a substantial reconfiguration that largely transcends the current system logic.

Similarly, the current structural crisis is causing a reconfiguration of the two main classes (just as the slave owners had to become feudal lords, and the slaves serfs). At present, we are seeing the emergence of a netarchical class of capital owners, who are renouncing their dependence on the present regime of immaterial accumulation through intellectual property, in favor of a role as enablers of social participation through proprietary platforms, which cleverly combine open and closed elements so as to ensure a measure of control and profit, while knowledge workers are reconfiguring from being a class that was dissociated from the means of production to one that is no longer dissociated from its own means of production, as their brains and the networks are now their socialized means of production. (However, they are still largely dissociated from autonomous means of monetization.) It would be fair to say that, currently, peer production communities are sustainable collectively, but not individually, leading to a crisis of value and widespread precarity amongst knowledge workers.

The solution would in my opinion point in the following direction:

- 1) the private sector recognizes its increasing dependence on the positive ex-

ternalization of social cooperation, and together with the public authorities, agrees to a new historical compromise in the form of a basic income; this allows the sphere of cooperation to thrive even more, creating market benefits

2) the sphere of the market is dissociated from infinite-growth capitalism (describing how this can be done would require a separate article, but the key would be a macro-monetary reform such as those proposed by Bernard Lietaer, associated with a new regime that extends the production of money from private banks to the social field, through open money systems)

3) the sphere of peer production creates appropriate 'wealth acknowledgment systems' to recognize those that sustain its existence, and systems exist that can translate that reputational wealth into income.

Peer governance and democracy

As peer to peer technical and social infrastructures, such as sociable media and self-directed teams, are emerging to become an important, if not dominant, format for the changes induced by cognitive capitalism, the peer-to-peer relational dynamic will increasingly have political effects. (4)

As a reminder, the P2P relational dynamic arises wherever there are distributed networks, i.e. networks where agents are free to undertake actions and relationships, and where there is an absence of overt coercion so that governance modes are emerging from the bottom-up. This creates processes such as peer production, the common production of value; peer governance, i.e. the self-governance of such projects; and peer property, the auto-immune system that prevents the private appropriation of the common.

It is important to distinguish the peer governance of a multitude of small, but coordinated global groups that choose non-representational processes in which participants co-decide on the projects, from representative democracy. The latter is a decentralized form of power-sharing based on elections and representatives. Since society is not a peer group with an *a priori* consensus, but a decentralized structure of competing groups, representative democracy cannot be replaced by peer governance.

However, both modes will influ-

ence and accommodate to each other. Peer projects that evolve beyond a certain scale and start having to make decisions about scarce resources will probably adapt some representational mechanisms.

In fact, there are a few things that we can already say about the emerging templates of peer governance. In the sharing mode, centred on the sharing of individual expression, in which network ties are relatively weak, proprietary third-party platforms are responsible for setting design rules that have to enable sharing and to demand some form of openness that creates the value, but balanced by their need to capture that value, with the existing possibilities and mobilization power of the sharing communities acting as a counterweight. In the commons-oriented form of peer production, as seen in free software for example, we see the emergence of a triarchical model, combining a self-aggregating, 'permission-less' and self-governed community; with a for-benefit association (usually an NGO in the form of a Foundation) that manages the infrastructure of cooperation, and subjected to formal democratic rules; and an ecology of businesses creating market value on top of the commons, while returning some of its profit in the form of benefit sharing to the Foundation or community, thereby insuring the continuation of the Commons on which they depend. These form templates that will be increasingly used in the expanding field of social production, but are not as such applicable to the polis as a totality.

Representative and bureaucratic decision-making can and will in some places be replaced by global governance networks, which may be to a large extent self-governed, but in any case, it will and should incorporate more and more multi-stakeholder models, which strive to include as participants in decision-making all groups that could be affected by such actions. This group-based partnership model is different, but related in spirit, to individual-based peer governance, because they share an ethos of participation.

Towards a Partner State approach

Partner state policy is an approach in which the state enables and empowers user communities to create value themselves, and which also focuses on

the elimination of obstacles. The fundamental change in approach is as follows. In the modern view, individuals were seen as atomized. They were believed to be in need of a social contract that delegated authority to a sovereign in order to create society, and in need of socialization by institutions that addressed them as an undifferentiated mass. In the new view, however, individuals are always-already connected with their peers, and look at institutions in this kind of peer-informed way. Institutions therefore, will have to evolve to become support ecologies, devising ways to create infrastructures of support.

Politicians become interpreters and experts, who can guide the issues emerging out of civil-society-based networks into the institutional realm. The state becomes an at least neutral (or better yet: commons-favorable) arbiter, i.e. a meta-regulator of the three realms, and retreats from the binary state/privatisation dilemma to the triarchical choice for an optimal mix between government regulation, private market freedom, and autonomous civil-society projects. A partner state recognizes that the law of asymmetric competition dictates that it has to support social innovation to it utmost ability.

An example I recently encountered was the work of the municipality of Brest in Brittany. There, the "Local Democracy" section of the city, under the leadership of Michel Briand, makes available online infrastructures, training modules, and a physical infrastructure for sharing (cameras, sound equipment, etc...), so that local individuals and groups, can create cultural and social projects on their own. For example, the *Territoires Sonores T* project allows the creation by the public of audio and video files to enrich custom trails, which are therefore neither produced by a private company, nor by the city itself. (5) In other words, the public authority in this case enables and empowers the direct social production of value.

The peer-to-peer dynamic, and the thinking and experimentation that it inspires, do not just present a third form for the production of social value, it also produces new forms of institutionalization and regulation, which could be fruitfully explored and/or applied.

Indeed, from civil society there emerges a new institutionalization,

the commons, which is a distinct new form of regulation and property. Unlike private property, which is exclusionary, and unlike state property, in which the collective 'expropriates' the individual; by contrast, in the form of the commons, the individual retains his sovereignty, but has voluntarily shared it. Only the commons-based property approach recognizes knowledge's propensity to flow everywhere, while the proprietary-property regime requires a radical fight against that natural propensity. This makes it likely that the commons-format will be adopted as the more competitive solution.

In terms of the institutionalization of these new forms of common property, Peter Barnes, in his important book *Capitalism 3.0*, explains how national parks and environmental commons (such as a proposed Skytrust), could be run by trusts, who have the obligation to retain all (natural) capital intact, and through a one man/one vote/one share, they would be in charge of preserving common natural resources. (6) This could become an accepted alternative to both nationalization and deregulation/privatization.

I would surmise that in a successor civilization, where peer to peer logic is the core logic of value creation, the commons will be the central institution that drives the meta-system, and the market will be a peer-informed sub-system that deals with the production of rival physical products, along with a pluralist economy that is augmented with a variety of reciprocity-based schemes.

A set of concrete proposals

Just as social innovation and peer production are hyperproductive and 'competitive' in the sphere of corporate competition, so they are also advantageous for any public authorities that adopt them in their own territorial spheres. This gives political leverage to a set of three inter-related proposals that would sustain a further expansion of peer production.

Here is my proposal for what we need as transitional measures to further stimulate social production: i.e. a set of three interlocking institutions, each with its own complementary mission and objectives:

1) Institute for the Protection and Development of the Commons

This is an institution that effectively supports the creation and maintenance of the commons by diffusing knowledge about the legal and institutional means of creating and protecting them; by creating a supportive infrastructure of cooperation that facilitates the creation of commons-oriented initiatives by those who have greater difficulties accessing such a necessary infrastructure; by maintaining relations with and supporting the operation and maintenance of the for-benefits institutions that are most often associated with commons-oriented initiatives. Example: the public support for social value creation in the French city of Brest.

2) Institute for Open Business

This institution supports the creation of market value in cooperation with the Commons, in ways that are compatible with and do not deplete commons-based value creation. Typically, this is the kind of Institution that would support open-source software businesses, open textbook publishers, etc., and support young and starting entrepreneurs who want to engage in such work. Example: the OSBR.Ca initiative in Toronto, Canada.

3) Institute for Benefit-Sharing and Commons Recognition

This institution focuses on patronage and on various forms of support that do not destroy the peer to peer logic of voluntary contributions. It creates *a priori* prizes, awards, bounties to support individuals involved in commons-based value-creation in cooperation with companies that profit from commons-created value (stimulated by the previously mentioned open-business institute); it stimulates benefit-sharing practices in those companies: it acts as a regulator for such practices, identifying weak spots and stimulating solutions for them; it creates a posteriori patronage arrangements for individuals with a proven record in commons-based value creation; it studies and proposes policies for the overall stimulation of commons-based value creation.

A renewed progressive policy centred on sustenance of the Commons

What does this mean for the emancipatory traditions that emerged from the industrial era? I believe it could have two positive effects:

1) a dissociation from the automatic link with bureaucratic government modalities (which does not mean that this is not appropriate in certain circumstances); proposals can be formulated that directly support the development of the Commons;

2) a dissociation from its alternative: deregulation/privatization; support for the Commons and peer production means that there is an alternative both to neoliberal privatization and to the Blairite introduction of private logics in the public sphere.

Progressive movements can thereby become informational rather than a modality of industrial society. Instead of defending the industrial status quo, they again become an offensive force (say: striving for an equity-based information society), more closely allied with open/free, participatory, commons-oriented forces and movements. These three social movements have arisen because of the need for efficient social reproduction of peer production and the common.

Open and free movements want to insure that there is raw material for free cultural production and appropriation, and to fight against the monopoly rents accorded to capital, as this now restricts innovation. They work on the input side of the equation. Participatory movements want to ensure that anybody can use his specific combination of skills to contribute to common projects, and work on lowering the technical, social and political thresholds; finally, the Commons movement works on protecting the common from private appropriation, so that its social reproduction is insured, and the circulation of the common can go on unimpeded, as it is the Commons which in turn creates new layers of open and free raw material.

These various movements come in the usual three flavors:

1) transgressive movements, such as young and old filesharers, which show that the legal regime has to be changed;

2) constructive movements, which create a framework for new types of social relationships, such as the Creative Commons movement, the free software movement, etc...;

3) reformist or radical attempts to

change the institutional regime and adapt it to the new realities.

I personally believe that these movements will not create new political parties, but that these networks of networks will indeed seek political liaisons. While peer to peer is a regime that combines equality and liberty, and therefore potentially combines elements from various sides of the political spectrum, I believe the left is particularly apt to forge an alliance with the new desires and demands of these movements. It remains to be seen whether new political and cultural expressions of the emerging free culture, such as the Swedish Pirate Party, will change that expectation by creating a new kind of political force, more directly in tune with peer production communities.

There is also a connection with the environmental movement. On one side, culturally-oriented movements fight against the artificial scarcities induced by the restrictive regimes of copyright law and patent law; on the other side, the environmental movement fights against the artificial abundance created by unrestricted market logics. The removal of pseudo-abundance and pseudo-scarcity are exactly what needs to happen to make our human civilization sustainable at this stage. As has been stressed by Richard Stallman and others, the copyright and patent regimes are explicitly intended to inhibit free cooperation and cultural flow between creative humans, and are just as pernicious for the further development of humanity as biospheric destruction.

Finally, restoring the balance between a scarcity-recognizing material regime, and an abundance-recognizing immaterial regime cannot be seen as separate from the efforts of social forces to achieve greater social justice, thereby linking the new open/free, participatory and commons-oriented forces with emancipatory social movements.

There is therefore a huge potential for such a renewed movement for human emancipation to become aligned with the values of a new generation of youth, and to achieve the long-term advantage that the Republicans have achieved in the U.S. since the 1980s.

Conclusion: What needs to be done?

Let us recall some of our points, and see how the movements that are against

artificial scarcity and for sustainability intersect. We live in a political economy that has things exactly backwards. We believe that our natural world is infinite, and therefore that we can have an economic system based on infinite growth. But since the material world is finite, it is based on pseudo-abundance. And then we believe that we should introduce artificial scarcities in the world of immaterial production, impeding the free flow of culture and social innovation, which is based on free cooperation, by creating the obstacle of permissions and intellectual property rents protected by the state. What we need instead is a political economy based on a true notion of scarcity in the material realm, and a realization of abundance in the immaterial realm. Complex innovation needs creative, autonomous workers who are not impeded in their ability to share and learn from each other.

In the world of immaterial production, of software, text and design, the costs of reproduction are marginal and therefore what we see emerging is non-reciprocal peer production, in which people voluntarily engage in the direct creation of use value, profiting from the resulting commons in a general way, but without specific reciprocity. In the world of material production, where we have scarcity, and costs have to be recouped, such non-reciprocity is not possible, and therefore we need modes of neutral exchange, such as the markets, or other modes of reciprocity. In the sphere of immaterial production, humanity is learning the laws of abundance, because non-rival goods gain in value through sharing. In this world, we are evolving towards non-proprietary licences, participatory modes of production, and commons-oriented property forms. Positive forms of affinity-based retribalization are emerging. But in the world of scarce material goods, a series of scarcity crises – global warming being just one of them – are brewing that are prompting the emergence of negative forms of competitive tribalization.

The logic of abundance has the potential to lead us to a reorganization of our world on a level of higher complexity, powered principally by peer-to-peer logic. The logic of scarcity has the potential to lead us into generalized wars for resources, into a descent to a lower form of complexity, a new dark age, as was the case after the disinte-

gration of the Roman Empire. So, the challenge is to use the emergent logic of abundance, and inject it into the world of scarcity.

Is that a realistic possibility? In the immaterial world of abundance, sharing is non-problematic, and the further emergence and expansion of non-reciprocal modes of production is very likely. “Together we know everything”, is a quite achievable ideal. In the material world of scarcity, abundance is translated into three key concepts that can change human consciousness, and therefore economic practices. The notion of ‘together we have everything’ seems not to be quite achievable, we therefore need transitional concepts. The first concept is the distribution of everything. This means that, instead of abundance, we have a slicing up of physical resources and of the physical means of production, so that individuals can become freely engaged and act. This means an economy that moves towards a vision of peer-informed market modes, such as fair trade (a market mechanism subjected to peer arbitrage of producers and consumers seen as partners), and social entrepreneurship (using profit for conscious social progress). Objective tendencies towards miniaturization of the physical means of production makes this a distinct possibility: desktop manufacturing enables individual designers; rapid manufacturing and tooling are reducing the advantages of scale of industrial production, as are personal fabricators. Social lending leads to a distribution of financial capital; and the direct social production of money through software is not far from being realized in various parts of the world (see the work of Bernard Lietaer); if scarcity does indeed create more expensive energy and raw material, a relocalisation of production is likely, and peer-informed modes of production will be enabled to a much greater extent.

The second concept is sustainability. Since an infinite-growth system cannot last indefinitely, we need to move to new market concepts as described by the thought schools of natural capitalism (David Korten, Paul Hawken, Hazel Henderson), capitalism 3.0 (Peter Barnes’ proposal to use Trusts as property forms because they legal form imposes the preservation of capital), and cradle-to-cradle design and production processes, so that no waste is gener-

- (1) <http://www.fims.uwo.ca/people/faculty/dyerwithford>
- (2) http://www.benkler.org/Common_Wisdom.pdf
- (3) <http://uk.zopa.com/ZopaWeb>
- (4) <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/category/cognitive-capitalism>
- (5) http://www.wiki-brest.net/index.php/Territoires_Sonores
- (6) <http://capitalism3.com/>

Next page: Miina Äkkijyrkkä, *Porin vasikka*, 1999, recycled car parts, 4mx6mx2m. Photo by Juha Merso, 2004.

ated. We need to move to a steady-state economy (Herman Daly), which is not necessarily static, but in which greater output from nature is dependent on our ability to regenerate those same resources.

The third concept is that of sufficiency or 'plenty'. Abundance does not just have an objective side, it has a subjective side, too. In the material economy, infinite growth needs to be replaced by sufficiency, a realization that status and human happiness can no longer be dependent on infinite material accumulation and overconsumption, but will become dependent on immaterial accumulation and growth. On having enough so that we can pursue meaning and status through our identity as creative, collaborative individuals, recognized in our various peer communities.

Only a rich experience economy can avoid a culture of frustration and sacrifice, and the repression and unhappiness that this could entail. This experience economy will, however, not just be created by commercial franchises, there will also be direct social production of cultural value. Businesses and peer communities, enabled and empowered by a partner state, will have to create a rich tapestry of immaterial value, and the thicker the surrounding layer of immaterial value of being, the weaker our attachment to mere having will be.

Scenarios for the current meltdown

How does the current meltdown/slump, which started with the financial collapse in the autumn of 2008, affect the above vision, which was elaborated before the non-linear emergence of this crisis.

There are two ways to read the crisis. The first, inspired by Carlota Perez's work on long-term cycles, is to see the current crisis as the end of the cycle that started in 1945, first, with a

30-year high-growth phase, then, with a low-growth neoliberal phase, based on stagnating wages and debt-fuelled consumption, financed by the new Asian powers. As this model, and the immense financial bubble it created, fails irrevocably, we could expect, after a long slump that will last at least a decade, a new expansion phase of capitalism, based on green capitalism and the change in institutions brought about by the internet revolution (a process that has only happened in civil society and at institutional margins, without resulting in a new equilibrium). In such a scenario, a new social compact would be struck with the new structure of social demands created by the emergence of peer to peer, allowing it to grow from its present seed phase to a level of parity at the end of the next growth phase. If our interpretation of the impossibility of infinite growth in a finite natural system is correct, the ultimate failure of attempt to achieve green capitalism would set the stage for a phase transition, in which the peer to peer system would become the core of the new society, as explained in the body of our text. I have called this the high road to peer to peer, because, despite the cyclical crisis moments, the transition could still be relatively smooth, replacing the former structures at a very high level of productivity, and minimizing social pain.

There are two possible ways that this scenario could be derailed. The first is that failure by the Obama administration to structurally reform the system and break the power of the predatory financial caste so impoverishes the possibilities of the state that no means are left for implementing social policies, leading to global dislocation, and a turning by humanity towards resilient communities, using P2P-inspired models on a local scale. The second potential derailment refers to the combined effects of the structural problems of capitalism as a system, and not just to

its long cycles. In this scenario, the accelerating problems involved in climate change, peak oil and resource depletion become too severe and do not allow for the generation of a new expansion phase. This element alone, which can be combined with the first one, would also lead to global dislocation, and to the resilient communities scenario, involving a 'low road' to peer to peer, in a context of immense social pain.

Relation to earlier Marxist scenarios of social change

All of the above can be read as an argument with earlier Marxist theories of social change. I would summarize the political attitude of the socialist movement as: workers need to take power, then change society in the direction of a new economic and political social structure. But this has never been how phase transitions from one form of civilization to another really happened.

The change from slavery to feudalism happened because some slave owners, undoubtedly under pressure, for example, from slave revolts in the context of a collapsing state infrastructure, started to turn their slaves into 'coloni', and an increasing number of them did so, creating the conditions for a phase transition to feudalism. This fundamental change could happen because of a congruent set of changes, among both those that produced and those that managed and profited from that production.

Change from feudalism to capitalism happened because, in the context of the crisis of feudalism after the 16th century, part of the nobility could see the superior productivity of capitalist enterprises, and funded and joined such projects, leaving behind their peers, who remained tied to the land. As the crisis intensified and the new hybrid capitalist class became dominant, political revolutions finalized the phase transition. Socialism did not have a su-

perior mode of production that could change capitalist society from within and prepare for the phase transition.

In contrast, the hyperproductivity of peer production has already created a new class of netarchical capitalists, who invest in social production, and who are already taking power through the Obama administration. By investing in hybrid forms of peer production, they paradoxically strengthen the post-capitalist logics within capitalist society. It is the congruence between peer producers and netarchical capitalists that is driving the change, and which will eventually cause the seed form of peer production to rise to parity level, perhaps leading to the ultimate phase change. Within a declining, crisis-ridden system that is destroying the biosphere, the congruent social forces of peer producers and netarchical capitalists are creating the conditions for an ulterior phase change.

The political struggle today is to help sharing communities defend their interests and promote them with the platform owners; and to help autonomous commons-oriented peer producing communities to maintain their autonomy as they cooperate with their respective business ecologies, thereby changing the very practices of the corporations. So what is happening is that, within the old, successful new patterns are being created, and these patterns are starting to interact synergistically to form an integrated alternative set of social practices.

As this new sphere grows, it is creating a living alternative within the declining global system, forming a real alternative that can inspire the social movements still rooted in the capitalist world of labour, creating the conditions for political and social transformations of the mainstream structure of society. Such a change, if it occurs, would be congruent with what we know about phase transitions in the past. +



The writer is a British-born curator, who has held several directorships with major international art museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford (UK); Moderna Museet (The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art) in Stockholm; and was founding Director of Mori Art Museum in Tokyo; and Istanbul Museum of Modern Art (Istanbul Modern). Currently he is Artistic Director for the 17th Biennale of Sydney, which will take place in 2010.

David Elliott

Guerillas and Partisans: Art, Power and Freedom in Europe and Beyond 1940-2012

This is a sketch for an exhibition which has been on my work table since the end of 2007. It was made in response to an initiative from the Council of Europe to 'update' aspects of *Art and Power. Europe under the Dictators 1930-1945* (London, Barcelona, Berlin, 1995) (1). I was one of the main curators involved in this exhibition and also since 1970, from many different points of view, had been concerned with questions relating to the relationships between modern and contemporary aesthetics, art, and power. Below I have sketched out what I believe should be the intellectual framework for a contemporary exhibition on art and power. Both the nature and locus of 'power' have changed as well as our understandings of it. The period begins with settlement of World War II in which the political and aesthetic ascendancy of the USA, Soviet Union/Russia and eventually China develops. Unlike the pre-war years, the scope of the exhibition can no longer be limited to Europe. Indeed, the exhibition would argue that the start of globalisation as we recognize it today begins at this time.

Some outlines

As recent events have shown, the winter of 2008/9 has been as momentous a year for Western Capitalism as 1989 was for Communism and, as the first *Art and Power* exhibition (and book) made clear, both tendencies emanated from related roots within the European Enlightenment. Yet, in spite of their origins in the hegemony of rationalism, the irrational, power-hungry, 'religious' tendencies of both Neo-Liberalism and State Socialism have not only been revealed as fellow travellers of other

quasi-religious fundamentalisms but also as perversions of the rights of the individual in the favour of an imagined and manipulated will of capital on the one hand (the market) and of the masses on the other (the proletariat). Such systems are fundamentally authoritarian, paranoid and self-perpetuating. In opposition to these tendencies, one of the key elements of what we have come to regard as 'quality' in modern and contemporary art is the individual and uncompromising viewpoint and perspective that enables the artist to both pre-figure and critique such manifestations in society, perception and common belief.

The pattern of pre-figuring has long been inscribed within the history of modernity and is integral to it: not only did Jacques-Louis David anticipate both the turmoil and ideals of the French Revolution in his work, but he also became the orchestrator of its celebrations, the chronicler of its terrors, and the portraitist of its ultimate dissolution. Over a century later, in the years immediately before World War I, the aesthetics of Cubism, Expressionism and Futurism were predicated on ideas of fragmentation and destruction which alternated between cultural imagination and reality. In the intervening years there are many other examples of art both anticipating, and in the process critiquing, social change. The first *Art and Power* exhibition continued this approach into the interwar years, and a similar way of looking at aesthetics, art, society and ideas can also be applied to modern and contemporary art after World War II.

In order to do this an historical narrative which is based on current reali-

ties has to be constructed. This means rejecting the prejudices of the Cold War, Eurocentricism, Soviet-inspired dogmas, and the warm nostalgia of imagined former greatness. Achieving this is easier said than done because we are still at the stage of trying to resolve a concatenation of rival, conflicting histories. The disparities, similarities, disjunctures and symmetries between West and East are not seen as being within a single pattern – as different responses to the same realities – but, as so often has been the case in the writing of history, as the chronicles of 'losers' written by 'winners'. And even when the 'losers' have written their own histories, the punch line has always been to open the possibility that in some way they too will eventually become 'winners' in an outdated game which today is certainly far too perilous to even contemplate playing.

Such a combative approach is often explained in terms of 'human nature', but in a world that is really connected, as we claim to be today, such adversarial and particular viewpoints are potentially disastrous in that the realities of past struggles are often employed to fuel the fantasies of future conflicts. If we wish to survive at a time of world-wide environmental deterioration, widespread poverty and religious polarization, the established idea of the sovereign nation state will be of little help. It makes more sense to concentrate on the necessity for co-operation and construction to create social and political environments in which all people have basic human rights and are not crippled by underdevelopment. To move forward we have to be able to understand the similarities between cultures, viewpoints and per-

spectives in order to celebrate their differences. Moving towards this approach implies a different kind of national motivation and world politics than we have experienced to date, with a more complex, comprehensive and inclusive appreciation of the history of art and culture as one of its first steps.

Style and politics

Looking at the history of the Communist Bloc, first in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, then later in China after 'The Liberation' (1949), two distinct strands have emerged which, as we have come closer to the present, have started increasingly to converge: a more or less autonomous 'avant-garde' art made within a post-Kantian European tradition and the dominant State governed and regulated Socialist Realism that was set in inevitable opposition to it. The key element here was the individual freedom implied by artistic autonomy – a tendency that was officially discouraged and actively suppressed.

Once State Communism had been established it was only a matter of time before the *Nomenklatura* would decide that the concept and function of avant-garde were obsolete as revolution had created the longed-for reality of a proletarian state that had to be consolidated rather than questioned. The idea of 'perpetual revolution' implicit in the avant-garde could easily become a magnet for opposition. Therefore artists, as with every other productive force, had to be harnessed and controlled under the strict direction and scrutiny of the Communist Party. Leftism became a term of severe criticism; however, the idea of the avant-garde as a 'left-orient-

tated', anti-bourgeois force continued in Western culture.

In the West during the 1960s there was a marked, perhaps visionary, change in attitude within the avant-garde which had developed out of Duchamp's much earlier ideas about the Ready-Made. Artists started to scrutinize both aesthetic tradition and capitalist power in different ways by focusing on the *fetishization* of art while, at the same time, implicitly *criticizing* the banality of its commodification. Andy Warhol and The Factory were a key element within this as were some Pop-Artists. From very different viewpoints the heirs of this tendency continue today in the work of such artists as Mauricio Cattelan, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami and Santiago Sierra.

In the 1960s such an approach was set within the compass of Marshall McLuhan's palliative slogan for the new technological age: *The medium is the message* (2), bolstered by Susan Sontag's synthesis of the materialism of Marx, the *Dasein* of Heidegger and the erotics of Bataille in her essay *Against Interpretation* (3) – a refashioned plea for the contemplation and understanding of art in its own terms. This was close to the ideas of 'non-hierarchy', 'non-specificity' and 'non-referentiality' propagated by the American so-called Minimal artists who had argued that art as an object could refer only to itself and was therefore be unintelligible from any other point of view. These artists looked back to the Soviet Constructivists for inspiration and many of them held leftist political views.

In 1962 the relative cultural liberalization and openness to the West

that had followed the Thaw in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin in 1953 received a check when, at a large exhibition of new art at the Manege Exhibition Hall in the centre of Moscow, President Krushchev famously denounced much of the work as 'dog shit'. This did not have a serious effect on new tendencies in this decade, but the Brezhnev years in the 1970s saw much stricter State controls over what was allowed to be exhibited.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and its aftermath, the Communist world in Europe imploded, although the same year in China marked the violent suppression of the Democracy movement in the June 4th Incident and a subsequent crackdown by the State. (4) Nevertheless, the ensuing twenty years, against the odds, have seen greater freedoms for artists in China, as well as for those in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, than were previously imagined or permitted. During this time ideology in the post-Enlightenment sense became increasingly less significant and power seems to have become more centred on issues of economic development and the market. This became clearly visible in the growth and proliferation of the Art Market.

Thinking about the market

The story from 1945 to 1989, in Europe at least, should cast a fresh eye on the ambiguous and incompatible relationships between oppositional and dominant cultures in both East and West and what this represents in terms of our understanding of art and aesthetics today. In the West, from the beginning of the 1980s, a key factor

has also been the rise of the market so that contemporary art has become increasingly regarded as a commodity or investment. This is a logical step from Guy Debord's analysis at the beginning of the 1960s of both art and society becoming a form of 'spectacle'. Recently the market has also had a vast impact on the reception and appreciation of post-1979 Chinese art.

Following on from this and events in Europe post-1989, the development of art is no longer affiliated to, or expressive of political 'left' or 'right'. Such distinctions are clearly anachronistic and ideas of opposition are now expressed more as a moral exploration of, or an objection to, such concrete situations as the meaning of freedom under post-Communism, the excessive influence of the market, the continuation of Cold War and Soviet-style politics, human trafficking, western involvement in two Gulf Wars, and the growth of the surveillance society, rather than as part of some abstract ideological position. This period has also seen the institutionalization of Critical Theory as a subject taught in Western universities and it is within this field, rather than that of art, that, often post-Marxist, ideas of opposition have been articulated. Tendaciously, some writers have claimed that the making of art is subsumed within theory itself.

Yet within the field of art and its institutions – Museums, Kunsthallen, galleries, large collections – important distinctions are still made about different ideas of what is public and what is private. These have increasingly interpollinated or crossed over, sometimes to the advantage of art and public, sometimes not. Within the market there has also

been a continuing tendency to 'invest' in particular kinds of individualism – even when the artist has gone to great lengths to resist it. This has led to a crisis in the whole idea of artistic value, with the market being on one side and culture on the other.

Both the market and public or cultural spheres are vitally necessary for the development of art and are dependent on each other for validation. But the differences are important. The market system invests in what it knows and speculates on what it does not know – the outcome is nothing more, or less, than price, and one hopes that, at least, some of the money goes back to the artist. The cultural system is based on disinterestedness, knowledge and research and feeds into public discourse about different ideas of quality. Often the two systems overlap, but without the disinterestedness (lack of financial interest) of the public system there is no 'court of appeal' for the values of the market and the whole question of value in art is – totally unacceptably – reduced to a matter of how much money a work of art may cost.

Thinking about an exhibition

i) 1940-1989

From 1940 to 1989 the story in the East is characterised by the tension between the State managed art bureaucracies (which outside the Soviet Union often did not follow the tenets of classical Socialist Realism) and the submerged traditions of independent avant-gardes that preserved an implicitly critical relation to both society and its politics within an overall 'aesthetics of poverty'. Extra energy was given to this by a

younger generation of artists who had not been directly involved in the War.

The starting point should be where *Art and Power* left off, focusing first on the much neglected survival of 'autonomous' art in the Soviet Union under Stalin. This would begin with a re-assessment of the 'unpainted' pictures of the Soviet avant-garde (by Rodchenko, Tatlin and others). These works have traditionally been omitted from the history of this time because they are very different from the artists' previous work, sometimes figurative, and obviously made under the duress of the times. This continuing Cold War perspective (the German *ungemälte Bilder* did not meet the same fate) completely misses these works' aesthetic value and significance. It fails to see their stark, melancholy beauty, self-lacerating irony and strong ethic of innovation, as well as their clearly stated, although implicit, political stance.

This work died with this generation under the continuing terror of late Stalinism, but these artists' position of aesthetic independence was picked up in the late 1950s and 1960s in the independent work of such so-called dissident artists as Oscar Rabin and Ernst Neizvestny who cultivated a certain kind of figurative *arte povera* on one hand and a more abstracted heroic stance on the other. In the face of disillusionment and oppression some painters, like Rabin, consciously made a form of 'poor art' that aesthetically reflected their situation, as well as that of society as a whole, in a creative affirmation of their will and power to work even without official permission or approval. (5) Others sought solace in forms of fantastic surrealism. Neizvestny took a more heroic approach in his drawings and sculpture and drew affinities with Western 'Communist' artists like Picasso. (6)

Here we may locate two core elements in an idea of 'Eastern' autonomy in modern art and aesthetics, previously characterized in the West as either blasted by the all encompassing power of the state or as 'dissident' – a pernicious Cold War expression that had little relation to either these artists' productive method or their work. (7)

Sots Art or ComPop was a third form of autonomy that emerged in the Soviet Union during the 1960s as

an ironical reflection on the prescribed styles of Socialist Realism as well as on the bureaucracy of the Soviet state. This satire of the bureaucratic fetish – a mirror image of western Pop Art – picked up on an underestimated element that is rooted within both the Soviet avant-garde and classical Russian literature: a delight in the eccentric and the absurd. From the 1960s the work of such artists as Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, Oleg Vasiliev and Komar & Melamid had been expressions of a fantastic imagination that can be traced back to the work of Mikhail Bulgakov, Daniil Kharms and the *Oberiuty*, FEKS, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Kruchonich and Vladimir Mayakovsky in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s as well as back even further to the absurd tales of Nikolai Gogol and others.

Around the same time, artists such as Vladimir Nemukhin, Lev Nusberg, Edouard Schteinberg and Vladimir Weisberg started to pick up where the classical avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s had left off in monochromatic and non-objective paintings and constructions. They regarded themselves as the guardians of a lost or submerged tradition to which they had little access other than through the sparse personal testimony of survivors and a few books smuggled in from the West.

These tendencies all express different levels of continuity and independence within a Russian 'revolutionary' culture that had become increasingly hermetic since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. External, western influences only began to assert themselves very slowly, partly because of lack of access to materials. Yet, from the mid-1950s, in line with the ideology of the Thaw after the death of Stalin, the official art of Socialist Realism itself also began to soften and change, particularly as a younger generation of artists grew up who could barely remember the purges and the war although, in different ways, these had both had become firmly embedded within personal and public collective memories and iconography.

The same pattern cannot be seen in the Eastern Bloc countries that had been independent from the Soviet Union before 1940 and had already begun to establish separate national identities, traditions and aesthetics. In both East and West from the end of the 1950s

a new Youth Culture developed that contained strongly oedipal elements of rebelliousness, expressed differently according to context. Here, for many avant-garde artists, looking outside to Western art helped preserve 'national' traditions from Soviet hegemony, and for this reason Western styles and tendencies were adapted, adopted and appropriated in a spirit of national independence and contemporaneity on both official and unofficial levels.

ii) 1940-1989 West

The story on the Western side runs parallel to this and has many strange mirror-like developments. In countries such as Spain and Portugal Fascism continued as a political and aesthetic ideology and echoes of it can be seen elsewhere in the world in countries such as Argentina or Turkey.

In Germany during the late 1940s and early 1950s the polemics between Carl Hofer and Hans Sedlmayr championing Realism and Willi Baumeister and Will Grohmann in favour of Abstraction reflected the ideological anxieties and aesthetics of the Cold War although none of them were Communists. By this time Realism had become clearly identified with 'Eastern' State Socialism and abstraction with 'Western' modernist aspirations. Nowhere could this be more clearly seen than in the partitioning of Germany in which the *Bundesrepublik*, terrified by the failure of its own cultural traditions, looked for inspiration to the abstraction of Paris and New York and the DDR focused on Soviet-style Socialist Realism which, melded with an anti-Fascist art of resistance, allowed certain aspects of German Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* to be quickly rehabilitated. A cynical view would be that the two parts of Germany accepted the stylistic hegemony of its victors. In the West this settlement was not seriously challenged until the beginning of the 1960s when a young generation of Berlin-based artists ironized the art of the Eastern Bloc that they had directly experienced in their youth: Georg Baselitz and Eugen Schoenbeck in the *Pandemonium Manifesto*; Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Wolf Vostell and Konrad Lueg in *Kapitalistische Realismus*.

At the same time Cold War attitudes in both West and East were made

even more anxious by the Atomic arms race. In the USA Senator McCarthy's witchhunt mirrored, on a minor scale, the purges of Zhdanov. The wars in Korea and Indo-China not only tried to extend the spheres of influence of both 'sides' but also to 'stabilize' East Asia where it was feared, according to one's viewpoint, either Communism or Imperialism might take over. At this time, in both East and West, the size of painting got much bigger as monumental abstraction faced up against architectural realism.

The Soviet-funded International Peace Movement had been influential in the West from the late 1940s and from the mid-1950s in the UK the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament also played an important independent role. Emigré artist Gustav Metzger was on its governing Committee of 100 and also, in the following decade was one of the main organizers of the seminal Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS, London 1966). Joseph Beuys's educational and political activities were also significant from the 1970s in that they expressed a constructive attitude towards human and social activity at a time when many Western radicals were propagating violent revolutionary action.

Until the late 1950s the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China had cordial relations and in 1955 a Soviet mission was sent over headed by Konstantin Maximov to teach the Chinese how to paint in a Socialist Realist style. Although after 1960 relations between the two countries severely deteriorated, the Chinese adaption of Socialist Realism became one of the official art forms of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and re-entered Europe in the art of Communist Albania, China's only European ally, as well as, in travelling exhibitions such as 'Peasant Paintings from Huhsien County' (1974) and, in a modified form, in the work of radical Western 'Maoist' artists such as Jörg Immendorff. Certainly the greyness of Brezhnev's politics as well as the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 contributed to the increasingly popularity of Mao in western radical circles, then often not aware of the inhuman and destructive face of the Cultural Revolution. This infatuation was short-lived and, as the 1970s

- (1) Ades, Dawn; Benton, Tim; Elliott, David; and Whyte, Ian Boyd; (eds). (1995). *Art and Power. Europe Under the Dictators 1930-1945*. London: Hayward Gallery.
- (2) McLuhan, Marshall (1964). *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- (3) Sontag, Susan (1966). *Against Interpretation*.

- New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.
- (4) See the exhibition catalogues for *China Avant-garde*, Berlin, 1993; *Silent Energy*, Oxford, 1993.
- (5) Elliott, David (1999). "Looking Things in the Face". *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe 1989-99*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet.

- (6) Berger, John (1969). *Art and Revolution*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969.
- (7) From the mid-1980s, this was gradually amended to the more neutral and all embracing term of "unofficial art".
- (8) Lucy Lippard (1973). *Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object*. New York.

progressed, the whole idea of a political or artistic avant-garde became increasingly remote. Following the logic of *Minimal and Conceptual Art*, and the title of Lucy Lippard's seminal book, the avant-garde literally 'dematerialized' itself out of existence. (8)

The 'new spirit' of the 'post-modern' 1980s privileged historicism and figuration in painting and sculpture and initially focussed on artists who had already been working in this way for decades, many of them West German. It also encouraged a lot of mediocre work by new artists. Image rather than environment, ideology or idea was back on the agenda and art was again recognizably a commodity. In tandem with this, contemporary art became fashionable and a greater number of private collectors began to invest in the art market with a resulting massive increase in prices for those artists who were considered by it.

iii) 1989-2012

The failure of the Soviet system in 1989 and the subsequent 'privatization' of Russia, Eastern Europe and the Central Asian Republics, the growth of the new economies of China and South Asia, and the rampant neo-Liberalism of the USA and its allies, all seemed to confirm the dominance of the market as a global system which could absorb and incorporate different kinds of activity. Devoid of Enlightenment-based ideologies, world power assumed an increasingly neo-Imperialist mask as different nations struggled for influence and resources throughout the Developing World.

In the former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe previous identities began to reassert themselves within the context of the increasingly familiar world-wide phenomenon of *glocalization*, because, in most cases, local markets were weak and the art market itself had become increasingly international.

Participation in the market both denotes power and invests one with it. Not surprisingly a number of artists began to scrutinize this as a central element of their work, some adopting neo-Dada strategies in the spirit of Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953), others seeking to develop their work (or name) as a form

of brand. Such strategies are conscious, often cynical, with the objective of exposing the whole idea of market value as nothing more than what someone is prepared to pay. It also uncovers the benefits of collecting art at a particular level in that the benefits are 'purchased' along with the art work in order to create a new form of social mobility.

In the power struggle between the artist and the market, regardless of the artist's strategic approach and distance, success inevitably brings great financial benefit and, as a result, the art work is re-inforced as an integral element of that which is being criticized.

In some ways this is not so different from the earlier western avant-garde strategy of 'biting the hand that feeds it' but the rewards from the market have become greater and this makes a vast difference. One way out of this circle may be in the purposes and ways in which these 'profits' are diverted back into the cultural system.

Back to the exhibition

The title *Guerillas and Partisans* highlights the 'mirror effect' between East and West during the post-War period and how each side has claimed, in different ways, to be fighting for 'freedom' while still looking out for its own interests. Because of this the exhibition needs to be organized on a thematic rather than strictly chronological basis that highlights the reflexivity between 'East' and 'West', but its end, or climax, must be situated clearly in the present.

Some themes

1. The cold war and the end of the *grandes histoires* 1945-1989

Looking at art in East and West Europe and the USA and its relation to the ideologies of Right and Left. It will also examine the impact of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76) on Western art. It will include:

- i) Key works from Soviet and Eastern European (and Chinese) Socialist Realism.
- ii) Key works reflecting the official art of Spanish and Portuguese Fascism.
- iii) Obviously leftist, revolutionary works made in the West.
- iv) Works (often paintings) that reflect the Western ideology of the artist as

genius who is outside time and society. These are made on a large scale and are, in a sense, academic. They mark the end of the Bohemian, countercultural trend in modernism and were also used for propaganda purposes by the West to express values of 'freedom' in opposition to the 'tyranny' of Communism.

2. Different endgames: Art, power and the market 1960-2008

Against the background of the rapid rise in value of the contemporary art market since the beginning of the 1980s, which was fuelled by the impact of Neo-Liberal ideology, this section will look at how, in the West, since the 1960s artists have fetishized and given artistic value to mass production, often with obviously critical intent. It will also examine how art has become spectacularized and commercialized, and how traditional notions of market and aesthetic value have imploded. It will also take into account Walter Benjamin's theories about art in 'the age of mass production' and how these have influenced artists during this time. It will include:

- i) Key works of Pop Art from the 1960s, focusing particularly on the fetishization of commodity in art.
- ii) Art as a brand.
- iii) Art, value, money and power: the question of exchange. How artists have, sometimes literally, begun to print money.

3. Art as argument. 1940-2012

This looks at the development of the discursive role of art which has increasingly replaced the hermetic idea of the individual artwork. Directly or reflexively, such work comments strategically on structures of power, either by criticizing them or by suggesting alternatives within an aesthetic framework. Necessarily, such works are made within an open structure with no dominant style or medium, although the media of film and photography have increasingly played an important role. As art, this aesthetic argument has to be essentially experiential rather than dialectical and the work must enshrine the values of disinterested artistic freedom (autonomy) and how they are intimately connected with, and reflect, broader social and political freedoms. This view

directly links with the argument of the earlier *Art and Power* exhibition.

This section will also examine the ideology of interactivity and how, from the 1960s, the observer has actually become a part of the art work. The impact of the Media is a significant influence as it has increasingly replaced the role of State propaganda in European society. The internet, mass travel and other aspects of globalization have had a significant effect in shrinking perceptions of both time and distance, yet in an age in which the nation state is becoming increasingly less powerful, it remains to be seen where power really lies. It will include:

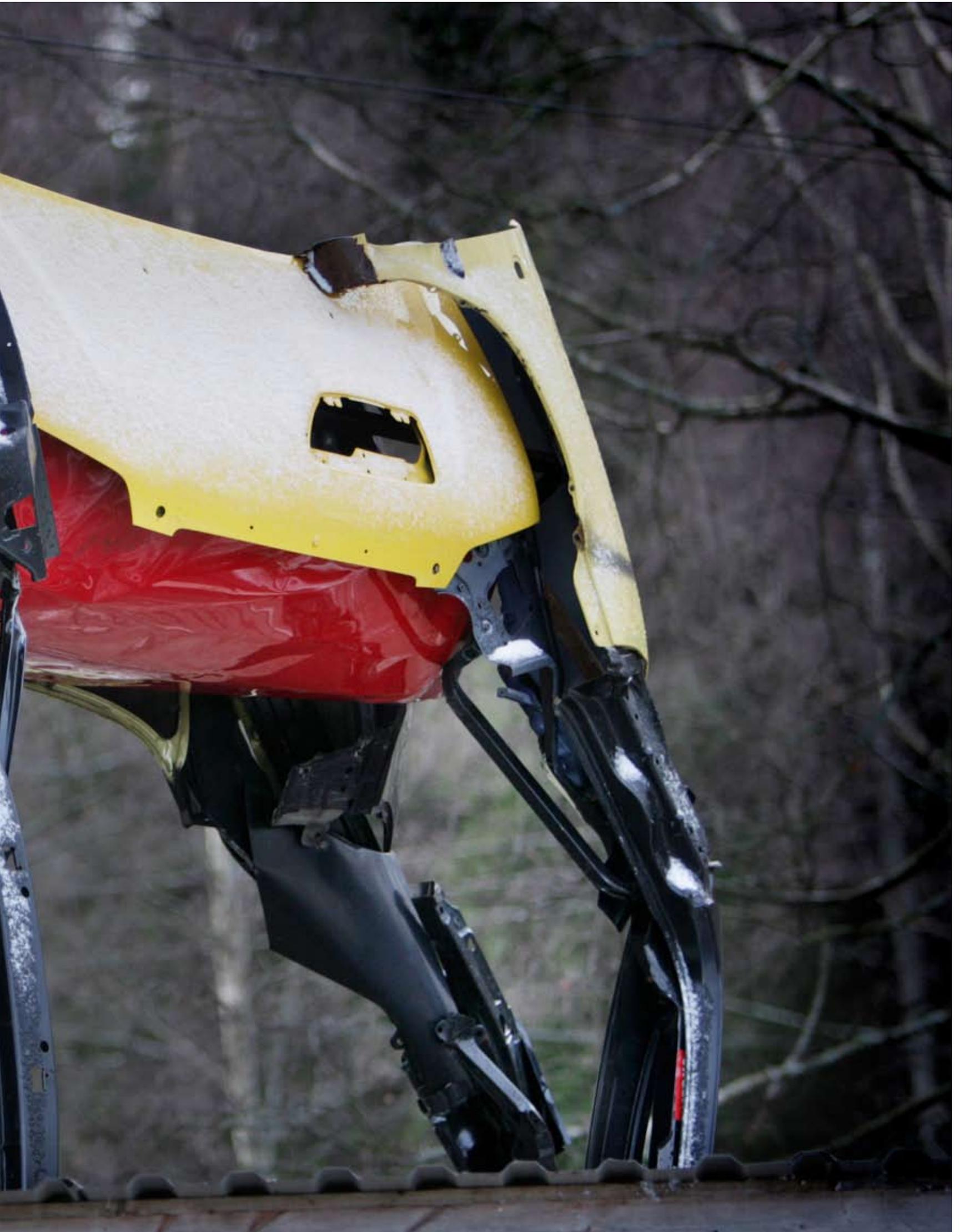
- i) The 'unpainted' pictures of the Russian avant-garde. Unofficial art in Russia. Sots Art to 1989. Irwin and others in former Yugoslavia. Selected avant-garde in Eastern Europe. *Perestroika* and its impact.
- ii) American minimalism, Italian *arte povera*.
- iii) Capitalist Realism in Germany 1960s-early 1970s.
- iv) Beuys and the Green movement.
- v) Land art, site specific and environmental work.
- vi) Feminism.
- vii) Minority rights.
- viii) The Punk movement in East and West. Music and art against communism and neo-liberalism.
- ix) Art after fascism in Spain and Portugal.
- x) Art from the 1990s. This must be strongly and cogently expressed with an open ended view for the future. Assuming that this exhibition will travel, as was the case with *Art and Power. Europe under the Dictators 1930-1945*, this section could be adapted to reflect discussions and arguments that resonate locally.

Art and power

The final aim of this exercise is to explore and analyze the autonomy and power of art in contemporary culture and to reflect on how this can preserve and activate individual freedoms in the face of increasingly homogenized, authoritarian and paranoid social and political institutions. Freedom can only exist if its boundaries are regularly tried and tested. It is one of the functions of art to do this in a non-violent, constructive and visionary way. +



Miina Äkkijyrkkä, Keltainen venyttelijä, xxxx,
recycled car parts, 2mx3mx1,5. Photo by Juha
Metso, 2004.



1) Late farmer, among the last keepers of the indigenous breed of Kyyttö cows, from whose heirs Miina Äkkijyrkkä bought her original stock.

Next page: Miina Äkkijyrkkä, *Joy*, xxxx, recycled car parts 6mx3mx4m. Photo by Juha Metso, 2004.

Miina Äkkijyrkkä

Crucifying the Pilgrim Realists

Practice has shown that tolerance for difference and lenience towards personality are a thing of the past. After nearly forty years of keeping, hauling along and cherishing these native cows, I am down in the dregs and crying.

Never in my youth could I imagine what kind of feelings of homelessness and expatriotism I would have to live through. Now I have a cowshed by the sea, or at least I can smell sea water, and all the administrative centers are within half an hour's reach.

I am annoyed and sorry about the fate of Helvi Tossavainen's cattle. (1) I am downright sickened by how little people care about this breed of cattle that has helped us lay a foundation for this present state of being which we call welfare. This is chiefly a symptom of excessiveness and unrealism, where is our happy and industrious nation?

A few words about Helvi's cows; they have made me both spiritually rich and physically feeble. Those rascals and rogues, they criticize, they don't let their caretaker off easy, but they will reward anyone with their intelligence, give teaching about the world of cattle. They possess centuries of wisdom on how to survive through the cold, scarcity and dark. With them, the trade of veterinarians would be unneeded but for a scarce occasion. Strange how a civilized state speaks of such artificial

things as natural phenomena!

Helvi's cows would multiply as a matter of course, unless owning and caring for them were made so difficult, as I have painfully learned in recent times. Little is the interest researchers have shown in our national bovine treasure, their majesty, their noble descent!

I come from deep in the Savonian heartlands, I have been armed with the fire of form, line and light, wearing my soul out on my sleeve. Merciless bystanders have got to tear at my shining self, beat me into tears, cast me in a mold and laugh. They love it when I suffer.

The big halls and yards of Viljandi Metal Ltd. Only one woman here who can speak Finnish. We walk around the place all day, I'm cold... I'd read a headline on the ship saying that I may be put in prison for cutting trees without permission.

The 1996 municipal master plan stated that the fields of the Skatta farm must be kept open. It was agreed that I will make glades, meadows, groves, but the fields were overgrown with 30-year-old trees. I said: "My cows don't live off trees". I spent three years sawing and cutting down trees – and then the City took the wood and the money. I actually had to pay for the

firewood. I sawed and blazed so hard that every crack in my body was gushing with blood. 13 years later, I'd given all my money and time to the farm and how was I rewarded? I got booted and shamed, and if they can, they will kill the cows. What a blast.

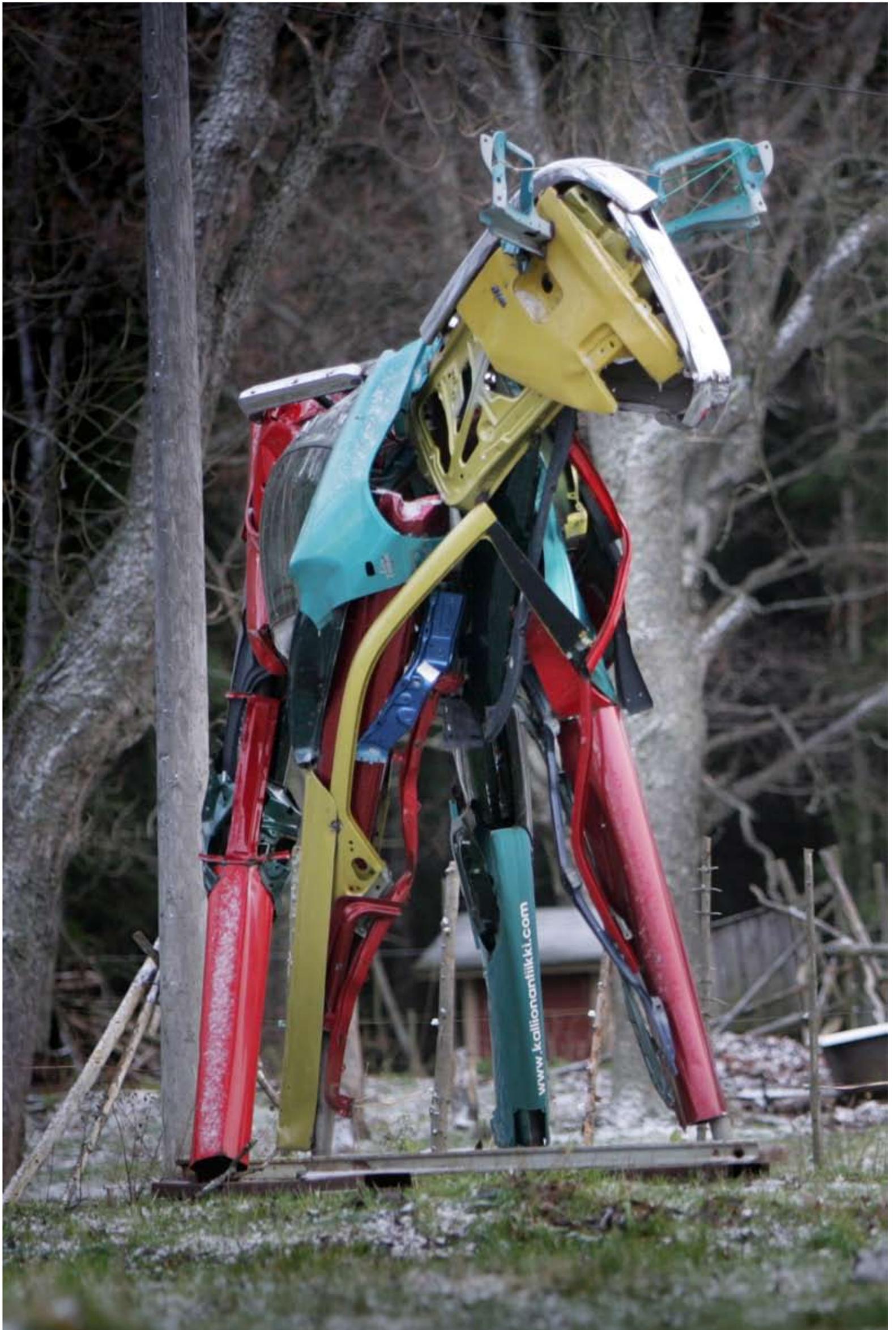
Finally I meet the welders, they warm my heart, even though I am shivering of cold and trembling in the soul. "What color shall it be, our good sculptor, yellow or red? "Light and fire, maybe purple, if my health sustains. The second day – the last one of the week – when the boys aren't at the shop at eight o'clock, my thoughts are hanged by tremendous rage. I yell and curse with no restraint: "What the hell's going on?". And I start to kick and throw junk into a corner, to get at least a small patch of uncovered space on the concrete floor. And I succeed, with the cleaning and shouting. So the men put a move on it, too. An arbiter woman comes over and asks me: "You're not feeling well?". "I am", I shout, "but I want some welding done and to make a calf". So metal starts to swing on the conveyors and the vast hall opens up. And I run on the floor back and forth. There are six men moving the I-beam, even though just a moment ago there was not a beam and not a man. This appeases me... When the cold stack is revealed, it needs to be sorted out, the measuring tape clicks

and squeals and sings... But the height mustn't go over 3,80 meters. Transportation is exact and getting permits becomes slower if you cross the limit...

So my mind glows with the fierce fascination of iron and the shop plays the music of thudding shafts and clinking cranes, and the men are gluing everything as agreed... professionals, craftsmen. I take lunch and top it off with a nap in the ladies' room. My back aches and I feel down.

"Where leads the vagrant road?" Sickness awaits and the battle grows fiercer. What will help? God? The Lord of Lords and Creativity. Let us head for the bathroom and pray. In the afternoon the sun shines outside but there is a northerly wind. I'm not dressed warmly enough. This is insane, but I WANT THE CALF, having finally made it this far. They are arranging the calf's feet when the clock strikes five and the boys, the men, are in a rush to get home.

Home
Nest of peace
For me to rest for my loved ones to breathe
Gaze at light and darkness
Feel sheltered
Be snug
In the world and at home. +



The writer is an artist and writer based in Reykjavík.
Translated from Icelandic by Valur B. Antonsson.

Ásmundur Ásmundsson

Capital Capitulates

Few think of the Iceland as a cultural nation, and those that do are usually ridiculed. Truth be told, for some time there have been traces of cultural life, but even the most fervent optimist knows that Iceland has a long way to go before it can be considered part of the civilized world. Seldom, if ever, has this been as apparent as it is now. Now when almost everything has collapsed, one can also see the pillars of our supposed cultural structures crumble. Icelanders have for a long time nurtured the delusion that they are the frontrunners in every endeavor: their men are strongest, their women the most beautiful; the best education; the best musicians and writers; and they even brew the best beer. Even our ancestry of rapping and pillaging was celebrated with a happy wink. Furthermore, during the economic boom, the media, the politicians and the President of the Republic perpetuated the delusion that Icelanders were also the best bankers in the world. The nation was filled with pride when an 'Útrásarvíkingur' – the modern-day version of a Viking doing business abroad – bought a well-established Danish company and thereby took revenge for a centuries-old grudge from when Iceland was a part of Denmark.

What began as a sweet inferiority complex turned into a delusion of grandeur. It has barely been a century since swim bladders and margarine were presented at exhibitions along with fine art, and barely 30 years since Iceland was most like an Eastern bloc country, with limited rights to travel

and exchange currency for its citizens (not to mention the functional fashions and tasteless cuisine). However, when Iceland joined the EEC and the banks were privatized, it started a boom of economic growth which ended only recently – and abruptly – as sadly everybody knows.

When the pillars of society crumble and all is exposed (despite the lies from a score of salaried people), it is clear that nothing good came out of this boom, only trash. Luxurious cars and a fleet of private jets have been put on fire sale, while the infrastructure has been neglected. What was being built was often nothing more than a flight of fancy. For example, the University of Iceland was planning to become one of the world's top 100 universities, supposedly financed by Icelandic companies, but these plans are never mentioned in polite company after the crash. Unfortunately, not only flights of fancy were being built, but whole neighborhoods into which nobody is moving, and skyscrapers whose windows are being shuttered; they will be empty for years to come. An unfinished building on Reykjavík Harbor, which was to become the Icelandic National Concert & Conference Centre, says everything about the present state of culture in Iceland. The building is bigger than the opera houses in both Oslo and Copenhagen and was supposed to be the pride of the nation, a building attracting tourists from around the world. It goes without saying that the reasons for building such a center

were not completely sound. Instead of becoming a European capital, we have become a snow-bound Dubai. We went from riches to rags, and coming generations will have to spend most of their lives paying for other people's debt because of the economic expansion. Now, whether people toil all day and night to pay off debts or buy useless goods is of no real importance. Surely this nation has proved itself too immature for anything but wage-slavery. In this regard, nothing has really changed, except that the stark truth has been revealed.

Some have said that nothing of value remains in Iceland but the language and spectacular landscape (something which foreigners have always known). The language is of no use to anyone but the fewer than half a million who speak it, and it is probably best to ditch it along with the currency. We might as well switch to Esperanto and the Argentinean Peso. The spectacular landscape will probably be sacrificed in the coming years and the natural resources sold to foreign corporations. And Icelanders will probably be content with this, because they will have something to do with their time. They will get jobs in an aluminum smelter, be allowed to speak Icelandic during coffee-breaks, and even string together a poem or two when they are not too drunk or suicidal.

Even if I refuse to spend precious column-space speaking of the landscape, I can hardly resist the temptation of mentioning the American artist Roni Horn and the Danish designer Ólafur

Eliasson and thereby draw attention to the triumphs of the human spirit and a spectacular landscape in the same breath. But resist I will in deference to my remaining sense of patriotism.

Everyone is a friend

Unfortunately there are few Icelandic artists willing to give the world what it wants (à la Eliasson and Horn). What Icelandic artists thought they had to offer the world is what they called the *drive*. This drive was mainly something that took place in bars and the dark corners of night life, but some even claim that this drive could result in immortal works of art. The creative drive of the Icelandic people was considered to be top-notch in the world, and our national power, courage and spontaneity something unique. The reason given for this is that Icelanders are children of nature and not as burdened by the weight of civilization, unlike other nations. Icelanders are not as old-fashioned as the rest of the civilized world and can let go of their inhibitions whenever it suits them. Foreign media flocked to the country (and maybe still do, though newspapers are having some of the same problems we are), along with pop stars, movie stars and international art world luminaries, which drove Icelanders into a party frenzy, eager to perform as was expected of this savage nation. When Aki Kaurismäki, Fransesca von Habsburg or Kiefer Sutherland showed up at a local bar, Icelanders would drink the Icelandic aquavit Brennivín, which no

Ásmundur Ásmundsson, *Grand Dame*, 2009, collage.



Icelander usually drinks (they usually drink Mojitos) and jump on tables, like an attention-seeking high school girl. As a reward, the cleverest Icelanders would catch some falling crumbs, sometimes a free drink, even though most were content with just taking part in the fun, and saying something witty – in flawless English – just for the honor of joining the party. Of course they nodded and bowed to the bankers, and the banks seized the opportunity; not only did they become patrons of the arts, not only did they support the museums and the art festivals, but also the grass roots and the young radicals. The radical artists, the very ones supposed to dissent, most fervently took part in the fun. For example, Landsbanki provided the artist collective Kling og Bang with an abandoned factory to be filled with creative youths in exchange for mentioning the bank in every promotion of projects taking place in the factory. The factory was named *Klink og Bank* ('klink' means change in Icelandic), and the bank got a lot of free space in the media and some positive press. Even before the factory was opened to the public, the board of the bank started to intervene in the projects. Björgólfur Guðmundsson, head of the board of Landsbanki, was supposed to formally inaugurate the building with a member of the Kling og Bang collective. However, the bank was taken aback when this member turned out to be the artist Snorri Ásmundsson – who also was running in the presidential elections – so the bank threatened to

throw out all 160 artists if the unpalatable Mr. Ásmundsson took part in the inauguration. Of course the members of Kling og Bang complied, and that is how *Klink og Bank* was born. For a while *Klink og Bank* was one of most popular destinations in Reykjavik. The beautiful presidential couple Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and Dorrit Moussaief brought their guests there rather than showing them the Golden triangle (Gullfoss waterfall, Geysir and Thingvellir). Great care went into making sure that everything was sullied in dirt before the noble guests arrived, however before the bankers came the place was cleaned up in an orderly fashion. (1) It was heaven on earth: the lambs lied down with the lions and everyone scratched each other's back. Those who protested reaped nothing but scorn; all criticism was considered inappropriate on this island of the innocents.

The revolution

Fortunately, artists are very adaptable, and they became the vanguard of the *kitchenware-revolution*, banging pots and pans outside Parliament alongside the writers and the students. Art, as such, seems vain in this larger context, and perhaps it is best for artists to make some noise, participate in underground meetings and organize the revolution, rather than splash paint on a canvas or photograph their naked friends or whatever they do nowadays. I was filled with pride the first days of the revolution when I observed my fellow artists

in the fog of war, banging away at their cooking utensils and throwing eggs at Parliament.

It is not every day we Icelanders can witness a revolution, and rarer still to be able to say that we are part of the civilized world. Outside Parliament, I saw a French teacher who has lived in Iceland for decades and has been one of us for a long time standing on Austurvöllur Square crying like a baby. He was not begging for sympathy like the businessmen and the Central Bank Governor, his were tears of joy. Many of his former students cried with him, and together they formed a choir of tears, which was silenced only by the noise of explosions, savage drumbeating, flashes of fire and the rattle of pans. 'How exciting it is to be an Icelander and how apparent it is that the force of this nation stems not least from a difference of opinions, the disputes over which can resemble a force of nature', one artist explained in his speech at the exhibition *From Another Shore* at the Scandinavia House in New York. (2)

Savior

By coincidence there was a celebration in a building next to Parliament at the height of the kitchenware revolution. The hostess was none other than Baroness Francesca von Habsburg – Francesca Anne Dolores Freiin Thyssen-Bornemisza de Kázon et Impérfalva – a dear friend of Iceland, an art collector and a distinguished patron of the arts. The Who's Who of the art world and the cultural elite of the nation

were invited. Baroness Francesca von Habsburg is a stalwart supporter of the nation and an enthusiastic partygoer as well. Which might be precisely why the nation's artists are so fond of her? Of course her wealth has something to do with it as well, and now we are speaking of true wealth, not mere paper money or speculative wealth, but old money that will never perish. She is also planning to have her collection of art on permanent display in Iceland. Could we then blame the artists for deciding to take a break from the revolution and celebrate the princess's birthday? After all, nature also rests sometimes.

The tabloid press reported a rumor that David Bowie might come along with his entourage; not a paid visit as is the case when showing up in a party of businessmen, but simply to celebrate with his favorite princess and her subjects. This turned out to be a lie, which teaches me not to trust the tabloid press (and I must say, it's really heartless of the press to raise such false hopes for a desperate nation like ours). Rumor had it also that Johnny Rotten would come – or John Lydon as he is now called after his days of punk rock – which is why some riffraff came to the party dressed in strange punk clothes with protest signs, simply to see their idol. This also turned out to be a lie, and a fight almost broke out when the disappointed punk rockers were refused entry. Would their energy have been better used elsewhere? It's hard to say, even nonconformists should get to have fun every once in a while.



Ásmundur Ásmundsson, *Flames of Doom*, 2008, collage.

Of course there was plenty of alcohol, and one philosopher mused that it was as if the guests were to die tomorrow and that they drank in a fashion referred to by the Parisian as doomsday drinking. One might be tempted to compare it to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*, but then again analogies are cheap. Many of the guests wanted to learn more about the customs of Arabic nations, since the place had partly been decorated as a Moroccan parlor. In the parlor one could see a slide show from the baroness's 50th birthday party in Morocco, celebrated with some exotic Arabs. What memories! And if it occurred to any of the partygoers that this year they were the exotic guests in a future slide show, well, there was no need to spoil the party by pointing it out. In the middle of the night a delicious fish soup was served, cooked by none other than First Lady of Iceland. One cheered for the revolution and the arts, but mainly for the baroness. Some stepped out on the balcony to smoke cigars and drink champagne while

watching the police disperse the crowd with teargas and batons.

The day after, we learned that the demonstrations had turned more violent because some riffraff from the suburbs replaced the artists and started throwing rocks at the police. Someone even started a fire outside Parliament. This riffraff had not been at the seminar on civil disobedience; they were uneducated people that did not understand the difference between Marx and Engels; some had even drunk beer. The protesters starting the 'revolution' did not want to be lumped in with this group so they dressed up in a uniform. Many thought that the sweetest moment of the revolution was when students dressed up in an orange uniform and protected a group of policemen being assailed by rocks. The 'revolution was successful in toppling the Government, only to have a new one formed by some of the people responsible for the crash. The 'radicals' had thwarted the revolution, but the center of Reykjavik looks as if a real revolution had

taken place. After years of economic boom, City Center is in ruins and an unsophisticated visitor might assume that there had been a recession in Iceland for a decade.

The end

Before taking on the colossal challenge of paying off the nation's debts, everybody agrees on one thing, and that is that the National Concert and Conference Centre on the waterfront must be finished. It was to be bigger than the newly inaugurated opera house in Oslo, which says everything about Icelanders' persistence and magnanimity. Of course there is no money to finish the building, and the politicians and even the public have become desperate. And it is no wonder because the unfinished Concert and Conference Centre is well on the way to becoming Iceland's saddest monument, a memorial of dashed hopes and thwarted expectations, our very own Palast der Republik. (3)

Some considerable compromises have to be made, if the Concert and

2008. The exhibition was one of a series of events in the city intended to highlight Iceland's bid for a seat in the United Nations Security Council. What took place was an exciting mix of visual arts, international politics and business, where the participants, joined together, cheered each other on, for what purpose is not all too clear or simple.

3) Everyone that has been to Berlin recognizes the palace of the republic, a concrete monster, built in the 60s in East-Berlin. It was recently torn down, a memorial of the GDR's regime of terror.

Conference Centre is to be finished. The building, whose architecture from the outset was nothing but second-rate – 'like a dead whale in an urban area', to quote a specialist in architecture – will likely turn into something even worse: a monstrosity blocking the people's view of the Mt. Esja. A colossal glass bell by Ólafur Elíasson – something which could at least partially atone for the building – will probably not be built. Politicians are eager to finish the building even without knowing how to finance it, while the public wants to scrap it. The most sensible thing to do would be to let it stand as is, as a memorial of the old regime. Such a memorial will come in handy when we Icelanders get lucky again and find offshore oil, or if salmon prices quadruple. The other alternative, which might please some, is to build the center without any compromise, i.e., according to the original plans. After the magnificent building is finished, violinists will play some pretty tunes as the flames of doom surround us. +

The writer is a multi-award winning curator, producer and arts advocate, based in Melbourne, Australia. She is the curator of *IMPACT: Living in the Age of Climate Change*, an exhibition conceptualized in response to the 2009 UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Antoanetta Ivanova

Impact by Degrees

He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. (1)

It's just after the Christmas holidays. Sweltering hot and humid Down-Under. Caught in the grips of a harrowing story, despite the heat, shivers crawl up my spine as I pace across the imaginary landscape – it's so terrifyingly real! In Australia, the driest inhabited continent, it is only a matter of time one gets to drive through these same ravaged forests – with blackened tree stumps devoid of leaves and life, sticking out of the cracked ground like obelisks... creatures scattered around in charred lumps for miles on end – as McCarthy luridly describes in his book.

Our land is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world. With global warming on the rise, the fire-weather has become *off the scale*. The cataclysmic consequences of record temperatures of 46–48°C, never-seen-before firestorms, and human and environmental tragedy of devastating proportions (2) – no longer containable between the pages of post-apocalyptic fiction – have become a grim expression of what it is to be living in the age of climate change. As our awareness of the compounded causes and impacts of Climate Change broadens, as we become more concerned about its real threats and what future we might live – and leave behind – we need to shift the course of our dis-

courses, actions and choices. Urgently.

What is to be done? – we ask, determined in the hope of our human spirit and ingenuity. It is a question media artists collaborating with scientists, engineers, environmentalists and political groups are actively engaged in finding answers to. Positioned at the leading edge of creative thought they are well placed to champion our cultural response: presenting visions of the efficacy, relatedness and intrinsic interdependence of our biophysical, social and electronic habitats; reflecting, recording, interpreting and advocating on Climate Change issues. We should note that the broader Climate Change debate ought to take into account the processes of the globalization of politics, the expansion of the neo-liberal economic doctrine, and the growing global security, environmental and social sustainability challenges that are influencing our cultural response. Thus, the artworks discussed here respond to these related issues from a range of perspectives.

In her latest work *Cascade* (3) New Zealand artist Janine Randerson draws together two different climate knowledge pathways. Firstly, the scientific – informed by data of monitored and recorded changes occurring in the Arctic, collected by her during a specially set up Art/Science residency at the Danish Environmental Research Institute. (4) And secondly, the public – observed

and filmed by ordinary citizens in the South-Pacific, which she sourced from the Internet. Functioning as an operating system through which these two sets of climate impact evidence are transferred, converged and communicated, the artwork posits a case for our collective knowledge and 'distributed creativity-action' being vital ingredients of the public governance of Climate Change.

The availability of on-line video-sharing resources such as EngageMedia (5), which archives and distributes independent activist videos on environmental themes, is particularly useful to artists. Applying new technologies as a means to bypass out-of-reach commercial channels, EngageMedia has generated its own global distribution opportunities. Through a flexible on-line delivery platform, peer-to-peer network and a 'share-like' license, it permits anyone anywhere to download and use the published works. Through the website, for example, Pip Starr's documentary *The First Wave* (6) gives us an insight into the plight of the inhabitants of the Carteret Islands who are now forced to abandon their sinking land. The small Pacific islands of Carteret and Tuvalu, which have no industry and produce hardly any CO₂ emissions, have been severely affected by extreme weather events of cyclones and flooding that are happening more frequently and more intensely. Their nations are declared as

the first official climate refugees. Works such as *The First Wave* have been used by non-governmental organisations for public awareness campaigns on these issues.

Nis Romer (Denmark) and Amy Franceschini (USA), together with an international group of artists, activists, researchers and gardeners, have been working on another ongoing peer-to-peer initiative FreeSoil (7), which includes an online resource for the exchange of ideas, ecological knowledge and campaigning strategies. One of the projects, titled *FR.U.I.T.*, examines the impact food distribution and trade systems have on global warming. Primarily presented on the Internet, the work offers users a game-like learning experience of how the phases in a product's life – farming, harvest, packaging, transportation to retail outlets, disposal – form a consumer-choice system with far-reaching consequences for the environment and, in turn, our lives.

For centuries, the industrialized world has pursued satisfaction 'from the holy grail of material abundance. The search has been exciting and we have discovered many things that were well worth finding... Unfortunately we have forgotten that there could be other goals at all... The pressing ecological need to change our economy offers us the opportunity to find out what it really is to live well'. (8) Through the conscious and directed efforts of many

FreeSoil, *FR.U.I.T.*, 2008, mixed media, installation view, San Jose Museum of Art, 2008. Photo by the artists.



Rúri, *Archive – Endangered Waters*, 2003, interactive multimedia installation, height 234 cm. Installation view, the Icelandic Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia 2003. Courtesy Laufey Helgadóttir. Photo by the artist.



Next page: Ilkka Halso, *Kitka River*, from the series *Museum of Nature*, 2004, chromogenic digital print on aluminium, 183x300 cm.

groups as evident in the growing number of resources – New Climates (9), GreenMuseum (10), Worldchanging (11), GlobalWarmingArt (12); festivals such as *DEEP North* (13) and *The Future* (14), and exhibitions: *Envisioning change: Melting Ice/Hot Topic*; *The Trouble With the Weather: a southern response*; *Moving Towards a Balanced Earth: Kick the Carbon Habit*; *Greenwashing: Environment, Perils, Promises and Perplexities* – a momentum for a cultural evolution is forming to foster new beliefs, values and forms of meaning, encouraging us to live fulfilling lives that are in alignment with sustainability.

Inspired by the philosophy of The Long Now Foundation (15), which fosters creative/collaborative responsibility in the framework of ten thousand years, the *ZERO1* (16) festival in San Jose is commissioning a major public artwork envisioned as a *Climate Clock* that could collect and display CO₂ emissions data for one hundred years. Led by an artistic team the project is to be realised in collaboration with engineers and scientists. Within a similar public context, though at a temporary setting, the French collective HeHe (17) created the award-winning intervention piece *Green Cloud – Nuage Vert* in which the public was invited to interact with its own CO₂ emissions. The artists projected a green laser cloud onto the gases pumped in the air by a local power station in Helsinki and invited

residents from the neighboring areas to try and affect the shape of the cloud in real-time by lowering their energy consumption.

The raising of energy-consumption awareness, as a strategy for reducing dangerous greenhouse gases, is realized by artists and researchers of the Swedish Interactive Institute (18) through the interface design of everyday appliances, for example: *Energy AWARE Clock*, which compares household electricity consumption over several days; *Flower Lamp*, which teases our subconscious preferences for abundance and liveliness by 'blooming' when energy use is low; and *Erratic Appliances* for the kitchen, which misbehave when energy is overused. The focus is on bringing about experiences that inspire changes in the consumer demand-supply chain of objects we can't imagine modern life without. A part of a growing number of *Cradle to Cradle* (19) inspired initiatives – envisioning industrial production to be transformed through ecological intelligent design that draws inspiration and knowledge from nature, science and social contexts – these objects give us some hope that it is possible to evolve our economic, production-consumption model into a more sustainable one.

Some media artists, however, are challenging us to imagine a future where Nature is completely overtaken by technology, and where our experi-

ences of it may be available only on an I-Max screen with digital surround sound. In his prolific digital-print series *Museum of Nature*, Finnish artist Ilkka Halso imagines habitats being housed in techno-shelters and theme parks. 'I visualize shelters where ecosystems could be stored. These massive buildings protect forests, lakes, and rivers from pollution and, what is more important, from man himself'. (20) Halso proposes a Virilian kind of an 'anti-museum', a 'public platform for what never gets exposed, but exposes us endlessly to major hazards'. (21) This 'aesthetic of disappearance' of landscapes and natural wonders are also central to the art practice of two island artists located at the polar ends of the globe – Martin Walsh (22) in Tasmania and Ruri (23) in Iceland – anecdotally believed to be the last remaining places of natural wilderness.

Ruri's immersive and interactive installations, in particular, present the life force of water as being endangered due to industrialisation. Her seminal work *Archive: endangered waters* comprises of 52 photographs of waterfalls taken on the banks of muddy glacial torrents and clear mountain streams in Iceland. The transparencies are glass-mounted and arranged in sliding slots inside a massive steel frame structure, forming an archive. As a photograph is pulled out, the sound of the waterfall fills the space. A crossed-out sign on some of the im-

ages denotes those waterfalls that have already perished. The work laments more than just loss. For Ruri being liberal and free to pursue any goal at any cost, turning the natural environment into an economic statistic is disempowering and enslaving to our human spirit for it deprives us from a fundamental human need. It is important to note – also in the context of Australia where we are experiencing over a decade of unprecedented drought – that after oil and land, water is the third most commercially and environmentally contentious resource (24) the free access to which is advocated for inclusion in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (25)

The dichotomy between the natural environment and the techno-driven world we have created for comfort, utility and profit is challenged in a strange twist in Mari Velonaki's responsive installation *The Woman and the Snowman*, picturing a snow-covered landscape with two figures in the foreground: a snowman and what it appears to be a woman in a crimson dress. The woman in fact is the humanoid robot Repliee Q2, created by Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro of Osaka University in Japan, where the artist completed an Art/Science residency. In the work, the humanoid develops an emotive connection with the snowman and her surrounds. Velonaki states that in a world of seemingly unrestrained techno-advancements, she



- (1) McCarthy, C. (2006). *The Road*. (Alfred A. Knopf.)
 (2) Victoria Bushfire Disaster, 7 February 2009
 (3) Inspired by the scientific observation of 'trophic cascades' that occur when predators suppress the abundance of their prey thus creating a mismatch in the food chain that is believed to be linked to global warming.
 (4) www.dmu.dk/international
 (5) www.engagemedia.org
 (6) www.engagemedia.org/Members/pipstarr/videos/carteretislands-4mins.mov/view
 (7) www.free-soil.org
 (8) Singer, P. (1999). *How are we to live? Ethics in an Age of Self-interest*. Mandarin.
 (9) www.newclimates.com

- (10) www.greenmuseum.org
 (11) www.worldchanging.com
 (12) www.globalwarmingart.com
 (13) www.transmediale.de
 (14) www.aec.at
 (15) www.longnow.org
 (16) http://01sj.org/
 (17) http://hehe.org.free.fr
 (18) www.tii.se
 (19) McDonald, W., Braungart, M., Cradle to Cradle (2002). *Remaking the Way We Make Things*. North Point Press.
 (20) www.ilikka.halso.net
 (21) Virilio, P. (2000). *The Accident Museum. A Landscape of Events*. MIT Press.
 (22) www.martinwalch.com

- (23) www.ruri.is
 (24) The independent documentary film *Flow: for the love of water* is an insightful overview of the global issue of water management, the emergence of global water cartels and the links between the world's diminishing fresh water resources, conservation politics and human rights. www.flowthefilm.com
 (25) Article 31, http://article31.org
 (26) Plant, S. (1996). *The virtual complexity of culture*. FutureNatural: nature, science, culture, Routledge.
 (27) UN IPCC, 'Chapter 11, Australia and New Zealand', Fourth Assessment Report (Cambridge University Press, 2007) www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/ar4-wg2.htm

Top: Ilkka Halso, *Kitka River*, from the series Museum of Nature, 2004, chromogenic digital print on aluminium, 183x300 cm.

Next page, top: Keith Armstrong & Chris Barker, participants interacting with *Knowmore (House of Commons)*, 2009, wooden table, projection, sound, computer hardware and electronics, 150x150x83 cm. Photo by Sonja de Sterke.

Next page, bottom: Rúri, *Archive – Endangered Waters*, 2003, interactive multimedia installation, height 234 cm. Installation view, the Icelandic Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia 2003. Courtesy Laufey Helgadóttir. Photo by the artist.

wants to engage the audiences with sensory experiences of how these mediate and affect relationships. The artist and robotics scientists Drs. David Rye and Steve Scheduling have created a digital ecology responsive to the changing elements outside the gallery: temperature, humidity, barometric pressure, wind speed, air pollution levels. The relationship between the two characters and the state of the snow-scape become completely affected by the local environmental conditions.

Further, through embodiment and direct engagement with perceptions of relatedness and impacts, media art pushes us to reflect on how we control and manipulate the natural world in reality. The question of 'common impacts and consequences' is investigated in Keith Armstrong and Chris Barker's interactive installation *Knowmore (House of Commons)*. The artwork consists of a circular table upon which images of complex digital ecosystems are projected. Up to five people can

be involved in the work, negotiating their position around the table as they try to spin the top. Individual and collective actions lead to behavioral and visual changes in the digital ecosystems. The artist's intention is to physically place us in a situation where we can control, conform and influence an environment, and in doing so become more willing to contemplate how we compose and conceive of our world. The work computationally mimics the complexities of natural and artificial systems, which do not follow linear principles but are 'composed of multiples series of parallel processes, simultaneous emergences, discontinuations... and mutations of every variety'. (26) Thus, through the interactivity we are asked to share mutually sustaining systems and are encouraged to look for particular places in them where our small strategic actions could pay off in big results. The work draws parallel with the processes of the public governance of climate change that

are self-organised, interlinked and bottom-up. The more we interact, the more we know what it is that we need to do – individually and together – in this seemingly anarchic system.

The artworks and strategies discussed here are neither conclusive nor exhaustive examples of the growing number of projects being produced across the world in response to the pressing issue of Climate Change. Indeed, we must remain diverse and broad in our ideas and responses to the complexities and local contexts of this challenge. Continuing to be proactive and inventive, accepting that our job would never be done.

As I write, the deadly bushfires are still burning across our state. According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Report on Australia, such heat waves and fire events will increase in frequency and intensity as a result of global warming. (27) At the same time, in the top end of our continent, over sixty per cent of

the state of Queensland is underwater due to unprecedented flooding. On the scale of geography, the total devastated area of this great country is several times the size of a country like Denmark.

The impact of these natural disasters and the immensity of the devastation are incomprehensible. In times like this it would be less human of any of us to not have shivered and doubted whether there is any hope for the future. For the road of our living in the age of climate change, though unknown and unpredictable, is very real. With nowhere else to go we ought to find ways to understand it... adapt to it... try to change its course. We ought to have great faith in the capacity and ingenuity of the creative mind, in the new possibilities that arise from shared knowledge and collaborations across disciplines and borderlines, and in our resolve to work together. We ought to have great faith in our common humanity, in the spirit of which we could take up this road – engaged and connected. +

The writer is a New York-based art critic, curator and artist who has regularly contributed to *The Village Voice* magazine and several international publications. From 1996-2002, she acted as President of the International Association of Art Critics and, over the course of her career, has received several journalism awards.

Kim Levin

On 'Notes and Itineraries': A Statement

The characteristic feature of the archive is its gap, its perforated essence.

Georges Didi-Huberman, 2007

Notes and Itineraries offers an alternative model that crosses the borders between art writing and art making. It deals in a very literal sense with time and history, memory and meaning. This long-term project tracks the peregrinations of New York's exhibition spaces as they shifted from Soho to the East Village and back again and then to Chelsea and elsewhere, and it traces the course of artists who, like Nancy Spero and Jeff Koons, started out in group shows in East Village galleries long before they were household names. It began as a working method for me as a critic whose job required that I cover a lot of ground. It also functioned, in a way, autobiographically, listing the galleries (with addresses) and exhibitions (with dates of shows) in the order in which I intended to see them, as well as noting my appointments, my shopping lists, and my instant reactions to the art. Later it became a two-room installation in a New York gallery, a somewhat perplexing and unexpected artwork that questions the distinctions between the visible, the legible, and the visual.

**To paraphrase Magritte,
this is not an archive**

Confusions appeal to me. I don't mean the red, purple, green, and blue felt-pen circles, stars, and other symbols that were instant coded reminders of how I reacted to each show and whether I intended to write about it, but rather the broader confusions about my role and what it is I am exhibiting. At a certain point recently I felt it necessary to clarify some of the confusion the exhibition has generated: *Notes and Itineraries* (in cooperation with John Salvest) is not – I insist, though you are free to disagree – my archive, though some people have mistaken it as such. It is an installation in which a small selection of papers from my archive functions as material and content. A confession is in order here: in the beginning, before I was a critic, a theorist, and a curator, I was a visual artist, although later I chose not to ever mention that fact. And then suddenly, in 2003, I found myself functioning as an artist again, thanks to John Salvest – an artist who was functioning as a curator.

Back in 1998, in my role as curator, I had included Salvest's conceptual work in a tri-state annual called MAX (Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee) at

the University of Memphis Art Museum. A couple of years later he was visiting Manhattan and I took him and his wife and fellow artist Les Christensen along one day on my tour of the Chelsea galleries. He was puzzled and intrigued by my itinerary for the day, which geographically listed the shows we would visit, street by street. As was my habit, I made cryptic notes with colored felt-tip pens as we went from one gallery to the next. Another few years passed, and then in 2003, I heard from John Salvest again. He had been invited by Delta axis, an alternative space in Memphis, to curate an exhibition: once a year a local artist would be invited to function as curator for one show. Being a conceptualist, he thought: if an artist can be a curator, a curator can be the artist. And so he phoned me to inquire whether I saved the itineraries, and how many I had. As it happens, the handwritten *Itineraries* were my essential working tool. For a newspaper critic writing weekly mini-reviews of ten or fifteen exhibitions a week, as well two "choices" for the week, plus a longer review or a full-page article, they were crucial materials.

It was quite by chance that I began to save them. In the first decade that

I wrote weekly for *The Village Voice*, I threw the itineraries away at the end of the week, after I had seen the shows and they became obsolete. But one day in 1994 I invited a German museum director who had an abiding interest in museology to accompany me to the galleries. He was fascinated by my itinerary for the day, and horrified when I told him I tossed them away. 'No, no', he insisted, 'You must save them. They are valuable archival material.' So that is how I came to have accumulated several hundred itineraries – nearly ten years worth – when John Salvest phoned to inquire about them. I couldn't resist the conceptual symmetry of his reasoning and so I immediately agreed to the exhibition, which was called simply 'Itineraries'. And besides, I had already begun to think of the itineraries and my annotated notes and sketches on check lists and press releases as wayward art objects, my secret way of making art.

As for my archive, it fills ten metal filing cabinets, plus twenty cardboard boxes stacked underneath and behind my furniture, and also a dozen shoeboxes containing postcard announcements from exhibitions going back to the 1970s and up to the present: downtown, uptown, out-of-town, and else-

Kim Levin, *Notes and Itineraries*, 1975-2004, installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, 2008. Photo by Arja Orbinski / Central Art Archives.



where. What excuse do I have? Well, for one thing, I had studied Egyptian archaeology and much was made of the importance of primary sources. When I abandoned archaeological studies to write about contemporary art, my Egyptology professor asked: 'How can you do it?' 'How can I do what?' I replied, uncomprehending. 'There are no experts, no references, no primary sources', he said with consternation. And with all the presumptiveness of youthful innocence verging on arrogance, I proclaimed: 'I will be the primary source for future archaeologists.' I also admit to a bit of an obsessive streak, and no one ever taught me to throw meaningful things away.

The Finnish artist Jussi Kivi collects everything and anything having to do with firefighting. I collect, or rather, accumulate historical art stuff that tends to get thrown away, the byproducts of my work as an art critic. But I do not collect everything, as a true collector would. Great quantities of press releases, announcements, and posters arrive in the mail that are of little interest to me. I recycle those. I save them for someone who has been compiling his own complete and cross-referenced archive of the art scene for the past forty

years. Once a month he takes away a couple of shopping bags crammed with art ephemera. It pleases me that they too have been saved from oblivion.

On the other hand, I like to travel light. I was thrilled to realize that the whole of the two-room installation of *Notes and Itineraries* that filled the Ron Feldman Gallery in New York in 2006 could be subsequently carried to Zurich as cabin baggage in a 10 x 12 x 15 inch cardboard storage box affixed to wheels. In the Zurich gallery version of the exhibition the box itself – upon which I had written notations and addresses – was exhibited on a white base, because it too had become an object with a history and there was a space in the gallery that seemed to cry out for something sculptural. When that exhibition ended, the installation was repacked inside the cardboard box, which was sent back to New York inside a slightly larger – and beautifully constructed – traditional art crate whose cubic dimensions measured approximately 22 by 21 by 17 inches.

At Feldman Gallery, which was the most complete installation to date, *Notes and Itineraries* was divided into four parts. The complete *Itineraries* (1995-2004) were installed in the front

gallery in reverse chronological order. In the side gallery, *Notes I* (1995-2004) an installation of annotated small announcements and postcards (it had been exhibited in Memphis as a patchwork grid) was stretched out in a long line. *Notes II* (1995-2004), a grid of annotated press releases and checklists, filled a large wall, as it did elsewhere, with two exceptions: at Kiasma, it lined both sides of a corridor from floor to ceiling, and at the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, an abbreviated version was laid out on the long table (originally intended for the postcards) under glass. The fourth part of the installation, *Downtown Postcards* (1976-1991), is the table installation of exhibition postcards, not annotated but generally addressed to me.

Did I mention that I always use recycled paper from the exhibition spaces? When you're going to twenty or more galleries a day, you don't want to carry one unnecessary piece of paper. What began as pure practicality soon became a deliberate practice. The *Itineraries* are on the blank backs of long gallery announcements, so when you first see the installation – sticking out perpendicularly from the wall in staggered rows – you see my handprinted lists. But when

you reach the end of the wall and turn to look backwards, the backs of the cards present a colorful variety of exhibition announcements as well as – in the gaps – my scribbled notes.

As for the postcards, I had already started collecting old postcards in the early 1970s. I sent them one year as Christmas cards, and then I began to save them: antique hand-colored photo cards from the first decade of the 20th century, sentimental cards of amorous soldiers and ladies from the beginning of World War I. As the war went on, the mood changed and the cards – posed in photographer's studios and tinted with pastel colors – depicted wounded soldiers cavorting with nurses. Still later, the soldiers became heroic little vignettes in the sky above dreaming women and children. I also collected, to contrast the fantasy with the actuality, real-photo-postcards of villages reduced to rubble. So it seemed perfectly logical to collect the art postcards that began to arrive, especially after Eleanor Antin's series of *100 Boots* post cards appeared in my mail one by one during 1973, and after Martha Rosler mailed me her early recipe narratives.

But I digress. After John Salvest proposed the Delta Axis exhibition,



I spent weeks organizing the itineraries in chronological order, and sorting through my archives for the notes. My criteria for the notes was visual – not the gallery or the artist, but the look of the page. While I was sorting through the material in New York in 2003, John Salvest, in Arkansas, was trying to figure out how we should display the Itineraries so both sides would be visible. We had ruled out glass and vitrines and a number of other two-sided solutions. Then he had his Eureka moment with the map tacks. He knew instantly that it was right, and when I saw it, so did I. We both felt absolutely comfortable with that mode of display. Does that make him the artist of the show, or does that make him a curator who is doing his job as curator perfectly, finding the solution that will advance the artist's intention? As for solutions, credit is also due to David Clarkson, Exhibition Manager (and an artist himself) at Feldman Gallery, for coming up with the design of the angled postcard table. In a way, as with many shows, it was a collaborative effort. And as always, the lighting designer, on which so much depends, gets the least credit.

If this exhibition still raises questions (What is it? Why is it art? Who is the artist?) about the expanding

boundaries for art, I am pleased. Despite the recent vogue for archive-installations by artists, and in spite of the ever-increasing evidence from many artists – Christine Hill, Danica Phelps, and Joseph Grigely among them – that information rescued from one's life or work can become your art, this is not what we were programmed to believe was art. The risk in presenting organized information as the material of an installation is that what tends to get overlooked is not only the process of selection and organization but the form it takes. It seems we've reverted back, in a new way, to the old question of naturalism.

This material resonates with my life as an art critic. I like that the installation of *Notes and Itineraries* is a gradual accretion, a long-term effort built up over the years that changed its nature like a chameleon. And it continues: itineraries and annotated notes exist from the year 2005 to the present, although after the exhibition in Memphis I suffered a month or two of self-consciousness that afflicted my notes. In a certain way the installation relates to the art I have written about and the shows I have curated. I have always been drawn to art that goes to extremes, that pushes the limit in one

way or another. Lars Saari pointed out this connection at a panel discussion in Helsinki last October, citing the Nordic Biennial I guest curated at Arken in Copenhagen in 1996, titled *The Scream* which focused on new artists who addressed 'the uncontrollable, the inexplicable, and the unbearable', and also referring to the issue of the Irish journal *Printed Project* for which I served as Guest Editor/Curator in 2007. Titled *Unconditional Love* that issue included impossible or improbable projects by a dozen transgressive conceptualists, all of whom had become known as *infants terribles* for their maverick provocations and unlovable interventions.

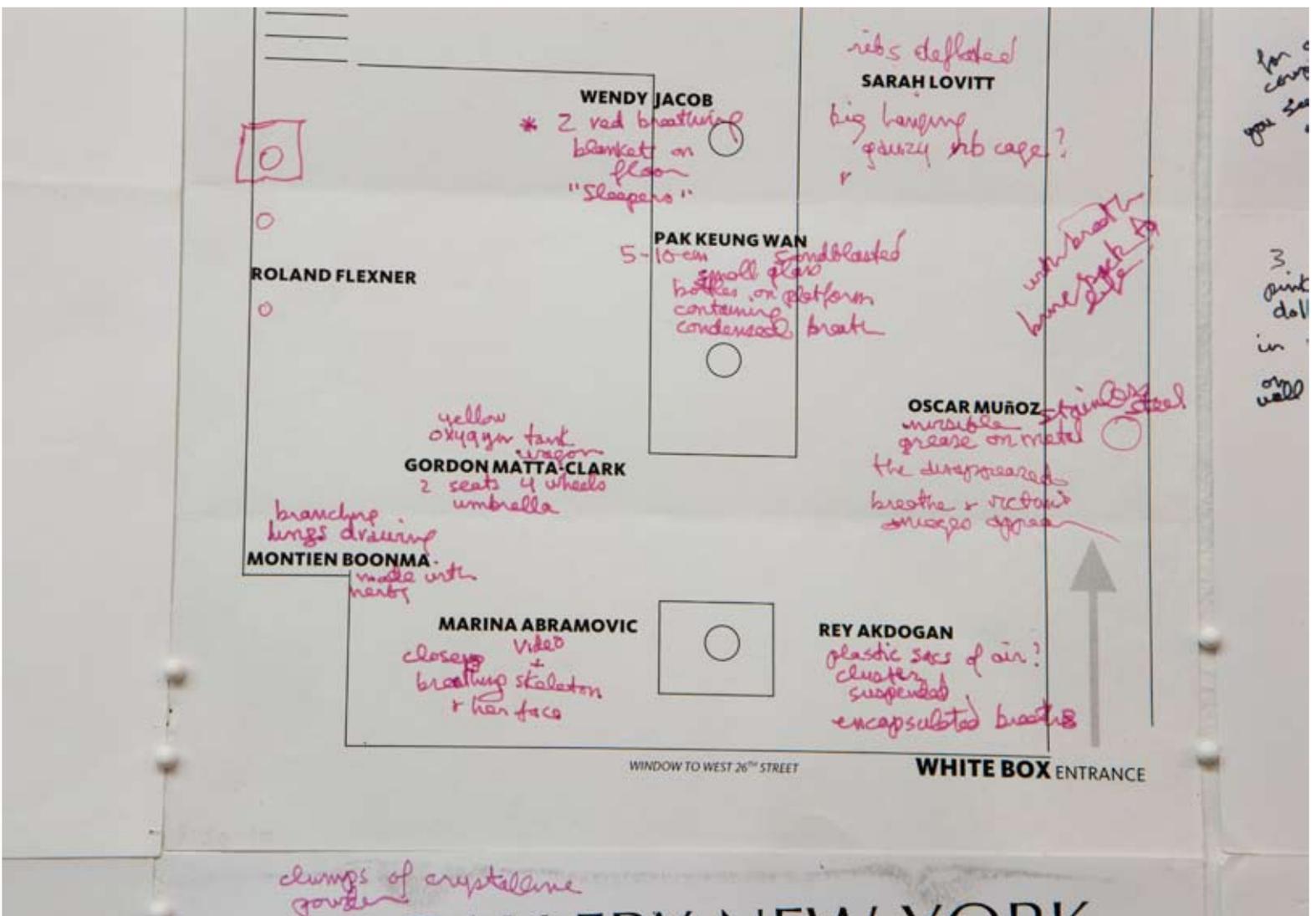
One thing remains unmentioned. *Notes and Itineraries* was never intended to go on tour, but it has now been shown in six places. That too happened in an additive process that perfectly suits its nature. Ron Feldman took a big risk when he gave me the whole gallery to update what had been a smaller show in Memphis. Someone recommended the exhibition at Feldman Gallery to a brand new gallery in Zurich, Haas and Mayer, where it became their second show ever. Then Janos Sugar, an artist from Hungary who had gone with me to galleries in Soho one day in 1994, heard about it and proposed it to the

Ludwig Museum in Budapest. While it was in Budapest, Berndt Arell suggested bringing it to Kiasma.

And while it was at Kiasma, Kari Conte, a student curator in London, who had seen it at the Feldman Gallery in New York and heard about it at Kiasma, invited me to be in a group show at the Royal College of Art titled *Retracing Exhibitions*. The premise for that exhibition: how we experience past exhibitions in the present, how we think about exhibitions in retrospect, how we preserve them for the future. And that is the story of how my *Downtown Postcards* and *Notes II* came to be exhibited most recently opposite an early work by Hans Haacke, across from a fragmentary installation by Joelle Tuerlinckx, and in front of Sarah Pierce's complex piece about history and amnesia that included a recreation of Eva Hesse's hanging rope. As one with a lifelong involvement in contemporary art, that was as thrilling as showing at Kiasma during *Full House*, which featured the minimalist giants of my youth.

As Franz West once said about his own work, 'Things in the world can, under certain special circumstances, enter the realm of art. And, in fact, once they have entered this realm they are art.' +

Kim Levin, *Notes and Itineraries*, 1975-2004, details of various notes written on press releases and invitations, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, 2008. Photo by Arja Orbinski / Central Art Archives.



Elena Sorokina is Paris/Brussels-based curator and writer. A Whitney Museum of American Art ISP fellow, she has recently curated *Petroliana* at the Moscow Biennial 2007; *Laws of Relativity* at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; *On Traders' Dilemmas* at YBCA, San Francisco, 2008; and *Scènes Centrales* at Tri Postal, Lille, France, 2009. She has been writing for *Artforum*, *Moscow Art Magazine*, *Die Zeit*, and other publications.

Oliver Ressler is an artist based in Vienna. Among his exhibitions and projects in public spaces is an ongoing project *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* that has been produced in 21 cities around the world and published as a book by the Wyspa Institute of Art, Gdansk in 2007. Ressler is currently preparing the multi-channel video installation *What Is Democracy?*.

(1) www.akegroup.com

(2) www.holy-damn-it.org. The DVD provides artistic and political interventions – videos, slide shows with sound, and image montages, each 1-7 minuets – free of charge. It can be used by all anti-militarists for screenings in public space, in exhibitions, in political and cultural institutions, cinemas, political events and actions. The ordering proce-

dures will be online at www.holy-damn-it.org.

The artists participating in the project are Internacional Errorista (Argentina), Noel Douglas (GB), Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid (Slovenia), Petra Gerschner (Germany), Feld für Kunst (Germany), Gülsün Karamustafa (Turkey), Carlos Motta (COL/USA), Oliver Ressler (Austria), Walter Seidl (Austria), and David Thorne (USA).

Elena Sorokina in Conversation with Oliver Ressler How Do the Fittest Survive?

Elena Sorokina (ES): I would like to focus our conversation on your film, *The Fittest Survive*. This video is based on footage taken during the five-day course *Surviving Hostile Regions*, which was carried out in January 2006 in Wales, Great Britain by the AKE Group. The course instructors are British ex-special force soldiers. As for the participants, they are businessmen who are preparing to work in Iraq and other similarly dangerous regions, government officials and mainstream journalists who, in the name of the establishment of democracy and human rights, help legitimise and secure the expansion of the market economy. How did you find out about this course?

Oliver Ressler (OR): I had been working on economy and labour issues in a couple of projects, when, several years ago, I read an article about these survival courses and got interested in the subject. In 2005 I got an invitation to produce a new piece for a museum exhibition committed to labour and so I proposed to make a video about one of these courses. I started intensive research and contacted private security companies and private military companies, which were mainly located in the United States and Great Britain. As you can imagine, it was very difficult to get shooting permission – the companies usually did not reply and if they did, they said that due to confidentiality agreements they could not allow filming during their courses. After six months writing numerous emails and phoning companies, the British AKE Group finally agreed to let me film one of their courses. AKE offers different kinds of training programmes, some of which are carried out according to the specifications set by corporations. I had the chance to shoot a standard survival

course in which people from different backgrounds participated.

This course is supposed to teach people strategies for profit making under conditions of military conflict, which is a rather delirious idea. In contrast, the language of AKE's advertising campaign sounds perfectly reasonable, although it warns against *an increase in costs and death* as possible risks. It reads: 'In today's expanding global marketplace, businesses and professionals may be vulnerable to significant security and political risk. Such risk – whether to personnel, operations or facilities – needs to be properly addressed; or the result could be project failure, reduced efficiency, increased costs and insurance premiums, injury, illness and even death. But surprisingly, some organisations assume these risks must simply be accepted'. (1)

ES: What was your position when making this film? Do you see this work as a documentary?

OR: For anyone interested in corporate statements about how military forces and the capitalist economy are linked to each other, the AKE webpage is a really rich source. I never planned to make an objective documentary. I don't believe in objectivity at all, I think it is a myth and an ideological construct. Working as an artist and filmmaker for me always means working from a political perspective. Trying to find something like a neutral perspective would bore me. The film *The Fittest Survive* is very different from all the films I have made to date, which usually show the protagonists of various social movements talking directly to the camera. *The Fittest Survive* is my first film that is not based on interviews. I have tried to affirm my position through the selec-

tion and the montage of the material, through a few text inserts and the footage of the course manual being burnt on the training grounds, which is the only staged element. My cameraman Volkmar Geiblinger and I recorded the rest of the material, as we followed the participants during the training course.

ES: Could you elaborate on the structure of the film and the process of its making?

OR: My idea was to produce a film based on the material collected during the five days of the training course, but one that doesn't necessarily show everything that took place during these days. For example, there were many hours of first aid training which I decided not to use too much of during the editing process, concentrating instead on what are called 'training scenarios' that present a clearer image of the militarisation of the economy. The film flirts with the fact that the eight participants are obviously aware that the training scenarios represent simulated realities. However, they take them very seriously and try to behave as if it was reality. There are a few sections in the film which show the different scenarios the participants went through: unexpected shell bombardments, kidnapping by a paramilitary unit, a car accident and crossing a minefield. The course was structured in such a way that the participants never knew exactly what to expect in the next hour. They were just told to walk in a particular direction and to meet a person there, and then something would happen and they had to react to it. Volkmar and I did not have any more information than the participants, so the cameraman had to react very fast and spontaneously to whatever happened, staying as close as

possible to the participants, which influenced the visual appearance of the film a lot. An interesting aspect of it is that there are two or three moments in the film where the participants or instructors directly communicate with the camera: actors in a staged reality communicating with a camera that is documenting them, the material from which will be used for a film, which – as with all films – can be seen as a staging and transformation of reality itself.

ES: From a formal point of view, the work shows the simulated reality of a military training camp. Yet for us, regular Western viewers, it is the reality of the Other that this camp is trying to simulate in order to eventually control it; and this, both in military and economic ways. Because the conflicts take place elsewhere, our access to them is conditioned by the Western ideological imagery, such as mainstream action movies or the production of infotainment channels like CNN. Unavoidable references to video games start appearing too. For instance, the camp's architecture looks like it has come directly from PlayStation's *Fuel of War* game.

OR: One of the motivations to produce this film was to present a kind of reality which is not usually accessible to a broader public. Corporations are not very interested in making their activities and strategies visible to everyone, a lot of things take place hidden from the public's gaze. But it is true that you get all these flash-backs to other 'realities' like the ones you have just described. In particular, the exercises the eight participants in this course go through do not represent something new. We all know them from movies and video games. What is special about the 'Surviving Hostile Regions' course is that the par-

Oliver Ressler, stills from *The Fittest Survive*, 2006, duration 23'. Courtesy the artist.



ticipants are civilians, and not soldiers, and this tells us something about the formation of our economy and society in general.

ES: The video brings attention to the current militarisation of businesses, and, less directly, to the increasing involvement of private business in warfare. On a metaphorical level, this work might be seen as alluding to the changing origins of the enemy. If the Cold War's 'red threat' formulated a stable and defined image of the enemy – communism versus capitalism – the currently predominant image – that of the terrorist – is related to specific religious doctrines or worldviews, rather than to states with well demarcated borders. And multinationals, like terrorists, are organised in borderless networks. Following some dystopian scenario, we could even imagine that they will begin confronting each other directly, without delegating military tasks to the states.

OR: My idea was to work on a film which points to the aggressive formation of the contemporary economy, which unfortunately is internalised by so many people. Today it is broadly accepted that economy has its own rules, which are based on inevitable toughness and recklessness. The militarised view of economy and the formation of the contemporary economy are linked to each other and belong together. Sometimes it becomes directly visible: when, for example, those in power decide to go to war and to fight for the formation of the economy and for the 'defence' of the raw materials this capitalist economy is based on, or for geo-strategic reasons. In this regard, we can describe the current form of economy as militarised neoliberalism. The most obvious example of militarised neoliberalism

is the military intervention in Iraq, where private security companies and private military companies have their largest playground for activities. In the meantime, it is a well-known fact that private military companies contribute the second largest number of employees to the coalition forces in Iraq – it is less than the US army, but much more than the British army.

ES: The example of Private Military Contractors (PMC's) is very interesting. Through PMC's, the dominant hypercapitalist states create legal exceptions for the warfare and try to escape public control. PMC's are less accountable to the public because they are private, some of their contracts do not need approval by the Congress in the US, although costs for military intervention do – here the mere juxtaposition of 'ethics' and 'economics' is jarring. The self-consciously non-ethical character of modern economics has been discussed in high theory, notably by Amartya Sen who observed that the founding father of modern economics, Adam Smith, was a professor of moral philosophy. With regard to PMC's, it sounds somewhat tragicomic. The new developments in today's post-Fordist risk society show no concern for such issues and impose risks which could and should be avoided. From the very beginning of your film, one almost unwillingly registers the normality – not to say the banality – of the participants, middle aged men and women, who are supposed to 'simply accept risks' in order to take care of their businesses 'in today's expanding global marketplace'. They look rather lost and pathetic as they try to perform some kind of Superman task that they obviously want to master – to run under the enemy's fire, evacuate the injured; on top of

that, your camera is not helping them to look good at all. All this generates a strong sense of absurdity and one begins to wonder what motivates these people.

OR: I think that a minority of the participants really enjoyed this training course. They liked the different kinds of activities they did there, which are in contrast with the boredom of their office jobs in the deadening urbanity. There is also the possibility of experiencing their own self, and seeing how far they are able to control themselves or lead other people into unexpected situations. Some of them had very positive experiences and gained additional self-confidence. But I think the majority of this small group had some pressure from their employer to participate in this course and did not like it so much. But still they accepted it in order to increase their chances of making a career within their field of work. So the title *The Fittest Survive* also refers to the pressure employees in corporations suffer from in general, as there are not many stable work contracts anymore and a social-Darwinist pecking order seems to dominate more and more fields in today's economy.

ES: I have one last question about where you have presented this film so far? Usually, your films are not only shown in the context of art, but are often screened for activist groups, parties, NGO's and so on.

OR: The film was commissioned by the Museum Arbeitswelt in Steyr in Austria, where it has been part of the permanent exhibition *working_world.net* since June 2006. It is true that my two films on the political processes in Venezuela and the two films I made on

the counter-globalisation movement have been presented much more often by solidarity groups or participants of the movement than in the art or film context. This is slightly different with *The Fittest Survive*, as this is a very special theme... Still, the film gets its own audience, it has been presented in a couple of exhibitions and I have been invited to present it at film festivals. Among others it has screened at *Impakt Festival* in Utrecht, *LA Freewaves* in Los Angeles, *Transmediale.07* in Berlin, *Diagonale* in Graz, *Image Forum Festival* in Tokyo and the *12th International Media Art Biennale WRO 07* in Wrocław in Poland.

The Fittest Survive is part of the art project *holy damn it*, including 10 international artists and artist collectives who have been invited to submit a contribution for the DVD project *War is Peace*. (2) *holy damn it* underlines how capitalist globalization and global war from two sides of one coin: The dominating political system can no longer offer new perspectives other than the administration of crisis, be it billions of money donated to banks or armament for the occupied zones. This leads to increasing militarization of societies worldwide, within and to the outside. Global war has no temporal or spatial limitation, no beginning and no end. War is Peace. In our current world order, there is no longer a state of peace doing without war. The military has become an essential means for global crisis management: whether in military border units of the EU and the USA against the right of free migration, to defend climate violation, securing raw materials and trade channels, e.g. in Guantanamo, Afghanistan, or the increasing militarization of everyday life in metropolises as well as the expansion of the authoritative surveillance state. +

Morten Goll is a visual artist. After 9/11 his work has gradually changed focus towards sociological and inter-cultural problematics. Joachim Hamou is a visual artist, who is also involved in many interdisciplinary collaborations such as urban empowerment projects. Tone Olaf Nielsen is an independent curator and educator engaged in deconstructing capitalist divides. *Language editing Mike Garner.*

Links:

The Trampoline House: www.trampolinehouse.dk
Asylum Dialog Tank: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=30835787623>

Morten Goll, Joachim Hamou and Tone Olaf Nielsen

The Asylum Dialog Tank as a Social Art Intervention

Over the course of the last fifteen years, the Danish Aliens Act has been altered several times, with the aim of making it less attractive to seek asylum in the country. The process was started in the 1990s, but was strengthened in 2001, when a coalition of right-wing parties won the election on the premise of getting tougher on foreigners. The new government, supported by the ultra-nationalist and outspokenly xenophobic Danish People's Party, launched a massive attack on the basic human rights of refugees through a series of 'tightenings', which today renders Denmark the European nation with the toughest Aliens Act of all. Exhibiting blatant hypocrisy, this government, at the same time, launched an activist foreign policy, which led to the Danish participation in the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002 and 2003. Although these military interventions have caused thousands of civilians to flee their homes, Denmark has never acknowledged its responsibility as one of the warring parties. On the contrary, it has taken several measures to repatriate Iraqi and Afghan refugees, which has set Denmark on a collision course with human rights and the recommendations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (1)

Although these changes have provoked many critical voices about the way in which Danish asylum centers function, no one has so far asked the asylum center residents directly for their own opinions.

Living conditions as an asylum seeker in Denmark:

- No right to work
- No right to live outside the asylum camps, or to choose which one to live in
- Grown ups cannot attend Danish

classes and have very limited access to education

- Children go to special schools with lower level education and no graduation exam (but a rising number are now allowed into public schools)
- Health care only for acute diseases

And for rejected asylum seekers, also:

- Forced to live in deportation camps
- Must report to the police in the camp twice a week (who simply ask why you are not going home)
- No pocket money, food in a cafeteria (you get 230 DKK a month)
- No activity programmes
- No time limit, if Denmark cannot deport you (many countries do not want their citizens back). If you don't have any ID, or you are stateless, you can stay like this forever. The average length of stay in the asylum camps is 3.5 years for an adult. About 800 people have been in them for more than 4 years.
- Imprisonment, also without time limit (many have been imprisoned for over a year), solely on suspicion that you will leave the country illegally or go underground. Most other European countries have time limits, some as little as weeks.

The Asylum Dialog Tank (ADT)

In response to the situation described above we initiated ADT as a process of empowerment, agency, and social change in the beginning of 2009. It took the form of a series of workshops in Denmark's Kongelunden and Sandholm asylum centers during January and February. The participants were residents from the asylum Center Avnstrup, Center Kongelunden, and Center Sandholm, as well as students from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, The School of Architecture,

Copenhagen College of Social Work, The Danish School of Media and Journalism, The University of Copenhagen, Architects Without Borders, and others. During the two workshops, the participants collectively developed ideas and strategies on how to improve the living conditions for asylum-center residents in Denmark. ADT Kongelunden had about 24 participants, nine of which were residents. ADT Sandholm had 46 participants, 32 of which were residents.

It was a key strategy of the ADT workshops that all participants were considered equal, regardless of their legal status. ADT does not accept stigmatizing labels such as "phase 1, 2, or 3 asylum seekers", partly because they refer to different degrees of rejection by the Danish state, partly because they lead to victimization, and partly because they connote "unreliable individual." In ADT, on the contrary, any identity that the refugees and students chose to present for themselves was accepted. Overall, ADT was a social experiment in which the refugees were invited to act as experts on asylum law and asylum-center living, while the students were invited to help find alternatives to the Danish system in close collaboration with the residents. Since the Danish state has made it its trademark to disrespect the rights of refugees, the only way to restore justice and dignity is to ask the refugees in the camps for help.

The workshops at Center Kongelunden and Center Sandholm each included three elements: a video workshop, a dialog tank, and a presentation. The purpose of the video workshop was to introduce the workshop participants to each other and to prepare them for the subsequent dialog tank. Participants were divided into groups, each of

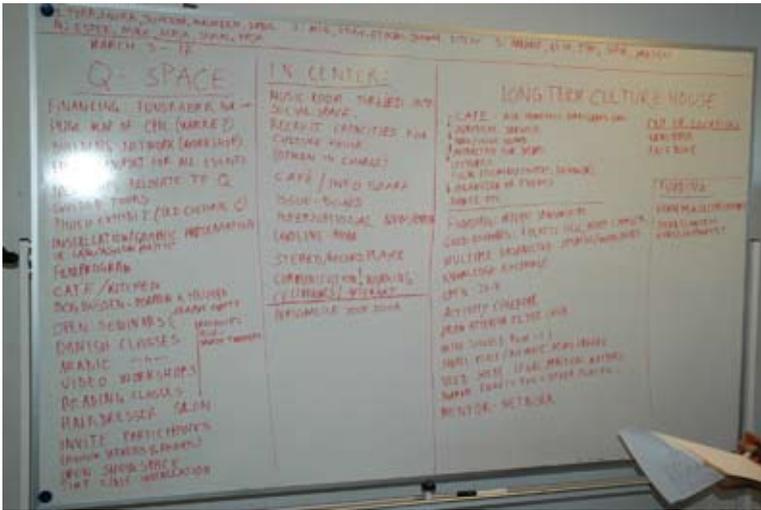
which was asked to formulate a question that would become the subject matter for their videos. Then, for three days, the group members collaborated on producing and editing their videos. The purpose of the questions was to engage the participants in critical reflection on their immediate situation, and thus, this also functioned as a kind of research for the dialog tank. It was a mandatory that each group develop questions that could be put to both refugees and Danes. Each group produced a 5-10-minute video that was shown to the entire workshop.

The purpose of the dialog tank was to analyze the asylum center in question, and to develop alternative solutions to the problems found there. The dialog tank was divided into problem-recognition phase and a problem-solving phase: During the second phase, we searched for answers and solutions to the problems identified during the first phase.

The third and last element of the ADT workshop was a presentation, in which participants described their ideas and solutions to the entire group. (2)

The results of the problem-definition phase

During the problem-definition phase, we discussed the shortcomings of Danish asylum centers in general, since many of the residents participating in ADT had several of years of experience with many different centers. The conclusion was that the centers are generally in reasonable condition, and that the Danish Red Cross, which has been appointed by the Danish state to run the centers, is doing a good job. Over the years, the Danish Red Cross has done its best to improve the architecture and interior of the centers in accordance



(1) Bendixen, Michaela Clante (2009). *An Introduction to Danish Asylum Policy*.

(2) Denmark used to be one of the Nice Guys and follow the advice of UNHCR. But over the years, and most drastically with the new Aliens Act in 2002, we have moved quite far away from UNHCR. The most fundamental difference is that to get asylum in Denmark you have to be *individually* in danger of persecution – it is not

enough to come from a very dangerous place or belong to a persecuted group. If you read the UN definition again, you will not find a word about this. And if you compare this with the situation of the Jews in Nazi Germany, most of them would not be included by the Danish definition. The economic burden of accepting refugees seem to mean more than the moral responsibility of offering them safety.

Left: To-do-board ADT Kongelunden. Photo by Otman Miloud.

Right: Free Soup in Trampoline House. Photo by Otman Miloud.

with clients' needs. It is beyond doubt that the Danish Red Cross is doing its best to help its clients, but as long as it agrees to act according to an inhumane Aliens Act, the organization's humanitarian measures are bound to fall short of its clients most basic needs. However, the asylum center residents who participated in *ADT* all said they could endure the disrespect of their human rights, if only there was a set time limit on this situation.

Danish asylum centers were built to accommodate refugees only temporarily – and for no more than 12-24 months, while waiting for their application to be processed. In reality, asylum seekers live in these enclosed, parallel worlds for much longer – some up to 12 years. Room and board comes with the prohibition of work, education, and integration into the general society. In most cases, the asylum seekers would prefer to work or study, thus contributing to the society they live in. Instead, asylum seekers face isolation, poverty, and mental paralysis. The state has banned these people, and rejected their desire to live a normal, self-sustaining life, and they are thus left as clients of a dubious welfare state, which does not want them, but cannot force them to leave. From the inside it seems that the Danish asylum centers are designed to break people down. Even if Denmark decided to turn the asylum centers into five-star hotels, the residents would still feel imprisoned, since they do not enjoy the basic right to a normal self-sustaining life.

The consequence of this is that Danes generally perceive asylum seekers as costly clients and parasites on the Danish welfare system, rather than as potential colleagues and contributors to society. But the fact is that they have become so against their own will.

The results of the problem-solving phase

Faced with this reality, *ADT* concluded that the Aliens Act is the biggest obstacle. Thus, we have to work to change voters' perception of asylum seekers. In order to do this, we identified a strong need for a self-organized independent platform outside of the centers from which refugees would be able to develop and display identities of their own choice. Through such a platform, they would gain agency and become self-empowered to simultaneously change public opinion and fight for social justice. Consequently, *ADT* decided to create two new independent institutions:

- 1) *Visavis*, a newspaper controlled and written by the asylum seekers, addressed to the Danish public.
- 2) *The Trampoline House*, an asylum-seeker-driven and controlled drop-in culture house designed to be a meeting place for asylum seekers and Danes.

Both are intended to serve as mouthpieces for refugees living in Denmark and as a means of social justification and integration. *ADT's* goal is that both *Visavis* and *The Trampoline House* will become permanent non-government institutions in the near future. The newspaper will be written and produced by refugees, aided by a professional editor, and a board consisting of refugees and Danes. As regards the distribution of the paper, we are working on adopting the distribution concept used by *Hus Forbi*, a Danish newspaper for homeless people. This paper is sold on the streets by the homeless, thus facilitating direct contact between citizens and the homeless.

The Trampoline House will be a pri-

ivate, non-profit, drop-in culture centre run by refugees and users of the house. The founding principles of *The Trampoline House* are integration, learning, exchange, networking, and mutual respect. It will serve as a platform for a variety of activities: a café, concerts, exhibitions, reading groups, Danish/foreign-language classes, video workshops, pro bono legal aid and counseling, a hair dresser, bicycle workshop, etc. Some of these activities are already offered by the Danish Red Cross, but only for some asylum seekers, depending on whether they are categorized as phase 1, 2 or 3 refugees. Other activities are not permitted to asylum center residents at all. *The Trampoline House* will accept all refugees and Danes, regardless of their legal status, and since it is independent of the state, we can operate according to the needs of the users of the house, rather than according to the Aliens Act. All in all, *The Trampoline House* – with its principle the fact that every human is a valuable resource, not a victim – gives asylum seekers an opportunity chance to organize and represent themselves, to establish and develop relations with Danish society, and to command a platform from which they can tell Danes about their situation.

The newspaper's editorial office will be in *The Trampoline House*. The paper's prime function is to serve as a link between people living in the asylum centers and people outside. It must be readable for refugees and Danes alike, since the goal is to promote integration and to break down isolation. In line with this, the people who will work on the paper have to be both refugees and Danes.

The Trampoline House opened on a temporary test site in the Royal Danish

Academy of Fine Arts' exhibition space, Q, on March 5, 2009. On the opening night we had about 250 visitors, refugees and Danes alike. In the following days, we had a full house, 20–60 visitors, at all times. The temporary site closed on March 15, but having proved the necessity for a Trampoline House, our next step will be to raise money to establish a permanent platform. In the meantime, we will launch the first issue of *Visavis* on May 15, 2009.

ADT currently comprises the following participants: Kalbsh Ahmad, Kaosar Ahmed, Marewan Ahmad, Soran Karim Ahmad, Refa Aldan, Abdul Ali, Ahlam Alnies, Hassan Arab, Mohammadi Arash, Lethé Bjørg, Pavlovic Bojan, Maureen N. Chi, Nabil Darwish, James Dickson, Mia Edelgart, Morten Goll, Johanna Guldager, Hamid Haidari, Selini Halvadaki, Joachim Hamou, Stine Laurberg Hansen, Aziz Hashimi, Farzad Hassani, Elsa Hepta, Sofie Holten, Husan, Hasan Jalali, Ziad Kabbani, Mira Kellerman, Memo Kara Khalil, Arendse Krabbe, Misja Krenchel, Aram Mahamadi, Fatma Mahmoud, Aras Mana'an, Ditlev Marboe, Maja Moesgaard, Otman Miloud, Tone Olaf Nielsen, Maher Omar, Yassin Rahmani, Nabila Saidi, Afraz Naif Saleh, Ann Sofie, Stan, Therese, Hasim Ullah, Ester Vilstrup, Laura Winge, Erik Yakubjan, and Eva Ågaard.

Several grass-roots organizations are currently working to change the conditions in the camps. We would like to express our thanks to these groups for their work and dedication, which have been an inspiration to us. *ADT's* contribution is to be a network of refugees and Danes, who have begun the work of breaking down the invisible wall set up by institutionalized racism. +

Marita Muukkonen is Curator at FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange.

<http://www.hehe.org>

Marita Muukkonen in Conversation with HeHe

The Riddle of *Green Cloud*

Spiralling out over Salmisaari Island toward the horizon, flue-gases spouted out of the chimney of the ominous redbrick power station – in laser-green. For one dark week in February 2008, the effluents of *Helsingin Energia's* (the energy utility of the city of Helsinki) power station served as an original sort of canvas. Positioned like medieval archers in a window of a Cable Factory tower some three hundred metres away, the Paris-based artist duo HeHe – Helen Evans (b. 1972) and Heiko Hansen (b. 1970) – took sharp aim with their home-made laser construction at a cloud. With their box of beams, wires and computers, and years of accumulated social know-how and preparation, they painted that cloud of effluents green.

Green Cloud, or *Nuage Vert* as it was first known in French, marries a power plant and a laser-beam to make an environmental sculpture and a community emissions-measuring tape. This is something done with more than a little irony: while drawing the city's citizens' critical attention to it, they aestheticise an icon of industrial pollution.

Interestingly, the painted canvas in the sky respected certain parameters of what one might traditionally call form. The genre of this form, furthermore, might be termed an updated sort of realism. For the laser-light on the billowing gases was shaped by the real electricity consumption of the city of Helsinki – the Ruoholahti and Lauttasaari districts, to be precise. Paradoxically, and somehow quite pleasingly, the green shape got bigger and bigger as the energy consumption decreased – re-

sponding to an appeal the artists made to the residents of Helsinki. Denizens were asked to consume less, to unplug their electrical appliances and then to watch the green cloud grow.

When electricity consumption was high, a thin and small contour was drawn onto the sky. Electricity savings resulted in an expansion: the green cloud over Salmisaari reached magnificent proportions, sparkling with green crackling lightning. The artists' laser-generated cloud scratched with static, shuddered, and warbled with the wind, and poetically wrote the nature of energy consumption, emissions, climate change, carbon trading, the EU's promise of maximum temperature increases into the sky.

HeHe's works skilfully interweave aesthetics and ethics. Often critically, this artist-designer duo investigates the relationship between the individual and the urban environment. HeHe call their concept "Cultural Reverse-Engineering". Clearly, it employs artistic means to raise political, economic or sociological questions. For HeHe, art is very much a social discussion, and expresses the desire for ideas to be thought out loud in an exchange between the maker and the experiencer of the work, a calling into question and an encounter with others' ideas. Powerfully present in the works is art's characteristic ability to open up issues in an alternative way, to make ideas present in social life, and in a way that relate directly to people.

Helen and Heiko studied computer-based design at the Royal College of Art in London, graduating in 1999.

Since then, they developed a concept which, poetically and in real time, re-programs the urban environment, its structures and buildings by means of light, sound, moving images, and just about anything else. They do not just make declarations, but also bring surprising elements into the everyday urban world, encouraging and exposing us to insights and interrogations via which we can try to find a (critical) connection to an endlessly variable reality.

In HeHe's works the web of cause and effect is often shown to viewers in real time, here and now. Take their work *Champs d'Ozone* (Ozone Fields) at the Centre Pompidou in Paris 2007. It analysed air quality by measuring the level of ozone. Using a retro-projection onto various holographic films installed in a window on the sixth floor of the Beaubourg (the Centre Pompidou), when looking out of this window, the viewer saw a coloured cloud moved slowly above the horizon of the city. This cloud-hologram changed colour depending on the air quality at that time. In this way, the view of the Paris cityscape was modulated in response to signals transmitted by the AirParif air-quality observation station. The invisible ozone was made visible.

As with HeHe's other works, *Green Cloud* turns out to be the outcome of extended research, experiment, risk-taking, collaboration, negotiation, and the building up of a contact network. Originally, *Green Cloud* was conceived in 2003 in Saint-Ouen near Paris, but the French incinerator-factory was unwilling to meet the artists. So they

proceeded in Helsinki during *Pixelache Festival* in 2005.

The following conversation took place in Helsinki in 2008, on the occasion of the Pixelache festival, and was completed by e-mail in 2009 after HeHe had won the Ars Electronica Golden Nica Prize for their *Green Cloud* project.

Marita Muukkonen (MM): Pollution has also been in issue in your earlier projects such as in the *Smoking Lamp* (2005) in which smokers are enticed to blow smoke into a hanging lamp, which lights up (no pun intended) when it "smells" nicotine. It preceded the *Green Cloud* concept?

Heiko Hansen (HH): *Smoking Lamp* is part of a larger artistic research into the question of how to generate real-time consciousness of air pollution. It was a result of our residency on the island of Suomenlinna in Helsinki in 2005, during which we wanted to work on *Green Cloud*. However, we could not realise the project and so *Smoking Lamp* was the quickest and shortest way, on a small, personal scale, to make a work that confronts us with our pollution at the moment of consumption and production. Afterwards, the idea grew in many different directions.

Helen Evans (HE): We came up with an idea of *Green Cloud* when we moved out of central Paris in 2003. We ended up finding a place in a suburb Saint Ouen, with a view onto a large power station. It was really beautiful. One day, the wind changed direction and the

HeHe (Helen Evans & Heiko Hansen), *Pollstream – Nuage Vert*, 2008. Vapour emissions of the Salmisaari power plant in Helsinki illuminated by a laser ray to show levels of electricity consumption by local residents. Photos by the artists.



cloud came towards us. It was so large, it was very scary. We wanted to find out more about the factory and discovered that it was a waste incinerator. We started thinking about ways how to change it, to colour it. We wanted to draw attention to it, it's meaning, and thought how one might paint it. Initially we wanted to colour the cloud with pigments, but we eventually worked out that light would be a more sustainable way to do it. We wanted the cloud to become a canvas for information. We were thinking of our relationship to the power plant and our role in society.

MM: When you approached the incinerator-plant in Paris, what was their reaction? And how did you get the energy company to do *Green Cloud* in Helsinki?

HH: In Paris they wrote a very nice letter, saying that they were not interested, as the project didn't fit in with their marketing strategy.

Here in Helsinki it was a long slow process that took three years. Besides the energy company, there were many other organisations that had to be convinced, such as the urban planning commission, the aviation authority and the city of Helsinki. Their support helped to realize the project at the energy company. Also, I think it's a question of trust. *Helsingin Energia* is a public-private company and a relatively small player in a country that needs to import energy. Like all energy companies, it produces the maximum amount possible as people demand more and more energy every year. It is essential

for energy companies to think of ways to reduce consumption, as they can no longer meet the demand anyway.

From 2005, when we first approached *Helsingin Energia* until today, it was officially not possible for them to locally monitor electricity consumption. Jussi Palola, a researcher at the company, started to work with us on this problem. Eventually, *Helsingin Energia* created an application to monitor the sub-grid of Ruoholahti and Lauttasaari, which were streamed in live on the website of *Green Cloud* and at the HIAP (Helsinki International Artist-in-residence Programme) gallery. It showed the kW consumed and the percentage that was of the full capacity of the factory. This was done in real time, and for the first time. Once this protocol was out in the world, *Helsingin Energia* realised the potential of such an application. Of course it is quite strange that we don't really know as a local community, where and how much power is consumed. Electricity flows like a free wild river, unmonitored through the veins of our city grids.

HE: To be honest, there were some people at the company who personally supported the project, especially Martti Hyvönen, the environmental director. I think, the general director did not want it to happen, initially at least. Martti helped us build a strategy to convince the company. There was a critical moment when we had a long, long debate, and the company realized that the project was going to happen with or without them. They saw that if they did not participate, it would be

much more damaging, than if they did. Eventually, our hand was too strong, and they came on board.

MM: You both studied computer-based design, and you seem to be using some of that terminology, like "reverse engineering". Often this means rebuilding something in a better, more transparent or open-source way. What is this all about?

HE: Reversing engineering means taking something apart and learning how to re-build it. We came up with reverse cultural engineering by looking at the history of technological systems and thinking of ways to reprogram them. Reverse cultural engineering means to propose ideas that develop the untaken paths from our past history. We want to reverse the cultural norms that are otherwise taken for granted. For example, we were thinking about the development of train transportation and we came up with an idea of a flying carpet: Once upon a time, if you go back to moment when the first trains were built, people could put their individual vehicle onto the tracks.

HH: It is very important to start with a cultural image, a representation. In this case we used the image of a flying carpet to deconstruct railway history. First there is the image and then our mechanics have to adapt to this image. The mechanics are actually resolved by the evocation of the image. Taking a train is a unity of many things, which we have become incapable of untangling into separate parts, the "machine

ensemble": the engine, the coaches, the tracks, the tickets, the train stations, the newspaper shop and the coffee kiosk. On Stephenson's first railroads this unity was not yet established; people could still place their individual vehicles on the tracks. So we wanted to work backwards, thinking about the culture of sitting. Also, we were fascinated by the history of Personal Rapid Transit. From the boom years in the sixties and seventies the dream of PRT systems is still alive today, but few of these prototypes have ever made it beyond a Utopian project into a larger working system. Why is this? Maybe, because these new systems imagine everything from scratch, even its own specially designed tracks. Why not develop a prototype for a personal light rail service for an existing track?

HE: There is the element of movement as well. Beyond fun, there is the fascination for something functioning. On *Flying Carpet* that we developed in 2005, you can really sit on it and fly away! That is, if you sit in a certain position, the imaginary cross-legged position of somebody on a flying carpet – and only in that position, can you stabilize the carpet and start to hover along. So, in this moment of operation, in form of a performance, the body is transported in a lighter way ... or yes, if you like, a more humorous way to move through this world.

MM: Is there not also the issue of the public and private vehicle? You seem to be individualizing things which are public.

HeHe (Helen Evans & Heiko Hansen), *Pollstream - Nuage Vert*, 2008. Vapour emissions of the Salmisaari power plant in Helsinki illuminated by a laser ray to show levels of electricity consumption by local residents. Photos by Antti Ahonen.

HE: Yes, we are. There could be individual vehicles that are public systems. There could be many, many flying carpets. In Paris, this would work in a really light way, a far more flexible way. On a flying carpet you are really low to the ground, your body lies down, it is a different way of experiencing the city.

HH: It is true that somehow living in a European motorised city, we are becoming immobile. In all forms of mass transportation we are really being immobilized. We are just sitting; we are becoming more and more frozen. We want to combine the movement of you as a person with becoming active.

MM: In your works both aesthetics and ethics are important, and sometimes in conflict. When you are doing your work, how do audiences relate to your works?

HE: We are always very careful not to be overtly critical, and we leave situations open. In the case of *Green Cloud*, it is a genuine cloud, but one which changes colour. It turns green. We give people an image they can interpret themselves.

HH: We make invisible things visible. It is always about throwing the medium back onto itself. For example in *Champs d'Ozone*, we designed a cloud hovering virtually in the sky. The colour of the cloud showed the amount of air pollution that day in Paris – while the cloud floats in the sky, the medium of air pollution itself. It is always playing a game, to somehow redesign, move things out of their current representation, to cut through these layers of representation and shorten our distance to the object of inquiry – in that sense it is very close to design.

MM: What is the relationship of scientists and artists in your practices?

HH: Scientists are always trying to get artists against the wall. They have their own desires. It is rare that we found an engineer who has equal desires somehow. Often we have had our own quite precise ideas, of how to realise a certain part of the technology and it is difficult to keep this original idea in mind when you work with somebody else who is trying to find his solution to a problem.

HE: Our methods differ from those employed by engineers. We do things ourselves, it works the way we do it, but the methods may not be theoretically “correct”. An engineer does things in a highly efficient, complex and optimised ways.

Science and technology has long crossed out of the laboratory and is experimenting in the real world on a massive scale in all kinds of domains. As a consequence there are many new and unknown risks that need to be assessed. I think artists and designers also have a role to play in this real world, to uncover those debates and give them new meanings. Art production is research, in that you never know exactly what is going to happen or what the results will be. It's an experimental process, within which you define certain limits and rules. We are working with some very unstable elements: politicians, energy companies, arts festivals, scientific laboratories, the general public, local activists...

HH: For example in *Green Cloud*, we worked with Joey Hagedorn, a computer science student in Chicago, who did parts of the laser programming and in Helsinki with Esa Räikkönen from the laser physics department of Technical University. He helped with the physical implementation of the laser. We used a lot different pieces of code from different people and wrote some more ourselves with the help of artist Juha

Huuskonen. Surprisingly, we got it all patched together in the end.

MM: *Green Cloud* is related to the issues of environment change and pollution. What are you doing besides pointing this out? One of the odd things of our times, is that instead of needing “to enlighten the dark corners of the world”, we nowadays are confronted with the situation that “everybody knows”. But nobody does anything concretely...

HH: I think there is a difference with the current green wave and the green movement of the seventies and eighties. Back then, many initiatives were direct practical actions: plant a garden, make a political party, start a community. Today the green movement is very mediated, computed. As you say there are many initiatives to point out, to educate, and to make “aware”. We didn't want the *Green Cloud* to fit with any of these jargons, but to project a form open enough to be interpreted into many directions and still to have a concrete outcome at the end.

It is fascinating for us, when we think how contemporary culture interprets “man made clouds”. People love clouds, they are passionate about their form and their movement, and always have been throughout the history of art. But, in regards to the clouds made by humans, we seem to be even more passionate. Take cigarette smoke or the industrial smokestack emissions – the cloud is always used as a symbol for people to highlight a contemporary issue that is unresolved. These issues always change, such as in the case of smoking, which was a signifier of the female liberation movement (in the 19 century), and later the health politics of the Nazi regime ... The factory smokestack was first as a signifier of prosperity, and today, it functions as the ultimate icon of pollution. So, to play with

the aesthetics of made clouds is a very comfortable conveyor to trigger a passionate controversy.

MM: Congratulations on winning *Ars Electronica Golden Nica!* Has much changed since we last talked to you during the *Green Cloud* project implementation at *Pixelache Festival* in Helsinki?

HH: Nothing, but we are happy that winter is over. The winter in Paris is dirty. We won the prize in the category “Hybrid Art, but I am not sure whether the term “Hybrid Art” will last. To be positive, it suggests complexity. In the 17th century Daniel Defoe published a book with the title “An essay upon projects”. He named the topics of his time: highways, assurances, and banks. It is important to define a work in an interconnected context. We often hear people “making projects” nowadays – maybe this is a terminology, which is suited again for our times.

HE: I think it's not a bad definition, if we have to have a definition, since it suggests the plurality of approaches and methods involved in a project.

MM: You have revealed or reprogrammed the brutality of city-planning politics through your artistic processes both intentionally and unintentionally. Can you give some examples of this?

HH: Right now we are working on *Nuage Vert* in Saint Ouen in the suburbs of Paris. In autumn 2008, the project was supported by the Region of Ile de France in the framework of a large biennial. At this time, the project encountered enthusiasm and support from the local government. However, shortly afterwards the local opposition started to mount a public debate about the incinerator and its health risks. The city of Saint Ouen is planning one of



the biggest projects in the greater Parisian region, the “Docks”, an Eco district in close proximity of the factory. If the general idea of valorising the quite dystopian zone around the waste incinerator is of benefit, some details of this master plan have raised much local debate, leading some to question the idea that an “eco quartier” could co-habit with a waste incinerator. As soon as this public debate surfaced, *Nuage Vert* was suddenly, explicitly unwanted by the town hall. Throughout, the last six months, the public organisation responsible for the incinerator has refused to interact with our initiative. Their main argument is that *Nuage Vert* will make people afraid. A short test projection onto the cloud at the end of March caused the local politician responsible for the environment to call the fire brigade. To extinguish the green light? However, they knew full well that the projection must be in connection with *Nuage Vert*. Further heated debates in public with the elected members of the city have sharpened the controversy. We didn’t intend the project to work in this direction, but right now the situation is unfolding in unexpected and maybe unwanted ways. The biennial has suspended its support for *Nuage Vert*, to avoid entering into a conflict with the local Mayor. Generally, at least in the Saint Ouen, it strikes us that it is not seen as appropriate for citizens to enter into direct dialogue with local politicians or to take the initiative.

HE: For the Mayor’s office, if it did not come from them it came from the “outside”, if they are not with you then you are against them. There are no shades of grey. And the town hall wields enormous power. It became clear that they would do everything they could to block this project and put us in a very uncomfortable position.

MM: What are the biggest obstacles,

what are the biggest differences to the Helsinki process? What do you expect from this sort of re-implementation of a process?

HE & HH: In France, the structure of administration is very hierarchical; people are used to talk with somebody as high up in the hierarchy as themselves. Artists don’t fit into this hierarchy and therefore if an artist attempts to interact in this system they are seen as very problematic.

Even though the project is still called *Nuage Vert*, each time the findings are different. In Paris, the power plant is not burning coal but incinerating waste. There is a lot of fear associated with incineration and even though it seemed the only solution at the time to stop landfills, it now has to change. People and authorities have to reduce waste, to reuse packaging, to recycle better, to compost and to reduce the amount of waste that is incinerated. In Paris, many people are not aware of what can be recycled, and that all the recycled materials have to be sorted through, by hand, in the recycling centres in the suburbs. A new generation incinerator is being constructed in Paris using a new technology is designed to condense the vapour higher in the atmosphere and so this new incinerator will not have any visible cloud emissions. This may be an aesthetic comfort for people, but they will be surprised to know that the emission content remains identical to the older incinerators that are equipped with modern filters. So, clearly these incinerators generate less questions from the public and it is worrying to see the last signs of production, our man made clouds, are disappearing. Meanwhile the risks remain the same, except that we are no longer reminded of them.

MM: Do you feel the urge to respond in some way to the crises in the

economy? Do you feel this and other crises on the streets of Paris – aside from the recent occupation of the Sorbonne in April 2009, there have also been numerous large-scale demonstrations by pupils, teachers, researchers, immigrants. What is your relation to this kind of movement? Are you involved in its transportation?

HH: Talking about the economy, I bought a work of art the other day: a poster of the Atelier Populaire. The Atelier Populaire was operating from the occupied Beaux Arts art academy and supplied street posters for the May 1968 uprisings in Paris. The poster I found depicts a fist coming out of the chimney of a factory, the symbolic raised fist substituting the smokestack. What would be the equivalent today – a blog? But in times of economic crisis the cheapest energy could also be the energy that is saved.

HE: I was very moved by the riots in the Paris suburbs and in social housing estates across France in 2005. It reminded me also of a series of riots in the UK throughout the 1980s (Toxteth, Brixton, Broadwater Farm) because quite simply I find these uprisings understandable; they are triggered by deep passion and despair. I am still fascinated by one small detail, that the uprisings in 2005 were largely non-violent but involved attacking property – mostly cars – and buildings of local employment: in one case a household waste sorting centre. Our new work on the police is partly inspired by these events.

MM: You are “measuring the resistance of the city” in your art projects. What kind of artistic strategies do you use in “measuring”? For example, your vehicles are all opposed to a standard viewpoint from which to experience to city.

HH: Different neighbourhoods provoke different frictions. When we performed *Flying Carpet* in Turkey, an old man working in the shop along Istiklal, the main drag in Istanbul, stroked my hair and said the street is proud of me! The police men just sat in their car, they couldn’t be bothered to intervene. At one point we were flying on collision course with a tram – on the same tracks. The driver just stopped the entire vehicle. During the Biennial an artist shot a video in the same street featuring a hooded gangster with a gun running into a bank, without provoking a reaction. On the other hand, when we showed the video of Istanbul to undergraduates in New York, they asked us what we would do with a vehicle like a flying carpet when it starts to rain. Paul Virilio points at this in his essay on dromology. With a “tank”, the all-terrain, the hummer vehicle, the 4x4 car we can go anywhere, in the city and beyond, even if it rains. At least the train-track offers some restrictions in form of a straight line, even if it cuts through our landscape as the impressionists already noted. However, the high speed train network only speeds up the promise inherent from the beginning of the rail journey, the annihilation of space and time, the foreground blurs, only the background is visible, the journey consists of departure and arrival. This is why we would like to alter the viewpoint of the rail journey, to valorise the local aspect and to sharpen the foreground. The journey as a zen experience controlled by body movement.

We have started to work since a while around the theme of police culture. In specific we have developed an algorithm, which can detect the sound of a police siren. We are installing these micro radars on balconies in Paris. Once a siren is detected the radar starts to film the police car rushing by. Let’s see what happens. +

Focus: Finnish Pavilion in the 53rd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Jussi Kivi's *Fire & Rescue Museum* at the Finnish Pavilion on the occasion of the 53rd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia has been the main catalyst for the 10th issue of *Framework: The Finnish Art Review*. The magazine as a whole reflects issues around the current global crisis, providing a wider context for Kivi's artistic case study on defence and protection.

Jussi Kivi's collection stems originally from his personal and nostalgic

hommage to the capability of defence against fire, one of the elementary natural forces. The accidentally found, mouldy Soviet-time information boards and posters that give instructions on civil defence and firefighting procedures before and after a nuclear fallout, gave a new dimension for the collection. Despite the propagandist nature of these boards and posters – or perhaps, rather, because of it – they underline the possibility of a complete destruction.

Even though the timeframe of the collecting process of *Fire & Rescue Museum* is short, only some fifty years, the museum's major statement compares with the apocalyptic fates of the ancient empires that were destroyed centuries ago. There are examples of how institutions that are responsible for public safety – for example the institution of firefighting that dates back to Imperial Rome – have fallen into disorder after the collapse of those empires. *Fire & Rescue Museum* is a wake-up call

to think about today's protection structures in the current crises of poverty, environmental deterioration, natural catastrophes and wars: What and how, in the end, can be salvaged after the catastrophes we are facing today? Even if the organised society carries out its protection plans to a T and fire brigades fight more valiantly than ever, there can be new sparks and flames – growing into fires – which no fire brigade in the world can put out.

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The Aalto Pavilion as Fire & Rescue Museum

51	-----	Berndt Arell and Marketta Seppälä	<i>Foreword</i>
52	-----	Sven Spieker	<i>Hot/Cold: Jussi Kivi's Collections</i>
56	-----	Jonni Roos	<i>Unlikely Heroes</i>

Fire & Rescue Museum on pp. 49-72 is published also as a free copy exhibition catalogue on the occasion of the exhibition at the Finnish Pavilion in the 53rd International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia in 2009.

Fire & Rescue Museum

Jussi Kivi
Finnish Pavilion
53rd International Art
Exhibition – La Biennale
di Venezia 2009



Berndt Arell is Director of Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki. Marketta Seppälä is Director of FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange.

(1) The pavilion was initiated in 1956 by Maire Gullichsen (1907-1990) and realized with private funds by the Nykytaide (Contemporary Art) Association of Finland. The first show of the Aalto Pavilion in 1956 featured paintings by Helene Schjerfbeck (1862-1946).

The summary on the history of the pavilion presented here owes to Erik Kruskopf's article *The Story of the Aalto Pavilion*, published in *Framework: The Finnish Art Review*, Issue 7, June 2007.

(2) For several decades the pavilion was taken care of by the Finnish Museum of Architecture. Since 2005 the pavilion has belonged to the state-owned real estate company Senaatti Properties, which takes care of it and rents it for the use of the Finnish organisations, the Finnish Museum of Architecture (in architecture biennials) and FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange (in visual art biennials), both funded by the Finnish Ministry of Culture.

(3) To acquire annual upkeep funding for the Aalto Pavilion, it was rented to other countries – Italy, Argentina, Portugal, and most recently Iceland – in visual art biennials in 1962-2005, after the completion of the Nordic Pavilion as a joint venue for Finland, Norway and Sweden in 1962. In 2007 it was a satellite venue for the exhibition *Welfare – Fare Well* at the Nordic Pavilion, curated by René Block.

Foreword by Berndt Arell & Marketta Seppälä

Jussi Kivi's *Fire & Rescue Museum* is hosted by a small wooden pavilion that was designed by Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) for the 1956 Biennale. The story of the pavilion itself provides an interesting framework for Jussi Kivi's highly loaded museum project.

An idea of an own pavilion in Venice had been a sort of utopian dream for the Finnish art world, which during the years following the Second World War was still heavily burdened by isolation. Finally, when a solution was found, the building had to be realised in a short time and with very modest resources. The great enthusiasm aroused by such new prospects for the future were probably the most effective driving force in the whole effort. (1)

Aalto, who had designed models of demountable wooden houses in post-war Finland, proposed a light, demountable structure consisting of fabricated barracks elements and wall units produced in a factory in Finland. They were supposed to be erected like a tent every second year for the Biennale. The idea of the pavilion being temporary and dismantlable after the end of the Biennale significantly expanded the option of getting a favourably situated plot of ground. Actually, also the plot that was provided by the Biennale administration was meant to be temporary, located partly on a route passing through the park.

Chance, however, intervened in the play. Owing to an error made when erecting the pavilion, the idea of demounting it after the Biennale could not be realised. Certain types of bolts and fasteners had been left behind in the hurry of transportation. Misunderstandings during the hasty setting up procedure played their own part, too. As a consequence, if the pavilion had been taken down, the components would have been damaged.

On the other hand, Alvar Aalto's building in Giardini aroused remark-

able interest and fascination after its erection in 1956. Aalto was, of course, a well-known name, and the pavilion was Aalto's first building in Italy. Furthermore, a building made of wood was also something of a sensation in Venice's Biennale Park.

Despite the regulations that do not actually allow buildings made of wood to be constructed in Venice, as an *Aalto building* the pavilion has successfully survived for many decades in Giardini. Sometimes it has been considered just a nuisance due to its central location. Hungary, for example, which celebrates its pavilion's centenary this year, expressed its annoyance at Finland's "wooden shack" right in front of its own grand entrance hall. The Hungarians were, however, swiftly appeased, perhaps by the belief that the building was only temporary.

Had the original intention not been to demount the temporary pavilion, Alvar Aalto would hardly have used wood as the building material in the Venetian humidity. When it turned out to be impossible to demount the building without damaging its components, many predicted a rapid decay for the pavilion in any case. And true it is, without special care and efforts the pavilion wouldn't have stood in Venice very long. Thanks to the care, today Aalto's pavilion is a protected building and a sort of peculiar mascot among its bigger neighbours. (2)

Now, fifty-three years after its completion, the pavilion is filled with objects and archival material of *Fire & Rescue Museum*, as if to remind that there are many options for what can happen even with things that are meant to be temporary. Jussi Kivi's museum/artwork is itself a good example of such an option.

The concept of a museum that is temporary and very personal by nature seems like a contradiction in terms. But in Jussi Kivi's case, it stems from a life-

long passion, which when given a new spark, has proven its permanence, not least on a conceptual level. In spring 2008 an accidental encounter with an old Soviet underground nuclear bomb shelter in eastern Estonia brought Jussi Kivi's private collection out of confinement and reconciled it with the world of art.

A pile of old information boards and posters presenting civil defence and firefighting procedures before and after a nuclear fallout fulfilled the collection and personal nostalgia was transformed to communicate new meanings. Childhood adoration for rescuers was mirrored against a threat of total destruction for which artefacts of heroism, or underground bunkers, can no longer provide protection. In the safety provided by the walls of the Aalto Pavilion in Giardini, *Fire & Rescue Museum* reminds both of the need of caring and the need of forecasting. If the preconditions of life at a time of worldwide environmental deterioration and widespread poverty are neglected, any rescue plans toward threats of future conflicts stand helpless.

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With the generous support from the Finnish Ministry of Culture, Jussi Kivi's *Fire & Rescue Museum* has been realised as the first international collaboration between Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma and FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange.

Fire & Rescue Museum has a special significance also in the sense that since 2009, similarly as in the first years of 1956-1960 in the visual art biennials, the Aalto Pavilion will be a venue for the Finnish Pavilion in the forthcoming biennials. (3)

The exhibition in the Aalto Pavilion is important for Kiasma also because it is the museum's first ever appearance at the Venice Biennale. Internationalism is a natural element of the core operations

of the Finnish Museum of Contemporary Art. The term 'international' has meant different things in different periods, however. Presence at major international art events as well as exhibition collaboration are today more crucial than ever. Cooperation with FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange provides a natural base for Kiasma's international operations. Acting collaboratively, the organisations are able to establish a wider contact surface internationally for the promotion of Finnish contemporary art. To achieve this goal, however, collective strategic intent across the entire field of contemporary art in Finland is needed, as well as concrete action. One particular focal point is to ensure the future operation as well as strategic development of the Aalto Pavilion in Venice. The Pavilion is not only an important chapter in the history of Finnish art, but also a resource for the future. It gives Finland an opportunity to link the country's cultural history and contemporary art together in an interesting way. Originally intended as a temporary structure, the Aalto Pavilion has now established its position, also for the Biennale. Systematic content planning ensures that the Pavilion and the exhibitions hosted there will provide an exciting angle on the Venice Biennale exhibitions also in the future. The voice of Finnish contemporary art sounds now clearer than ever in Venice.

The significance of this small pavilion will even remarkably grow for the Finnish art scene in 2011, when the countries of the Nordic Pavilion, with an ambition to adopt an alternative model to the changing conditions for presenting contemporary art, will start taking turns and arranging their own exhibitions every sixth year.

On behalf of the organisers we wish to express our thanks to Jussi Kivi and his team as well as to all the organisations that have been involved with the realisation of this apocalyptic work of art.+

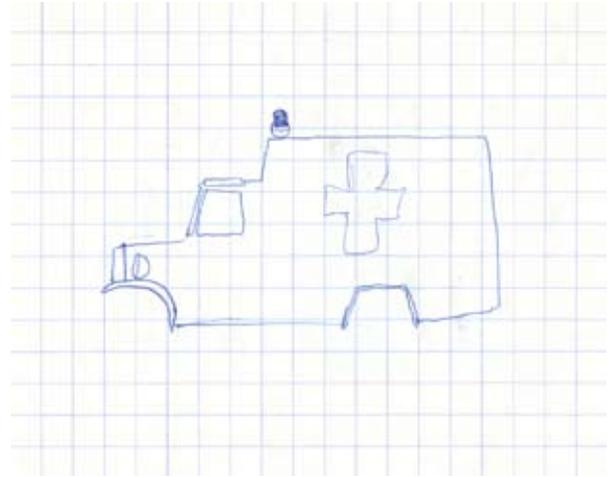
The Aalto Pavilion as *Fire & Rescue Museum*

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Jussi Kivi, *Ambulance from school notebook, early 1970s.*

Sven Spieker

Hot/Cold: Jussi Kivi's Collections



Jussi Kivi's *Fire & Rescue Museum* shows, among other things, the artist's extensive collection of firefighting memorabilia. The origins of Kivi's museum lie in his childhood passion for firefighting and in his lifelong pursuit of objects connected with it. On the one hand, *Fire & Rescue Museum* reminds us of the traditional view that the separation of man from animal – the beginning of culture – coincides with our ability to extinguish fire and to bend it to our will. As a natural element, fire represents the museum's – the archive's – most serious threat. In that sense, a museum devoted to firefighting is a museum devoted to culture as pure preservation and defense. Here, fire – understood as a destructive force – can have no place because it threatens the archive at its very foundations. Yet in basing his museum on a private, idiosyncratic childhood passion, Kivi also hints that without fire – without little Jussi's devotion to firefighting – there would be no collection, and hence no culture. Collections, in fact, are all about fire: their owners tirelessly pursue the one elusive piece that would complete the set once and for all, and extinguish the fire that keeps them searching. And yet, to find that piece is a moment the collector both eagerly awaits and dreads at the same time. For in the collection's closure she inevitably reads her own death (the absence of heat).

These, then, are the ambiguities of Kivi's museum project. On the one hand, it reminds us of the fact that the generation and storage of culture

is based on defense mechanisms that exclude, or fend against, the heat of fire. Yet on the other hand culture – here understood not merely as a closed archive that guards against external threats but as an open set whose final piece is always missing – cannot be fully understood without such heat. What does it mean to place fire at the very center of the archive, to build a museum around it?

Jussi Kivi has consistently tugged at the boundary that separates the heat of poetic reverie from the coolness of objectifying science. Nothing illustrates this more succinctly than the activities of the so-called Romantic Geographic Society, a group Kivi founded in 2000 with the express purpose of reversing the separation of science from poetry. As a member the RGS, Kivi has undertaken several expeditions on foot and on skis both into faraway places of the Finnish countryside and urban wastelands in the vicinity of Helsinki, and then documented these trips meticulously through photography, videotapes, writing, and other media. The goal behind RGS's excursions was to revive a type of geographic expedition that rejects, in the Romantic vein, the classic tropes on which Enlightenment science (and exploration) is founded, especially the belief in nature as an objectifiable entity that exists independently (separately) from its human observer. By injecting the self and its passion into its observations, the Romantic Geographic Society seeks to admit poetic reverie and enthusiasm as permissible elements in

the acquisition of knowledge. And once again the archive – here in the form of records that document the trips in meticulous detail and in a variety of different media – is central Kivi's argument. Can poetry and reverie be reconciled with traditional views of science as cool and rational? Are archives and the documents they store compatible with passion and immediacy? Can fire have a place in the archive? These are some of the questions Kivi asks in an effort to question the archive's objectifying postures by exposing them to the fire of subjective reverie and enthusiasm.

In the preface to his *Philosophy of Fire* (1938), Gaston Bachelard writes that fire is a problem “that no one has managed to approach objectively, one in which the initial charm of the object is so strong that it still has the power to warp the minds of the clearest thinkers and to keep bringing them back to the poetic fold in which dreams replace thought and poems conceal theorems.” (1) Bachelard links fire to a position that combines – not unlike the Romantic Geographic Society's expeditions – the subjective with the seemingly objective, the collection and organization of facts with the poetics of chance. In Bachelard's reading, fire acts to disturb and confound all efforts at maintaining a neutral distance by leading us inexorably from the (objective) outside to the (subjective) inside or, more to the point, by sending us on a circuitous route that leads from the outside to the inside – from self to nature – and then back again. This

is why to Bachelard – who does not mention Freud's speculations regarding the collection and preservation of fire as a cultural achievement based on the renunciation of (homo-) sexual desire (2) – the theory and practice of psychoanalysis is linked to fire almost by definition. Fire, Bachelard argues, was the first phenomenon on which the human mind reflected and it was the only phenomenon that was “sufficiently prized by prehistoric man to wake in him the desire for knowledge, and this mainly because it accompanies the desire for love.” (3) If this were true, then the modern separation of the acquisition of knowledge from sexuality and the desire that drives it would be anything but natural and God-given. The human thirst for knowledge would be born instead from the contemplation of fire that “gives to the man concerned with inner depths the lesson of an inner essence which is in a process of development.” (4)

Like prehistoric man in Bachelard's text, the Romantic Geographic Society meditates upon fire, rekindling the flame in which the human desire to know has its origin. Therefore, the archive that documents the group's explorations ought to be understood less as a vehicle for the nostalgic wish to reverse the effects of time than as an effort to reconstitute fire as a source of ideas, dreams, and poetic reverie – a contemplative practice whose “heat” is thrown into all the more relief by its cold, snowy setting in the Finnish countryside.

Jussi Kivi, *Fire & Rescue Museum*, 2009, installation view. Photo by the artist.



Jussi Kivi, *Fire & Rescue Museum*, 2009, installation view. Photo by the artist.



(1) Bachelard, Gaston (1964). *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2.

(2) In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930).
(3) *Ibid.*, p. 55.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 56.

(5) Derrida, Jacques (1995). *Archive Fever. A*

Freudian Impression. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 10.

The excursions of Kivi's Romantic Geographic Society bring to mind another European artists' group from North-Eastern Europe whose activities have evolved around trips out of town and their archivization, Andrei Monastyrski's Collective Actions (Moscow). However, where the Romantic Geographic Society focuses on the interface of nature and subjective experience and then create archives to document that experience – in this order –, the excursions by the members of the Collective Actions group are designed primarily to explore (and expand) the archive itself. In an environment conceived as a proliferating text and its endlessly accumulating commentary, the experience of nature is an after-effect of the archive that records it. In its performances, Collective Actions enacts a tautological scheme whereby culture – understood here as an archive of texts – endlessly reproduces itself, and where the self ap-

pears as the empty center of a recording activity that merely passes through it.

Unlike Monastyrski's decidedly "cold" explorations of the Russian semiosphere, Jussi's "hot" explorations of the Finnish countryside are designed to illustrate the centrality of fire – of seduction and poetic enthusiasm – to the archival enterprise. This is not to say that the extensive archives of Collective Actions are without their own poetic quality. However, their charm is that of the bureaucracy: they exist in a realm where the self and its particular experience are an effect of administrative formulae. By contrast, Jussi retains a high-minded literalness that straddles the fence between neo-Romantic immersion and conceptual abstraction. Where Monastyrski's archive – like most archival projects in contemporary art – is decidedly cold, Jussi's is decidedly hot, an archive whose starting point is reverie and the infinite wealth of subjective experience.

Fire & Rescue Museum was created after an expedition by members of the Romantic Geographic Society to an abandoned former Soviet underground nuclear bomb shelter in Eastern Estonia. The shelter was filled with decayed information panels and other signage related to pre- and post-nuclear civil defense procedures and firefighting drills. Together with the firefighting toys and objects Kivi had collected earlier, these objects now make up the collection of a museum that ended up being devoted, paradoxically, both to the heroism of firefighters and to the complete collapse of their efforts in the face of an all-consuming nuclear meltdown. Where in Freud's speculation on the originative link between the preservation of fire and the pre-historical (infantile) renunciation of instinctual pleasure cultural achievements are effects of the successful deferral of pleasure, no such sublimation could ever deal with the kind of

fire unleashed by nuclear war. Its flames fully consume the collection together with its edifice, disabling in the process any interaction between inside and outside – between the archival signs and the material base that gives them shelter – without which no archive can function. In *this* perspective, there can be no question of giving fire a place inside the archive in the hopes of redressing the balance between objectifying distance and subjective reverie. And there can be no question of firefighting, or of extinguishing any flames. Here, fire not only consumes the archive but also, ultimately, itself. Like the Freudian death drive, this nuclear "superfire" (Bachelard) "never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement." (5) In more than one way, *Fire & Rescue Museum* reminds us of a type of fire that cannot be put out – ever. +

Top left: Burning warehouse in Jätkäsaari, Helsinki, 1964. Jussi Kivi: "Drawing made at age 5 on the basis of news footage seen on our neighbor's black and white TV."

Top right: Fire engines in action, drawing, age 7.

Bottom: In the yard of the Käpylä fire station around the mid-1960s. Jussi Kivi: "At the time my father was seriously interested in photography, a hobby he later gave up. The picture is staged and a double exposure has occurred accidentally. My father's idea was to photograph the little man wearing a helmet at the fire station with his favorite toy fire engine." Photo by Matti Kivi.



The writer is an art historian, culture reporter and critic. He is especially interested in the connections between welfare and culture. *Translated by Susan Heiskanen.*

Jonni Roos Unlikely Heroes

There probably aren't very many contemporary artists who uphold the fireman as their hero. Jussi Kivi's interest in firefighting is not of erotic nature. It is not pyromania, nor does it derive from having been rescued from a burning house or some other such fatal moment in his personal life.

A viewer can create a tentative relationship to the work *Fire & Rescue Museum* by approaching it from the perspective of collecting. The display cases are brimming with pictures, documents, objects, toys, clothes and scale models on the theme of firefighting. A central part of the entity is made up of material on preparing for a nuclear strike and rescue operations in nuclear war.

Irrational collecting

Collecting is to a great degree irrational – even when it revolves around something as strongly symbolic of order and control as firefighting. Kivi has collected objects related to firefighting almost all his life. He has also shown the collection he named the 'Fire Museum' at his studio, although only to a selected circle of friends and, even then, somewhat self-ironically. He preferred to keep the material half hidden behind the shelves in his studio. Kivi himself has said that irony is his only defense against the role of manic collector and buff.

Before this work and context of display, the collection was not about art. In Kivi's thinking art was linked to something that was real in the world. Things like making scale models of fire engines served more as a counterbalance of nostalgia and childhood romanticism for more serious work, in two different realms of life that Kivi categorically liked to keep apart. Col-

lecting firefighting equipment and other related material was an issue Kivi would speak about with people selectively and apprehensively; as if revealing a personal secret. And perhaps there was reason for secrecy: as a young artist Jussi Kivi assumed an identity that is hard to associate with admiration for pillars of order. On the other hand, he was aware that an artist can only rarely produce in his work the kind of concrete, positive results like the ones produced by a firefighter.

If a grown man has developed a vivid interest in firefighting, he may be called upon to explain. With a child, no one would question it. Kivi's interest in firefighting actually stems from his childhood: Helsinki's Käpylä is a peaceful garden district with a fire station of its own. Kivi lived as a child close enough to the fire station to hear the first signs of an alarm even before the engine would shoot out into the street with howling sirens: the alarm was raised inside the station by sounding a bell. Another subtle sign preceding the engine's take-off was the screech of its brakes as it was driven outside the station to wait for the firemen to run up to the scene. And soon the engine would disappear out of sight with flashing lights and tremendous sound. This was usually all a little boy would get to experience. The fires were normally so far away that a boy didn't know how or had no means to get there. In most cases the fire engine would soon return to the station, having been summoned by just the beginnings of a fire or a false alarm.

This childhood sensory world of experience holds within a feeling of outsidership: firefighters make up a rather introverted community, which a little

boy with an emotionally enthusiastic outlook is unable to just simply swim into. Even though Jussi Kivi gradually got to know the firemen of the nearby station and spend time on the premises, he couldn't accompany them on their runs or on the scenes of fire. (1)

Firefighter's soul

Maybe it's possible to have a firefighter's soul even when one doesn't work as a firefighter? In contemporary art it is not customary to speak of a soul, the stand-in synonym being 'identity'. In the context of contemporary art the firefighter would appear most naturally as an ironic or erotic hero, but for Kivi the firefighter is simply speaking a good hero who repairs the occurred damage and saves the people in trouble. Which is what firefighters do, literally.

If we think about the theoretic foundations of contemporary art, a firefighter makes a bad hero mostly because he can be seen as a conservative, someone who prevents creative destruction. Because striving for a better world is a significant part of the intellectual tradition of contemporary art, the firefighter doesn't quite fit in the picture. Why take to the barricades to cast stones and throw torches (even figuratively speaking) if, at the next moment, you'd be overcome by a desire to put out a fire with a promising start? Considering, especially, that the firefighters' water cannons can at least in theory also be used to break up a demonstration. In many societies the fire department has a paramilitary role, which also detracts from its attraction in circles of art.

An artist breaks and creates order or, considering Kivi's other production,

(1) The high point of little Jussi's "firefighting career" was in 1971, when 11-year-old Jussi traveled to the United States and his grandmother's cousin, head of the fire department in Warren, Ohio, let Jussi accompany him on the job, allowing him to follow from the front seat of a fire engine the work of firefighters in action round the clock. Jussi kept a cheap camera with him at all times.

can call into mind the possibility that an artist may seek and find both order and disorder, map them out and convert them into other forms. Firefighters aim only to prevent order from breaking down and, when necessary, restore it. Artists are for the most part outside members of society: even when they are honored with medals or academic titles, artists are conscious of their detachment and freedom. Firefighters are a carrying force of society, inside it. They can't be to any great extent 'detached'.

This is reflected in a photograph featuring Kivi's grandmother's cousin, head of a fire department in Ohio, USA, together with president Nixon. The head of a fire department is a representative of a public authority who in certain situations and circumstances is allowed near the top leader of the state. Particularly at times when safety becomes an obsession.

Hidden agenda

By bringing firefighting into art, Kivi paves out a fruitful terrain of questions. I have already alluded to the question of revolution: does it still make sense for us to regard taking to the barricades and disrupting order as a metaphor for art? Can art have a stronger influence on society by infiltrating its structures? Could art infiltrate the structures of society without losing its values? Has art already infiltrated the structures of society too much and lost its revolutionary values? Have artists already become firefighters?

By drawing an analogy between the artist and the firefighter, Kivi has brought into our sight and sphere of consciousness a hidden agenda: it is a question of art as a functional part of





society – not as a decorator of environments and producer of views placed inside gilded frames but as an area of knowledge of substance. Artists often find themselves viewing the society from the outside, like Kivi looked upon the firefighters as a child.

Perhaps the firefighter could be the artist's alter ego. With the socially conscious turn that art has taken during the past decades, art has become a kind of volunteer fire brigade dashing from one scene of fire to another to offer its help and methods. In most cases the results have been weak, at least from the viewpoint of social impact.

In the face of a fire – should we wish to put it out – irony proves its ineffectiveness. But what also are proved ineffective are endless reflection and analysis of concepts. Only direct action can help, but even that is at its most effective when it is practiced and planned in advance. Putting out a fire requires collaborative action and agreed-upon roles which are adhered to. An artistic solo stunt can put the team in great danger.

Saving what can be saved

Another theme lured out by Kivi's work has to do with the museum institution. A fire museum displays a selection of things that deal with firefighting. But

the fire itself is missing. Logically the next question to ask is: To what extent can an art museum save and display art itself? In this respect the fire museum shows more clearly than an art museum what museums are about: saving and displaying what can be saved and displayed of a phenomenon. Many would tend to believe that the relationship of an artwork object to art is similar to that of a fire engine to a fire: art appears in surprising places at unexpected times, sometimes actually flaring up in huge flames, but as it reaches the point when it finally starts to be surrounded by artwork objects in every direction, its last spark has died out.

On display are both authentic artifacts connected with firefighting and scale models and other representations. The fireman's helmet is a concrete object but in the museum context its task is to represent the authentic context of use, which in itself is something a museum cannot achieve. Thus the museum in effect converts the inherent authenticity of the objects into representation. The relationship between representation and authenticity is similar to the relationship between the human conscious and the external world. The human mind does not have a direct connection to reality, it only has a bunch of

different reconstructions the usefulness of which strongly depends on the situation at hand. A sign showing the emergency exits is more useful to a person trying to get out of a burning building than a painting of a burning building.

Point of reference affects meanings

In *Fire & Rescue Museum* we may think about how different fires conjure up different representations of a firefighter in our minds. The smaller the fire, the more condescending the association. A fighter of small fires is more often than not a mildly comical character. He can afford to get drunk and bungle things up. He may be in an amusing hurry to get to the scene of the fire, on the whole, his work is pitifully unimportant. And anyhow, sooner or later it will start to rain and the fire will go out.

In normal daily life the firefighter is a public official who qualifies as a model in a milk commercial or to run for city council. He keeps entirely secret his status as an object of erotic fantasies, at least at daytime. Along with individual tragedies he makes a momentary appearance in the public as a good human being who does the best he can.

When fires become life-threatening the firefighter starts to attain heroic features. The firefighters in the New

York City terrorist strikes or Australian bush fires are national-level heroes. Even though they are facing an almost unconquerable challenge, the hope and faith in the results of the work prevails.

But what if the catastrophe is so big that there isn't even very much hope?

Imagery of destruction of the world

Fire & Rescue Museum was born from a coincidence, when a fortunate discovery brought Jussi Kivi in front of a larger frame of questions. Last spring Jussi Kivi went on an expedition with the Romantic Geographic Society, a group consisting of a few artist and researcher colleagues, to the city of Sillamäe in Estonia. They set out to explore a bomb shelter which had been in use during the Soviet times. Kivi and his companions found a collection of Soviet training posters on preparing for nuclear war. The discovery of this material gave Kivi a reason to bring his fire museum material, which he had thus far kept in a realm of its own, under the title of art. In fact, he had already pretty much given up on the collected material a few years ago and stored it in a warehouse. The find in Sillamäe made the theme timely again.

The poster series created by professional Soviet artists shows with visual

Previous page & page 57(10): Emergency rescue service. Jussi Kivi: "In 1971 I spent a year in the city of Warren in Ohio, USA. This picture of the fire station was taken by a firefighter who worked as the station's photographer, with the task of photographing the

scenes of fire to support investigations into the causes of fire. In the picture I am 11 years old and have been ordered to pose with the phone in hand. A few years later I censored myself out of this picture and many others, either by scratching or with orange paint."

Top left: President Nixon, Assistant Fire Chief Reino (Ray) Niemi and Fire Chief LaBaugh, Warren, Ohio. (photograph sent to relatives in Finland).

Top right: Used hoses are collected after testing of pumps (Warren Fire Dept.) 1971.



effect how nuclear weapons explode over nameless metropolises, waves of light and pressure spread from the nucleus of the explosion and various patterns are formed by a nuclear fallout. What probably gripped Kivi's most avid interest were, however, the pictures of large troops of firefighters prepared for the aftermaths of a nuclear explosion arriving on the scene in an orderly fashion and ready to rescue the civilians hiding in the basements of the collapsed buildings. Even though a former metropolis has been transformed into a lunar landscape, an endless chain of fire engines appears from somewhere outside the frame with their anti-radiation gear and clearance equipment. Shown by a single caved-in building in the picture are three whole fire engine loads of rescue workers who are determinedly drilling holes into the wall to free the civilians. If this many rescue workers can be spared for a single building, somewhere outside the destroyed metropolis must lie a secret metropolis of firefighters from where they arrive at the hour of need. Somewhere there must also be a refuge where the survivors are taken: a place where there is no radiation. And how are the survivors transported there and how are they protected from the radiation?

The civilians in turn wait in the basements for their rescuers under well-maintained order and in immaculate dress, with their hands in their pockets and collars turned up, though, to expose as little as possible of their skin to the radioactive dust. They don't however look the least bit shocked. Obviously they won't even have to wait very long for help to arrive.

So. Is there hope even when there is no hope? According to the posters there is, for the state is prepared for every eventuality. There are enough rescue workers and they act in an organized manner. At least it was generally believed in the Soviet Union that this was a good impression to create.

It is also noteworthy that when making these posters, the professionally educated Soviet artists have most notably served as pillars of society, like firefighters. They have been realizing the secret dream of western artists to be in a socially significant role.

The posters could be seen as showing the firefighter cleaning up after a nuclear war as a fictive character, whose functional capacity or very existence is hard to believe in. Viewed more broadly and from a different perspective, the firefighter emerges as a symbol of all mankind: even when facing most

extreme destruction the survivors have no choice but to clamber up, rescue the ones in need, clear up the mess and try to live on. The image conveyed by the posters is however propagandist: the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl showed that the Soviet administration was far from able to follow its own instructions even with this isolated incident. How could it have functioned under the circumstances of an actual nuclear war?

The same doubt also falls around Western nuclear technology and the administration that supports it. The peaceful development of nuclear energy is closely tied to the development of nuclear weapons, but this is not something that is spoken about in the West. Unlike in the Soviet Union, where propaganda created an impression of an effective rescue system, in the West propaganda has to keep a low and nondescript profile. You don't end up promising too much if you don't promise anything.

In a situation of mass destruction, we can finally surpass claims as to the petit bourgeois nature of firemen. Of course in this respect, too, the firefighter can be seen as a watchman of the old world, but viewed against the scale of nuclear destruction, the question of the conservativeness of firefighters can

be dismissed as irrelevant. In the face of a nuclear disaster, the firefighter is as helpless as a man in the street is in an ordinary fire. It is for the viewer to ultimately choose how to see the situation: as a hopeless and cold end or as a powerful attempt of human individuals to climb up on their feet and continue to live despite the circumstances.

Modern states have their own, stated plans in case of catastrophes of all sizes, including nuclear disasters. It is probable that the images used as illustration material are made by others than contemporary artists. Then again, contemporary artists are rarely willing to settle for merely visual assignments anymore: it fits the agenda of contemporary art better to produce entire plans, and not just illustrations for them.

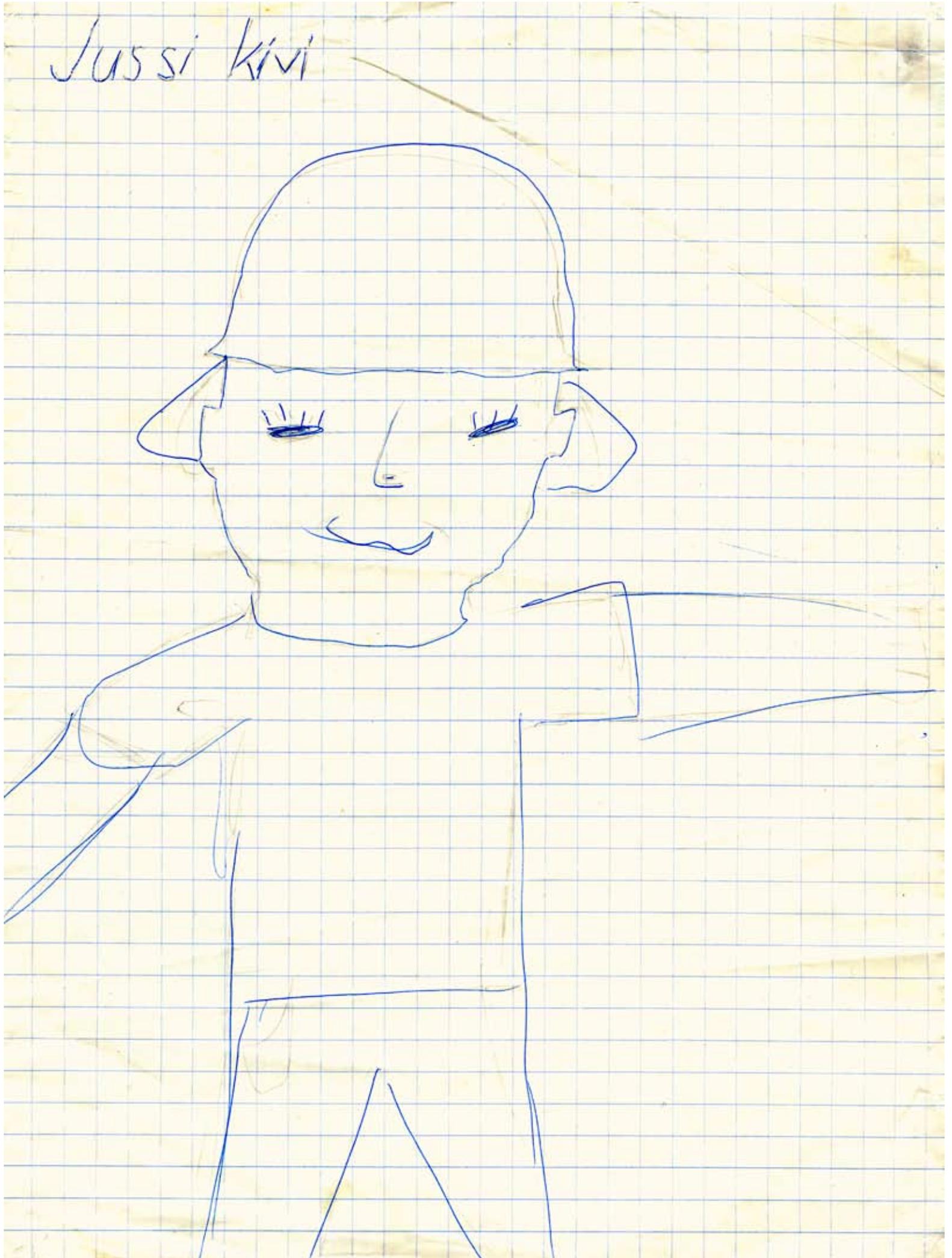
Fire & Rescue Museum links together the themes of collecting, exhibiting, power, art and humanity. It is based on an ethical question of how a human being can act positively in this world. At the same time, it shows in its own way how many the threads are through which positive action (in this case rescuing people in distress) is tied to the complexity of the world. Problems and solutions are entangled in the same skein. +



Previous page, top: So-called "Chanterelle" fire helmet manufactured in Britain, formerly used by Helsinki firefighters, 1980s.

Jussi Kivi, Self-portrait as fireman, age 7.

Previous page, bottom: Finnish fire helmet made of steel, 1950s.



Top: NFD ambulance 3.

Bottom: Animal Fire Engine.



Soviet training material on civilian protection and fire and rescue operations, poster no.16.
 -----> väärä? kuvassa lukee nr. 15???

Next page, top: Surveillance of emergency exit of a shelter in a collapsed building after a weapons of mass destruction strike. Detail from a Soviet training poster.

Next page, bottom: Rescue from Shelter. Detail from a Soviet training poster on civilian protection.

ВИДЫ МАССОВЫХ ПОЖАРОВ

ПЛАКАТ № 15

ОТДЕЛЬНЫЕ ПОЖАРЫ

Часть массовых пожаров, которые в процессе развития имеют отдельные зоны опасного теплового воздействия, называются отдельными пожарами.



СПЛОШНЫЕ ПОЖАРЫ

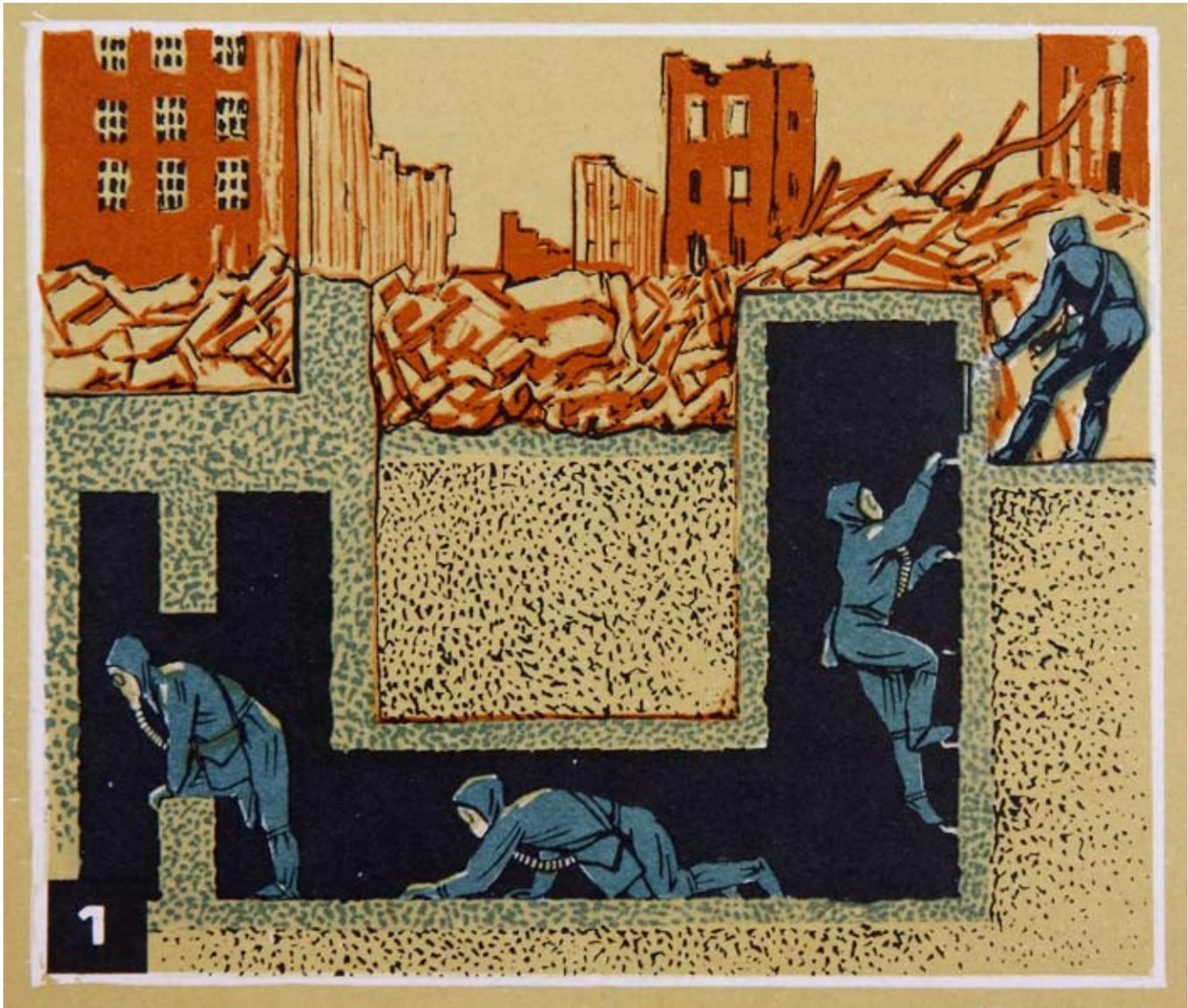
Часть массовых пожаров, у которых в процессе развития образуются общие зоны опасного теплового воздействия, называются сплошными пожарами.
 Разновидностью сплошных пожаров является огневой шторм.



Автор: В. М. Плещинский.
 Эскизы: В. М. Плещинский.

Иллюстрация: И. Шаповалов.
 Москва 1924

1:10000. Типографический завод № 1, Ленинград. Тираж 10000 экз. Формат 80x100 см. № 1. 1924 г. Издательство: Государственный центральный архив Российской Федерации. Москва, 1998 г. 1:10000. Типографический завод № 1, Ленинград. Тираж 10000 экз. Формат 80x100 см. № 1. 1924 г. Издательство: Государственный центральный архив Российской Федерации. Москва, 1998 г.

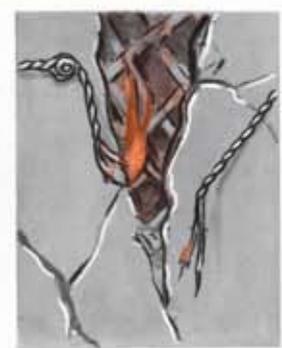
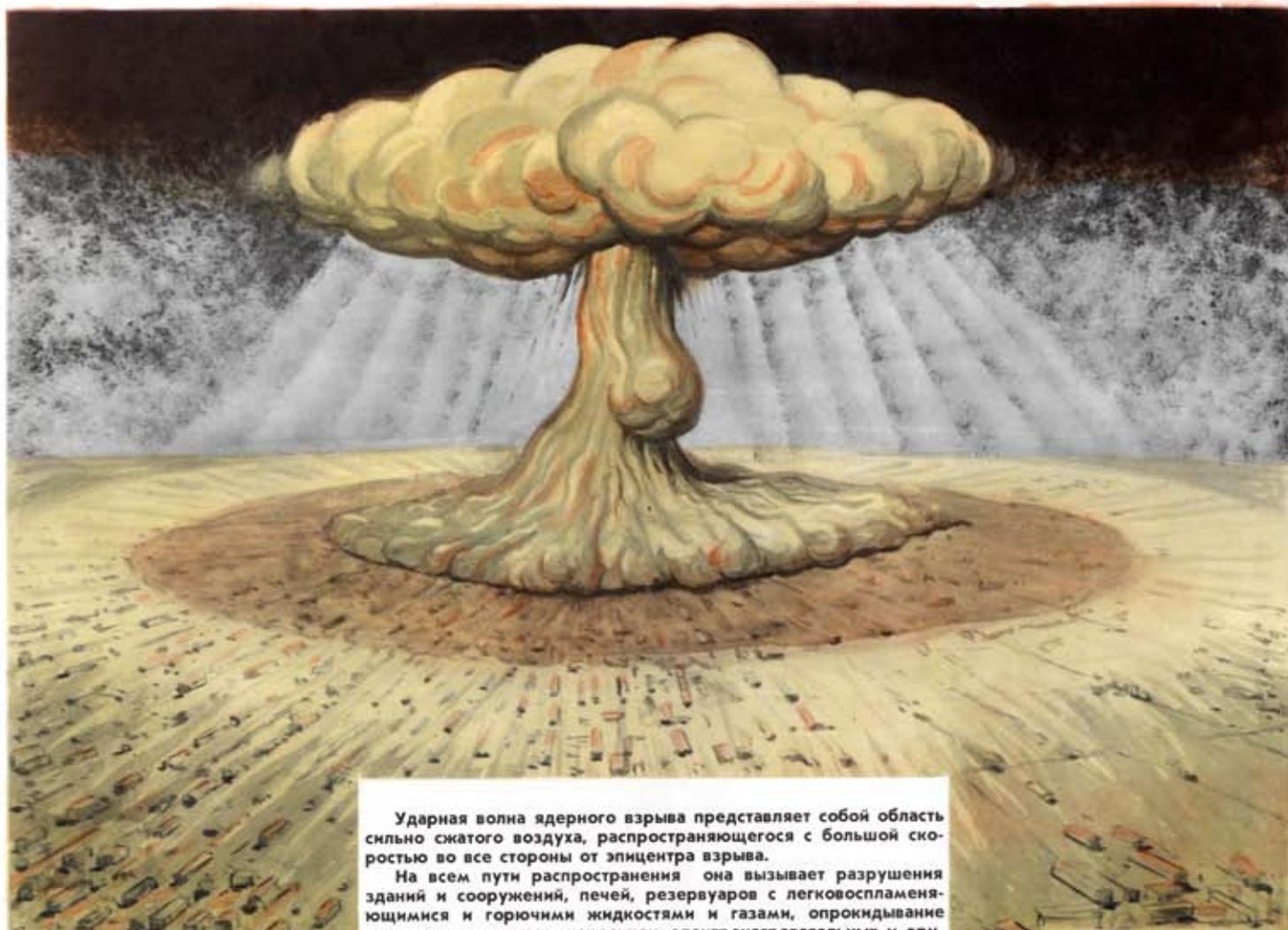


Cover page of training poster series on civilian protection and firefighting from the Sillamäe bunker. "Depth" publishing house, Moscow, 1974.



УДАРНАЯ ВОЛНА – ПРИЧИНА ПОЖАРА

ПЛАКАТ № 3



Автор В. Г. Жданов
Художник Ю. Э. Мельник

Издательство «Воскресение»
Москва 1974

Т. 00302. Издание в серии 28X 1074 г. Тираж 85 000 экз. Формат 60X90/7. Печ. л. 85. Ул. - м. л. 674. Цена 3755-1-827. Цена серии 3 р. 90 к. Ленинградская фабрика офсетной печати № 1. Сопоставление цен: Государственный комитет Управления СССР по делам культуры, полиграфии и книжной торговли. Ленинград, 287183, Коммунальная ул., 7

Top: Cleaning up before removing protective gear. Detail from Soviet poster series on civilian protection.

Bottom: First aid for frost injury, from Soviet poster series on first aid.

Next page, top: ???

Next page, bottom: Soviet training model from the Sillamäe bunker illustrating the dermatological symptoms caused by chemical weapons (sarin).



ПЕРВАЯ ПОМОЩЬ ПРИ ОТМОРОЖЕНИИ

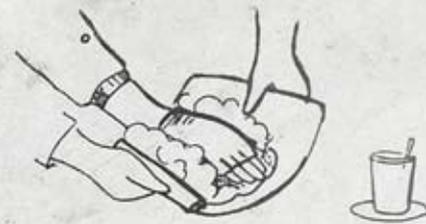
ОТМОРОЖЕНИЯ ВОЗНИКАЮТ В РЕЗУЛЬТАТЕ ВОЗДЕЙСТВИЯ НИЗКОЙ ТЕМПЕРАТУРЫ. ПРИ ОТМОРОЖЕНИИ НЕОБХОДИМО ВОССТАНОВИТЬ КРОВООБРАЩЕНИЕ В ПОРАЖЕННЫХ ЧАСТКАХ ТЕЛА И ПРЕДОХРАНИТЬ ОТ БОЛЕЗНЕТВОРНЫХ МИКРОБОВ.



ПРИ ЛЕГКИХ ОТМОРОЖЕНИЯХ ДОСТАТОЧНО РАСТЕРЕТЬ ПОРАЖЕННЫЙ УЧАСТОК ТЕЛА МЯГКОЙ ТКАНЬЮ ИЛИ РУКОЙ, ПОСЛЕ ВОССТАНОВЛЕНИЯ КРОВООБРАЩЕНИЯ ПРОТЕРЕТЬ СПИРТОМ И СМАЗАТЬ ВАЗЕЛИНОМ ИЛИ ГУСИНЫМ ИЛИ СВИННЫМ ЖИРОМ.



ПОСТРАДАВШЕГО С ТЯЖЕЛЫМ ОТМОРОЖЕНИЕМ, ПОСЛЕ РАСТИРАНИЯ, НУЖНО ОПУСТИТЬ В ТЕПЛУЮ ВОДУ И ПОСТЕПЕННО ДОБАВЛЯЯ ГОРЯЧУЮ ВОДУ ДО 37°-38°, РАСТИРАТЬ ПОРАЖЕННУЮ ЧАСТЬ ТЕЛА ВАТОЙ ИЛИ КУСКОМ МЯГКОЙ ТКАНИ ДО ВОССТАНОВЛЕНИЯ КРОВООБРАЩЕНИЯ. ПОРАЖЕННЫЙ УЧАСТОК ТЕЛА СМАЗЫВАЮТ ВАЗЕЛИНОМ ИЛИ КАКИМ-ЛИБО ЖИРОМ И НАКЛАДЫВАЮТ СТЕРИЛЬНУЮ ПОВЯЗКУ.



ЕСЛИ НА ОТМОРОЖЕННОМ МЕСТЕ ПОЯВИЛОСЬ ПОКРАСНЕНИЕ, ОБРАЗОВАЛИСЬ ПУЗЫРИ ИЛИ ОТМЕРТВЕНИЕ ТКАНЕЙ ТЕЛА, РАСТИРАНИЕ И ОТОГРЕВАНИЕ ПРОИЗВОДИТЬ НЕ НУЖНО. НА ОТМОРОЖЕННУЮ ЧАСТЬ ТЕЛА НАКЛАДЫВАЮТ СУХУЮ СТЕРИЛЬНУЮ ПОВЯЗКУ, ДАЮТ ПОСТРАДАВШЕМУ ГОРЯЧИЙ ЧАЙ, СОГРЕВАЮТ ЕГО И НАПРАВЛЯЮТ В ЛЕЧЕБНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ.

ПРОТИВОПОЖАРНОЕ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЕ СПАСАТЕЛЬНЫХ РАБОТ



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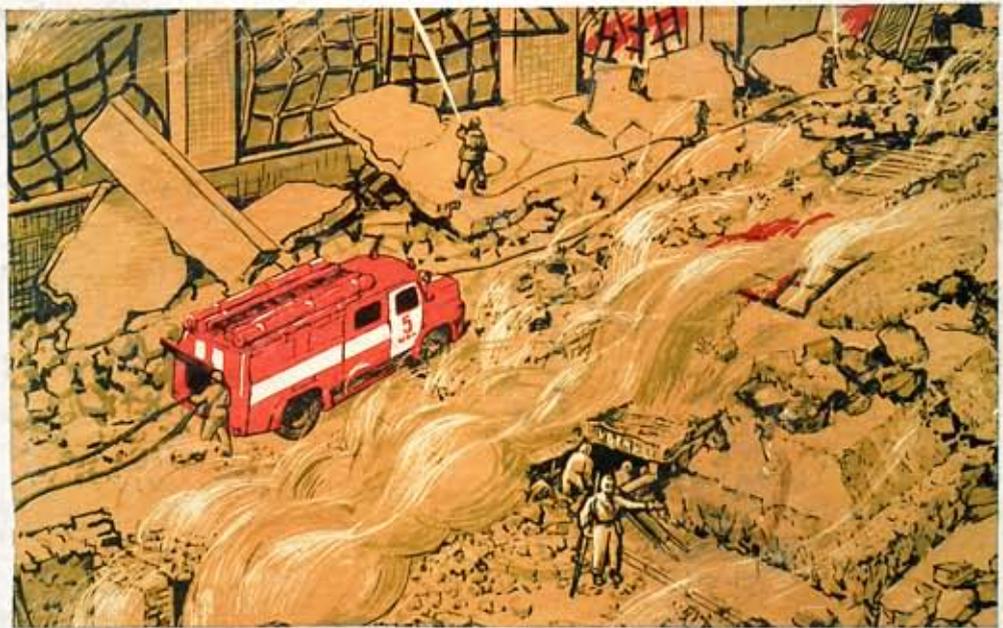
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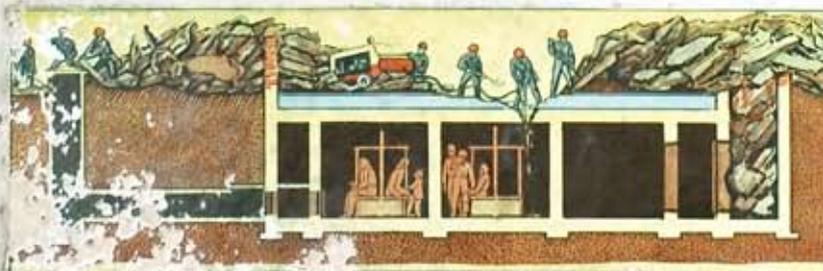
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Previous page: Training board from the Sillamäe bunker: Fire protection in rescue and clearing operations; Digging out shelters buried under collapsed structures.

Next page/Back cover: *Wounded Angel*, 2008, photograph, 100x148cm.



The Finnish Pavilion 53rd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 10 June – 21 November 2007

This newsletter is also published as part of the magazine *Framework: The Finnish Art Review*, # 10, 2009, pp. 49-72. www.framework.fi.

Welfare – Fare Well

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Jacob Dahlgren
Toril Goksøyr & Camilla Martens
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The Nordic Pavilion is organized and funded by the Nordic Committee for the Venice Biennial FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange/ Director Marketta Seppälä Office for Contemporary Art Norway/ Director Marta Kuzma Moderna Museet, Sweden/Deputy Director/ Chief Curator Ann-Sofi Noring The responsibility for representation in each biennial alternates between the collaborative countries. In 2007 the hosting country is Finland.

The Publication

Publisher
FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange

Editor
Marketta Seppälä

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Graphic design
Patrik Söderlund

Printing
Finepress Oy, Turku, Finland

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ISSN 1459-6288

Acknowledgements

The curator and the organizers would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their support and assistance: Finnish Ministry of Culture, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, Finnish Embassy in Rome, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Rome, Royal Swedish Embassy in Rome; Art Council of Finland, Arts Council Norway, AVEK The Promotion Center for Audiovisual Culture, Helsinki; Nordisk Kulturfond (Nordic Culture Fund), Copenhagen; Suomalais-tanskalainen kulttuurirahasto (Finnish-Danish Culture Fund); Museum of Finnish Architecture, Ahlstrom Oyj; Adel Abidin, Jacob Dahlgren, Toril Goksøyr, Camilla Martens, Sirous Namazi, Lars Ramberg, Maaria Wirkkala; Velaug Bollingmo, Anne-Sophie Cardinal, Heidi Grah, Henna Harri, Kaisa Heinänen, Mia Kuokkanen, Jari Lehtinen, Fredrik Liew, Outi Liusvaara, Marita Muukkonen, Paula Toppila, Andrea Zausa; Martin Glaser, Trude Iversen, Hanna Johansson, Andrea Kroksnes, Laura U. Marks, Ann-Sofi Noring, Patrik Söderlund, Timo Valjakka; Anna Lallerstedt, Hannu Hellman, Markku Lahti, Corrado Pedrocchi.

Adel Abidin would like to thank:
David Knight, Sam Shingler, Janice Redman UN-neon, Art print, Reuters/ITN source, FRAME, Art Council of Finland, AVEK The Promotion Center for Audiovisual Culture

Jacob Dahlgren would like to thank:
Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm; Fredrik Liew, Timo Valjakka

Toril Goksøyr & Camilla Martens would like to thank:
Arts Council Norway, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Jan Alsaker, Mosse Sjaastad, Marianne Heier, Eivind Furnesvik, Per Gunnar Tverbakk, Ole Reinert Omvik, Are Sjaastad, Stine Wexelsen Goksøyr

Sirous Namazi would like to thank:
Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Gallery Nordenhake, Stockholm/Berlin; Mirgruppen, Vimmerby, Sweden

Lars Ramberg would like to thank:
JCDecaux Norway, JCDecaux France, NRK Ulyd, Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo County, City of Oslo, The National Museum for Art, Architecture and Design, Norway

Maaria Wirkkala would like to thank:
Dr. Giancarlo Chimento / Venini S.p.A., Architetto Roberto Gasparotto/ Venini S.p.A. Ferdinando Benettelli, Lisa Ponti



Opinions, Analyses & Letters

Recently, caused by the turmoil of the current financial crisis, a constantly accelerating flow of news in media on closures of art institutions and consequent petition campaigns on the internet to prevent them are signs of the uncertainty of several institutions. It is literally a question of survival or being

eliminated. The same uncertainty is reflected in many countries by plans for structural changes in art education, not to speak about new variations of interferences in informal and governmental cultural political structures.

Opinions, Analyses & Letters include four commentaries by writers from

different disciplines. They have been invited to discuss these socio-political dimensions of art production and the dynamics of its institutional relations, with a special focus on particular infrastructural functions that artists, curators and critics perform in these dispositions. *MS*

74 -----	Raul Zamudio	<i>The Genie of History in Three Acts</i>
76 -----	Martina Corgnati	<i>L'Autre/The other</i>
78 -----	Henk Slager	<i>O BaMa</i>
79 -----	Ilya Budratskis and Alexandra Galkina	<i>Five Theses on Art and Capital</i>

The writer is a New York-based independent curator and critic, and most recently, co-curator, 2008 Seoul International Media Art Biennale and artistic director, 2008 Yeosu International Art Festival.

Raul Zamudio

The Genie of History in Three Acts

On October 9th 2001 and exactly 29 days after the World Trade Center attacks, a work by the Chilean artist Diego Fernandez titled *Twin Towers* (2001) was included in an exhibition I organized at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. The sleepy, New Jersey hamlet was slightly out of view of New York City's Wall Street icons that were reduced to a graveyard of smoldering rubble from two jets that smashed into them. *Twin Towers*, which I had selected in July 2001 for the exhibition *Rayuela*, consisted of two small glass plates protruding from the wall about waist high. On the surface of the 25 cm squared glass was placed two small digital scales. On one scale was a certain number of Chilean centavos, on the other scale were the same amount of U.S. pennies; the difference between the two was their color and most importantly their weight that was digitally illuminated on the scales. While the work was poetic and conceptual and commented on international circuits of power and commerce between North/South America, center/periphery, and inside/outside, the destruction of the World Trade Center catapulted *Twin Towers* to an altogether different register where history now wove its way into the work's narrative fabric. The conflation between past and present pinpointed September 11, 2001 with a previous moment in history. The other date being 24 years ago on September 11, 1973, which was the day the democratically-elected socialist government of Salvador Allende was overthrown by the Chilean right-wing military clandestinely supported by the C.I.A.

Unbeknownst to its creator, *Twin Towers* became one of the most talked

about works both within and beyond the exhibition. It became a flashpoint in which a host of existential questions circulated including artistic responsibility, mourning, trauma and, of course, censorship, democracy and what Foucault referred to as the politics of discourse. After what became known in the vernacular as 9/11, monuments began to appear in New York City that marked the traumatic event including a cross created in situ from damaged infrastructure as well as make-shift memorials adjacent to the area known as Ground Zero.

The effect of Fernandez's work was unexpected: an architectural historian who teaches at Bard College in New York had mentioned to me that I should pull it from the exhibition, and substitute it with a plaque commemorating those who died in the attacks. The scholar/professor who has written for *Text Zur Kunst*, *Art Journal* and other magazines, went as far as to chauvinistically suggest that because the artist is Chilean he does not know – i.e. have a right to comment – on what happened on 9/11/2001. His reaction was not without company, however; for I had moderated a panel at the university with three of the exhibiting artists and most of the questions asked by the public revolved around the inclusion of *Twin Towers* in the exhibition: Why is the work exhibited? Doesn't the artist feel responsibility to the deceased or injured? When was the invitation sent to the artist to participate? Possibly the most compelling argument articulated dovetailed on President Bush's invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001; for not only did he supposedly invade that country to pursue what he thought

were the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, but one of his reasons for invasion was the exportation of democracy and "American" values? How ironic, an audience member noted, that democracy practiced abroad from the barrel of a gun was now under scrutiny at home in the desire to censor *Twin Towers*? The irony, regardless of its obvious absurdity, seems to have also mired the recent exhibition of Norwegian artist Lene Berg with similar issues that galvanized discourse around *Twin Towers*.

From October to the end of November 2008, Lene Berg was scheduled to exhibit a body of work at Cooper Union in New York City. The main piece of the exhibition was a public artwork titled *Stalin by Picasso or Portrait of Woman with Moustache* (2008). The work consisted of a banner that hung outside of the façade of Cooper Union's Houghton Gallery and Foundation building. The banner was based on a drawing by Picasso that he made in 1953 for the French Communist weekly *Les Lettres Françaises*. It was originally commissioned by Louis Aragon, a Stalinist sympathizer, but Picasso's rendition of Stalin was considered so horrendous that it was edited out of the newspaper and was cause for his expulsion from the Communist party. (1)

Regardless of the humor of its original rejection, the work at Cooper Union was taken down some five days after the opening without notifying either the artist or curator of the exhibition. And the reason given for its de-installation was that the Ukrainian community living in the area protested the banner's image of Stalin. What was voiced by representatives of the com-

(1) Sewall Chan, "Cooper Union Tears Down That Stalin Banner," *NY Times "City Room"*, November 7, 2008.

(2) Ibid. Jaroslaw Leshko, president of the board of trustees at the Ukrainian Museum on East Sixth Street, and professor emeritus at Smith College.

(3) Riiko Sakkinen, <http://www.riikosakkinen.com>, accessed on April 1, 2009.

(4) See Lee Jeon-Hee, "Samsung Chief Summoned in Corruption Case," April 5, 2008, http://www.upiasia.com/Economics/2008/04/05/samsung_chief_summoned_in_corruption_case/2251/, accessed on April 1, 2009.

(5) Benjamin, Walter (1986). *IX Thesis*, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. by Hazard Adams & Leroy Searle. Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University Press, pp. 680–685.

munity was that the image of Stalin, regardless of the context of its original manufacture in 1953 or its re-contextualization in 2008, was that it was a stark reminder of Soviet persecution of Ukrainians. Rather than admit that it was pressured by the Ukrainian community and local politicians such as New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg, Cooper Union issued a statement that the banner was not up to building code regulations thus its removal had nothing to do with its content. As was the case with *Twin Towers*, there were art professionals whose response to Berg's work bordered on the reactionary:

"I am an art historian and a profound believer in creative freedom of expression. That will never change. But putting a giant Stalin banner on the face of the school's headquarters was insensitive"..."Perhaps the banner can still be viewed in another context, inside the building, without an aggressive public face"..."that would satisfy everybody, certainly me. I want the image to exist as a work of art and to have an appropriate presentation." (2)

There are two things that are disturbing about this response: one is the art historian's desire that Berg's work exist "as a work of art." It is already a work of art by virtue of it being created by an artist; what the scholar was ostensibly seeking was its censoring under the guise of what he construed as "appropriate presentation." The other, equally distressing element was that he became a spokesperson for "everybody"; if the work's removal satisfied him, then it should satisfy everyone, since everyone must have responded similarly to the work? The art historian was also



Riiko Sakkinen, *WE SAMSUNG AND KIM IL-SUNG*, 2008, mixed media, installation view, Yeosu International Contemporary Art Festival 2008. Photo by the artist.



Lene Berg, *Stalin by Picasso or Portrait of Woman with Moustache*, 2008, ink on vinyl. Façade-banners on Cooper Union, New York, October 29.-31. 2008. Photo by Bryan Zimmerman.



Diego Fernandez, *Twin Towers*, 2001, Chilean centavos, U.S. pennies, electronic digital scales, glass, hardware. Photo by Raul Zamudio.

President of the Board of Trustees at the Ukrainian Museum. As such, he not only had his own constituencies to placate, but the specter of 9/11 had by default seeped its way as subtext were Stalin was equated with the perpetrators of World Trade Center attacks. After 9/11, it seemed ubiquitous that many right-wing pundits caricatured Islam's resistance to the West as Islamofascism; and they extended this stereotype to President Bush's Axis of Evil of North Korea, Iran and Iraq as well as subsuming Stalin, Mao, and Hitler. The blurring of historical trauma with a contemporaneous moment via the conflation of one form of terrorism with another was parallel to the Chilean artist and the events of 9/11, 2001 with 9/11, 1973, but the absence of historical specificity with the former became an ideological weapon used for political purposes. This epistemic tactic by the right was also the backdrop of a recent exhibition involving the Spain-based, Finnish artist Riiko Sakkinen.

In August of 31, 2008, Riiko Sakkinen had just finished his installation for 2008 Yeosu International Art Festival of which my role was of artistic director. Sakkinen's piece, titled *WE ♥ SAMSUNG AND KIM IL-SUNG* (2008), consisted of a wall drawing and text superimposed with 24 framed works-on-paper. According to the artist, the elements of the installation referred to the following:

Samsung is South Korea's largest company and the world's second largest conglomerate by revenue. Kim Il-sung was the leader of North Korea from its founding in 1948 until his death 1994. He switched from a Marxist-Leninist ide-

ology to his self-developed Juche idea and established a personality cult. The figure is from Animallow marshmallow package sold in Lidl, a discount supermarket chain of German origin. (3)

After installing his piece, which was one of the highlights of the 86 artist exhibition, officials told us that the work needed to be modified or taken down. The reason for this, according to official statements, was that the national constitution prohibits anyone from "praising" Kim Il-Sung. And transgressing this national rule of law could lead to imprisonment. This charge was taken seriously for in researching the official, state position it was revealed that there was at least one instance of a South Korean teacher arrested for downloading North Korean posters from the Internet for pedagogical purposes, which was misconstrued by anticommunists as condoning North Korean ideology. In April of 2008 Lee Samsung of the Samsung conglomerate was being investigated for bribery, illicit transfer of ownership and the creation of slush funds. (4) This was the same Samsung who funded Seoul's beautiful museum by the same name. The piece by Sakkinen, however, not only questioned Kim Il-Sung's personality cult, but also the relationship between art, politics and commerce. There is precedence in this particular critical framework that makes Sakkinen's installation that much more compelling.

Hans Haacke's important work that was censored by the Guggenheim Museum in New York City is one example. Titled *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, the piece traced

the real estate holdings of Harry Shapolsky from 1951-1971; and implicated how his criminal dealings including investments acquired from slums in Harlem and other low income, high minority neighborhoods, was being protected by politicians with connections to the Guggenheim Museum. Like the censoring of Haacke's conceptual artwork par excellence, the attempt to remove Sakkinen's installation reached a feverish pitch: requests for pulling the work amounted to more than 50 phone calls a day to the venue's administrative offices from all areas of South Korea. Since Sakkinen had already returned to Spain and gave me permission to take any action I thought appropriate, I finally agreed with trepidation to have one of the artist's works-on-paper cover II in the name Kim Il-Sung. I allowed this to happen after I gave a TV interview in front of the exhibition hall at the 2008 Gwangju Biennale. I found it ironic that I was giving a statement against censorship in a city that in 1980 over 200 students were killed in the now famous pro-democracy movement? In all fairness and sensitivity to those who lost loved ones during the Korean War and not because I bowed to right-wing, anticommunist pressure, I allowed the work to be modified by one single work-on-paper in agreement with the Yeosu International Art Festival Committee. However, I did ask in return for compromise that the YIAF Committee, which was the exhibition's administrative body, issue a press release stating that the work was misinterpreted. And that the artist and I were not attempting to disrespect anyone's memory of the past or trivializing the horror experienced by Kim Il-Sung

and the Korean War. The statement to the press that officials agreed to send out was never released. After returning to New York City, I found out that the work had been so drastically altered that it looked vandalized. Not only did the YIAF committee condone the artwork's destruction reminiscent of the Taliban's demolition of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, but it was left in this state throughout the remainder of the exhibition for all to see.

In one of Walter Benjamin's most famous metaphors of Hegelian teleology and the dialectic, he describes the "angel of history" in a painting by Paul Klee:

This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (5)

With the aforementioned instances of censorship where yesteryear is telescoped into the present without specificity, it may be more apt that Benjamin's storm that he so poetically alludes to is one of regress and not of progress. It is not an angel of history that witnesses the day-to-day world and its accumulating wreckage; but a phantom or, if you will, a genie of history that conjures and conflates the past with the present and vice versa. +

The writer is a curator and senior professor in History of Contemporary Art at Albertina Academy in Turin. She regularly contributes articles to *Contemporary Art Practices*. Since 2000 she is consultant responsible for contemporary art at the Horcy-nus Orca Foundation, Messina and art-consultant at the Spoleto Modern and Contemporary Art Museum – Palazzo Collicola (PG). *Translated by Rino Gelmi.*

11th International Cairo Biennale:
L'Autre/The other
20 December – 20 February, 2009
Various venues, Cairo, Egypt

Next page, left: Kaarina Kaikkonen, *And It Was Empty*, 2008, men's jackets, installation view, Cairo Biennale 2008. Photo by the artist.

Next page, right: Adel Abidin, *Tasty*, 2008, two channel video installation. Photo by Lauri Nykopp.

Martina Corgnati

L'Autre/The other

The title, *L'Autre/The other*, isn't as such a token of originality, yet under this label the content and approach of the 11th Cairo Biennale shows an effort of renewal in the face of previous events. Indeed the Cairo Biennale, compared to similar exhibitions which recently have flourished all over the world, had remained somehow *dinosaurish*. Old mindsets for the selection of artists (ministerial channels or irremovable national exhibition organizers), lack of scientific management and shortage of a genuine cultural project, rigid control by bureaucratic elites, all those relics of old times dogmatic centralism explain why the Biennale has been in no condition to express significant and up-to-date values in spite of the presence, in all editions, of some good artists coming mostly from the Arab world and of some interesting curators – appointed members of the international jury, whose assignment was to hand out prizes to the deserving artists in the show.

In 2001, I was a member of such a jury together with Daniel Abadie, Salima Hashimi and Rosa Martinez among others: I still recall the high irritation shown by Egyptian authorities at the fact that none of their protégés had been awarded a prize, so much so that they pulled out of the hat an entirely new special prize that was awarded

without consulting the 'defaulting' jury, unable to live up to its duties. Episodes like this seem not to have been isolated cases, yet they were not to be seen in 2008. The fact that a new highly cultured, much younger artistic figure (all the civil servants at the Department of Arts in Egypt are traditionally artists, even the minister, Faruk Hosni) was heading the Fine Arts Sector of the Ministry of Culture offered some actual guaranties of improvement in terms of fairness and cultural openness.

The 11th Cairo Biennale delivered: under the guidance of a committee of informed young artists with international presence, the Biennale has managed to ensure the participation of a number of authentic stars, such as the Korean Kimsooja, and has avoided to a large extent those outdated, quite insignificant artists who plagued the rooms with kitsch and totally obsolete works. As a handful of old-fashioned commissioners were still in charge, quite a few European countries and the West in general were induced to send a misrepresentation to the Biennale. Nevertheless fine Western artists came, such as the Spaniard Bernard Roig, the Serb Mrđjan Bajić, the Austrian (Brazilian by birth) Roberta Lima and a bright Finnish delegation composed of Adel Abidin (of Iraqi extraction), Eija-

Liisa Ahtila with her celebrated multi-channel video *Where is where?* (2008), Kaarina Kaikkonen with her stunning installation of old clothes creating the image of a landscape and, in my opinion, one of the most fascinating works of the entire biennale, as well as Lauri Nykopp and Stiina Ulriikka Saaristo. To say it plainly: 'Chapeau!'

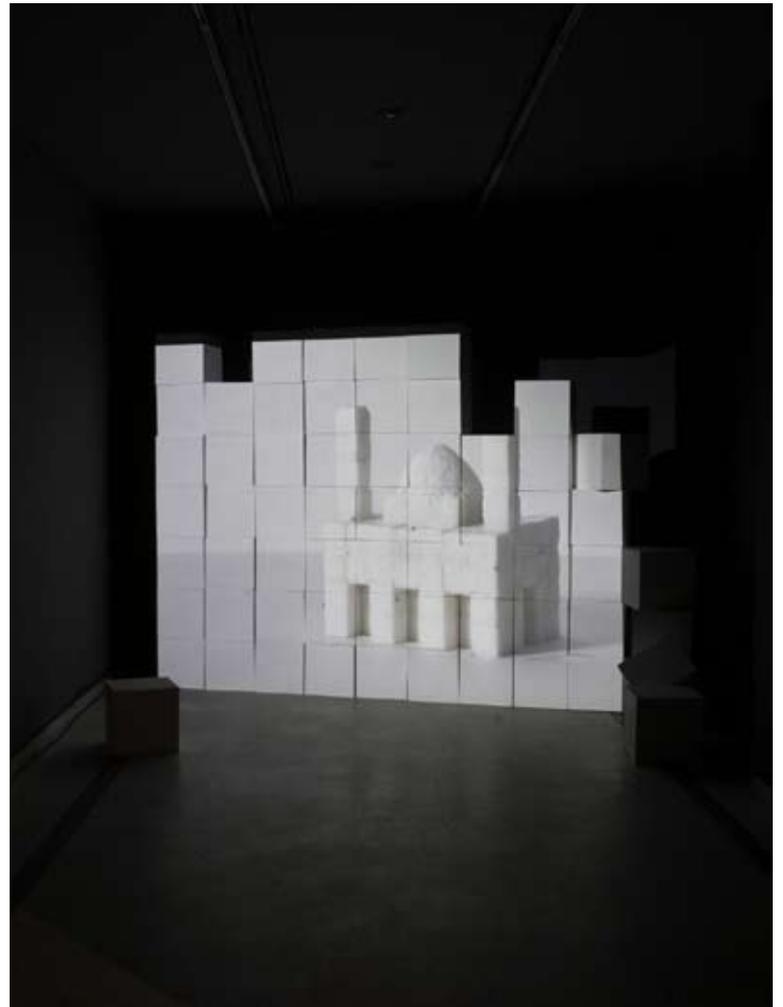
Indeed one does probably not go to a Cairo Biennale to look for the best European artists but rather the best Arab ones and most of them were indeed at the *rendez-vous*. The Egyptian hosts brought in a squad of great names which reaped two prizes on the four available. Lara Baladi, Nile Prize 2008, created the installation *Borg El Amal* (*Tower of Hope*), a precarious construction of bricks 'marked' with the picture of a humble donkey with a heavy burden followed by a human figure, bended under the load of fatigues brought by existence. Bricks, cement, scales leading to nowhere, this construction erected in the gardens of the Biennale, facing the Museum entrance, recalled the scary buildings mushrooming in the suburbs of Cairo. Once inside, the visitor was taken by surprise, enchanted by the almost celestial sounds of a symphonic composition by Nathaniel Robin Mann and Ángel Lopez de la Llave, interpreted by various instruments and

a choir... of actual donkeys. A piece combining a peculiar scarcity of means, suggested environments and a singular poetic streak.

The work of Adel El Siwi put forward exceptional pictorial quality and great project breath. It was one of the few really matching the exhibition topic, namely *The Other*. For the matter, the other was to be understood as the child within ourselves. The piece was a gigantic portrayal solemnly standing out, similar and yet different to a nowadays artist's self portrait. Despite the scale of his pieces of art, the tones of the 'message' conveyed by Siwi are particularly intimate. Far from the ubiquitous 'war rhetoric' so well-spread over the Arab world, the artist focuses on, and calls our attention on, human condition, change, the transformations of concern for all beings in their life process. A vision which on the pictorially refined large surface of the canvas acquires accents of a tremendous obviousness.

One could also enjoy the contributions of the Armenian-Egyptian sculptor Armen Agop, the great and silent representations immersed in metaphysical atmosphere from Esran Marouf, the ironic installation by Wael Darwish, and Hanafi Mahmoud's paintings.

Nowadays Egypt stands for, beyond a doubt, one of the most active,



rich and vibrant non western (not just Arab) centres for research and experiment in matters of visual arts, full of ferments, popping up in a large variety of media, of contexts and situations, with perhaps a very special focus on painting, a language particularly alive in the entire Arab world, and which in Egypt continues to hold the interest of young and not so young artists and allows plenty of meaningful experiences.

Given such a rich panorama, the six artists exhibited at the Biennale couldn't indeed be a representative sample; on the other hand this is always true of any big international exhibition, where at best what is shown is the tip of the iceberg. Therefore what matters is that an iceberg lies under the visible tip: as it turns out to be true in that display, supported by a fast growing number of galleries (In addition to the historical ones such as Mashrabia, Karim Francis and Townhouse, where paying a visit is a must, it is worth mentioning the splendid Almasar Gallery in Zamalek which opened a couple of years ago), by associations and foundations as Contemporary Image Collective (CIC) and by a wealth of initiatives, such as *PhotoCairo*, a large international exhibit held during the days of the Biennale for the fourth time and hosted in different places. *PhotoCairo* might have

lost a bit of its personality in its attempt to match similar settings elsewhere in the world, but anyway it is surely always worth the go.

Back to the 11th Biennale, and let's point out that this time new artistic figures, more or less outstanding, yet all 'genuine' and open, capable of research and experiment (and not the typical representatives of academic art, selected outside deadlines by local political hierarchies), came not only from the home country but from other Middle-East countries.

The case of Syria is illustrative. In 2007, after 43 years of absence, the Arab Republic of Syria set up at the 52nd Biennale di Venezia an absurd pavilion that sparked off laughter. An Italian critic, Duccio Trombadori, without ever having set a foot in Syria, curated the official exhibition and proposed Bassem Dahdouh and Nasser Nassan Agha, two mediocre painters from Damascus, an entirely improper choice if Syrian cultural reality was to be introduced, together with a dozen (!) Italian and French artists selected by the Syrian ambassador to Italy, Samir Al Kassir.

To Cairo instead, came two excellent Syrian artists, Ms Buthayna Ali, who made a bright and poetic installation, in addition to Sabhan Adem, of-the-moment one of the strongest and

original painters in the Arab world. Most interesting also, the highly sensitive painter Tamara Nouri, and a master like Ali Assaf, representing Iraq.

From the most awaited Lebanese and Palestinian contributions, a corner of the world thronged with major figures, the sole truly noticeable presence was the video-maker and theorist Khaled Ramadan (Lebanese, but long-established in Copenhagen) with an ironic yet tender autobiographic video dealing, as well, with the power of media image. The video was granted a prize.

Last but not least, the French-Algerian Kader Attia's video. Not of latest making (2007), the proposal still is very efficient in its extreme, disarming straightforwardness and it was especially well received (presently exhibited in the most gossiped Saatchi's show in London, *New Art from the Middle East*). The video stages a white cube made out of lumps of sugar slowly melted down by black oil poured on top of it until a disgusting filthy shapeless mass is formed.

All these and other proposals are documented in a ponderous catalogue riddled with many misprints, proof-reading and editing mistakes, yet on the whole undoubtedly the best catalogue ever produced by a Cairo biennale. Graphics are upstanding, photo-

graphs in focus and the documentation on the participants appropriate.

In conclusion, it is to be wished that the Cairo Biennale proceeds along those lines of transformation, aperture and adjustment, preferably without aping external and more powerful realities, but consolidating a project of its own, with a geographic and/or thematic dimension, which could take on board predictably the Middle-East, the Maghreb (an area under-represented everywhere and moreover lacking a biennale!) and even, why not, Sub-Saharan Africa: a rather urgent matter given the dimming star of Dakar, anyhow so far and so lonely.

It seems rather pointless by now to grant monetary prizes to artists. It might perhaps be more helpful to offer the participants a more steady technical assistance, travel and transport expenses, particularly for those artists coming from impoverished areas. Maybe instead of one unique 'pavilion' conceived as a replica of the Biennale di Venezia, a clearly aged and unattainable model, why not financing 'projects' allowing for the production of new and original curatorial experiences, pertaining to countries or situations rather unheard of? I have no doubt there is a wealth of candidates for a selection of this type... +

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Henk Slager

O BaMa

Our current artistic decade is filled with an excess of rhetorical moments: crisis, change, but most of all challenge. One of the challenges in today's art world concerns the Bologna process that started ten years ago as a reconstructive trajectory focusing on rethinking and reformulating the paradigm of the art academy. Slowly but surely, it becomes clear that the romantic model of master-pupil education has definitely reached its final stages and now makes room for a variety of course-based programs demanding space for critical and contextual studies, collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, experimental productions, and above all communication and presentation skills. At the same time, it turns out that gratuitous production of artifacts for a neo-liberal art market directed towards speculation and financial profit must end, with the academy regaining its traditional connotation of giving room for debate and research.

However, when looking at the present situation of European art education, one discovers a dramatic devaluation: the critical autonomous space of art as once put forward by Adorno has evaporated greatly in the practice of many art academies. No more than a 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' has remained, i.e. a fleeting experience of freedom in a world drowning in an iconography of visual culture and the opportunistic rhetorics of the creative industries. One-dimensional strategies of signification seem to directly derive their implicit structure from a formatting awareness of the late-capitalist ideology of a free market system. Ultimately, it seems that the notion of art could be erased from the title of art academies whereupon they subsequently could continue as 'academies for creative industries', dominated by the paradigm of a world characterized by economic and financial dogmas without any commitment to other worlds.

In the context sketched above, there is yet another alarming trend. Remarkably enough, the established practice of curating exhibitions has

started to expand the notions of academy and education during the last couple of years. Increasingly, exhibitions which are characterized by a curatorial paradigm based on notions such as 'expanded academy' or an 'educational turn in curating' are emerging. Obvious examples are the curatorial concepts of *Manifesta 7* (Notes for an Art School) and *Documenta 12* (What is to be done?). These connotative expansions have contributed to a further disintegration of the position of the art academy as such. If the entire domain of the art world can be determined by academic parameters, it clearly seems to be the case that the art academy as such has inevitably lost its unique position. With that, the academy seems to have demonstrated the unmistakable crisis of its institutional redundancy.

The Bologna rules and the challenges mentioned above, i.e. the introduction of a Bachelor-Master (BA-MA) system in art education, ultimately seem to have delayed the crisis in a positive way. Fortunately, the curriculum to be introduced in the European art educational system as per 2010 will also necessitate a reevaluation of the specificity of art education. Such a reflection will position the debate on the specificity of the academy in the context where it should be conducted, i.e. within the institutional framework of art education. This will not lead to a homogenizing framing, as some conservative critics fear; it will rather result in a form of differential thought enabling to rethink the somewhat obsolete concept of autonomy while turning it into an autonomy of commitment. Because of that reformulation of the curriculum and its related production of room for thought, the art academy could become the preeminent location in the cultural domain for generating innovative processes during the upcoming decade.

In that context, the PhD research trajectories (the so-called third cycle) connected with the Bologna rules are of great importance. Such form of research does not need the guidance of the formatting models of established

scientific domains, nor is it swayed by issues produced by the late-capitalist free market. Rather, it is an authentic form of research emerging from mere artistic necessity while erasing a dependence on any form of rhetorics connected to social-economic relevance. Currently, Finland plays a crucial role in the development and realization of forms of research transgressing established boundaries. The PhD program offered by the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts is considered an important, constructive and inspiring model by many European art academies. The program offers artists an intellectual sanctuary where they can reflect on their artistic motives and strategies while creating a qualitative impulse with respect to their artistic practices. The participating artists, mainly mid-career artists, have a chance to focus on issues inherent to their artistic practices. In addition, such a novel, experimental sanctuary for autonomous artistic (PhD) research creates an environment able to function as a maxim for the art academy at large. After all, it is important for such artistic research to function as the art academy's conscience and, in that sense, govern the continuously pressing issues of the paradigm of art education.

Art education should again be aware of its responsibility in the fields dominating our various cultural and intellectual domains. Clearly, these domains have been dominated by an economic-financial paradigm in an almost catastrophic way. Therefore, today's art academy should entirely focus on reevaluating its original task of creating novel forms of perception and critical awareness from the perspective of committed forms of autonomy while combating prevailing economic models of thought. In so doing, a topical academy will not only generate novel perceptual modes; it can and will ultimately steer a renovation of a culture that will be transformed according to the logic and rhythm of an inevitable change. +

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(1) Daniel Buren, "Art is not free", *Studio international*, vol. 185, #956, June 1973, p. 254.

Ilya Budratskis & Alexandra Galkina

Five Theses on Art and Capital

This text was written for the Moscow Art Magazine, currently probably the only serious independent review of contemporary art in Russia. The issue of the MAM in which our "five theses" were published, is focused on the problem of art institutions. In the present situation of total hegemony of capital in culture and social life, it is essential to explore critical strategies of the artists. In our text, we wanted just to stress some contradictions concerning the place of art in the market society and spell out some ways to develop criticism.

1. The key conflict at the heart of contemporary art might be described as the contradiction between its mode of production and its mode of appropriation. Although it deals with meanings that lie outside profit-based relations and is fundamentally noncommercial in nature, art is nevertheless part of the market; moreover, its principal value as a commodity is just this noncommercial essence. Art's disinterested basis satisfies the need people living in a market economy have for an alternative, for something else. The market, however, is the chief middleman between this need and its satisfaction. During the entire course of its recent history, art has thus entered into definite relations with capital, with the "masters." These relations are fluid and fickle, conscious or unconscious. To a certain degree, the history of art is a history of the complex infrastructure generated by the relations between the artist and economic power. This situation deprives the artist (like any other producer) of the capacity of free choice within the dominant system of economic relations. At the same time, however, the objective contradiction between art's essence and its market function grants the artist a specific space of freedom from the market's repressive hegemony.

2. The creation and continuously growing complexity of artistic institutions are the direct expression of the contradiction described above. As one of the founders of institutional critique in the late sixties/early seventies, Daniel Buren, has noted, "Art is not free, and the artist is not engaged in free

expression (he simply cannot)." (1) In this sense, the artist cannot be free, but at the same time he has a complicated relationship with the context offered him; he constantly searches for ways to escape it. For example, Carl Andre's "specific objects" or Robert Morris's structures are interesting in this respect because they are imbued with a critique of the very "site" in which the artistic utterance happens. The history of institutional critique demonstrates one of the declarative forms of the artist's reflection on the conditional demands of the market. Moreover, the critique of institutions – museums, galleries, and artworks themselves – led to the opposite result by making them even more influential. Carl Andre provoked the market system by producing works that were seemingly "unacceptable" to it – wooden beams, featureless metal plates, etc. – but they were nonetheless successfully incorporated in the system. This subversive "playing the market" lays bare the entire multiplicity of relations between owners and producers of contemporary art and demonstrates how hegemony is implemented in the field of cultural production.

3. Contemporary art is attractive to business not only as an object of profitable investment. The bourgeois collector is also drawn to art because it corresponds to the way he understands himself. Innovation, dynamism, and a passion for predicting/planning the future: these qualities of contemporary art enable him to recognize himself in art; they impart to his social function a certain aesthetic quality. The art market gives the bourgeois class absolute freedom in determining the value of the work. The bourgeois class regards this value formation as a moment of creativity; it serves as a source of aesthetic pleasure. By participating in value creation, the collector begins to feel like an artist: it is for this opportunity that he is willing to pay a high price. However, the historicity of art, based on the acceptance of criteria formulated by the preceding artistic tradition, can rob the collector of this intoxicating sense of creative freedom. That is why the collec-

tor experiences the need for an anarchic "liberation" of form from tradition; he wants to be able to place the work in the history of art at his personal discretion. Such phenomena as the Young British Artists or the local "stars" of the Russian art market are the most striking examples of capital's anarchic invasion. In these cases, the bourgeois collector acquires the role of a full-fledged creator, the work's co-author – or, even, the role of the work's genuine author.

4. Thus, for the bourgeois, his belonging to art is determined by his ability to set its price. Whereas the capitalists make up the class of the buyers and owners of art objects, artists are the class of producers who sell their labor power. However, the cultural disposition is not limited by this principal division; it includes a number of variations on the interpenetration of forms of production/ownership. In this disposition, curators and critics perform a particular infrastructural function.

Although it responds to the buyer's demands, the role of art is not limited to these needs. Like the ideology of the class as a whole, bourgeois ideology dominates art. This ideology cannot be described as a completed concept or a sequence of formulations that correspond to the tasks of the present moment. It constitutes complex, fluid structures whose various aspects are reflected in art. Thus, when we examine contemporary Russian art from the political point of view, what we might interpret as the liberal-westernizing and nativist camps are not two tendencies in conflict with one another. They merely demonstrate the variety of moods and expectations experienced by different segments of the ruling class, which on the whole is united in its attitude towards art's primary commercial function.

Historically speaking, the dynamic of institutional relations in Soviet/post-Soviet art is inextricably bound up with the radical changes in the country's economic and social character as a whole. Thus, the underground (Soviet unofficial culture), although it developed outside any official institutions and

was sometimes also subjected to state repression, was at the same time rooted in the existing hierarchy of social relations. It occupied a firm place in the system of informal institutions, which determined the life of post-Soviet society to no lesser degree than other institutions. In this sense, unofficial culture was "a submarine you couldn't escape" (Yuri Albert). This informal institutionalization determined the specific relations within the art community, its ethics and collective self-consciousness.

As a result of the nullification of the earlier configuration – official/unofficial – new elites have crystallized. A new politics of cultural production has taken shape that is non-transparent to the art community: the system of relations, hierarchies, and values in the professional art milieu is defined outside this milieu. This new form of power has generated a superstructure that has expropriated the right of judgment within the art community. Today, the issue of how to relate to this superstructure is a practical question of self-organization, of art's sovereignty.

5. We must understand that we are dealing with a cultural conjuncture in which critical utterance is impossible *vis-à-vis* the paradigm of "unofficial culture." The current system of relations, which is based on the power of capital, constitutes a totality that cannot be overcome via artistic practice. We proceed from concrete circumstances in which a new critical stance for art might be formulated as a principled, conscious strategy capable of challenging the bourgeois's right to arbitrary rule.

In this context, the question of self-organization is primarily a question of countering the manipulative and inertial mechanisms of the art infrastructure with concrete events and practices linked to the actualization of the previous tradition. This is what constitutes the authentic refraction of the political in art. By returning historical continuity and protesting against capital's usurpation of the right to history, we link art to the issue of liberating and self-organizing society as a whole. +



Features

Among the key questions brought up in this issue are: What can other disciplines do for visual arts and what role can art, broadly understood, play in broadening the scope of cultural practices?

The projects presented here do not comply with normal artistic practices of commissioned works which are based on collaboration with curators or established art institutions. On the contrary, they have been transgressing established boundaries that guide and control current conditions of artistic production.

Jan-Erik Andersson's private house project is an example of a work that has originally emerged from mere artistic necessity. For many years, however, it looked like a utopian dream that would remain just one of those countless unnoticed and unrealised projects, but for far more complex reasons than usually

is the case. First of all, the plan had to go through several phases inside the bureaucratic structures that have authorisation to assess norms of quality and habitability. After having been accepted with his own house project as his topic in a PhD research programme at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, the house as a practical building project got new strength behind it. Astonishingly, however, still in the final phase of his doctoral thesis the problem of defining the boundary between 'art' and 'architecture' turned out to be one of the main causes of confusion.

Antti Laitinen, blurring the boundaries between the fields of activism, performance and sculpture, deals often with the relationship between humanity and nature. First of all, through his artistic efforts to 'conquer' nature he reveals the inherent need of western thinking for linearity and cat-

egorisation. The paradoxical nature of his physical and self-ironical acts and gestures gets richer by the fact that, of course, his efforts to conquer nature are often doomed to end up with mere failures. These simple acts – were their failures intended or caused by chance – bring familiar worlds into a new light.

Through her long-term project entitled *Rentyhorn*, Sasha Huber, herself of Haitian-Swiss origin, reminds us about the historical injustice of racism and slavery in the history of European colonialism. The starting point of the project is the Agassizhorn, a mountain in the Swiss Alps, named after the Swiss natural scientist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) who developed racist theories about racial difference among people. The project is highly collective by its nature, inviting individuals and institutions to participate in an interactive worldwide campaign, run in collabora-

tion with the artist and a trans-Atlantic committee devoted to it with a common ultimate aim of renaming the mountain after Renty, a 19th century slave Agassiz used in his research.

Also Jani Ruscica's major theme in his films and film installations can be summarised as a search for the potential of collectivity, a topical issue in a world that looks for new alternatives in coping with challenges of the future. However, the approach in his works is based on a very personal level where meanings of subjective experience and interpretation are highlighted as striving forces for collective responsibility. By this the artist wants to underline that one cannot hide behind any general structures – were they social construction on local or on global levels.

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82	-----	Yrjö Haila on Jan-Erik Andersson	<i>Life on a Leaf: A House and Its Contexts</i>
92	-----	Suzana Milevska on Sasha Huber	<i>Is There Racism on the Moon?</i>
96	-----	Hans Fässler on Sasha Huber	<i>How Many Years Can a Racist's Mountain Exist?</i>
100	-----	Maxine Kopsa on Jani Ruscica	<i>On Pulling the Viewer</i>
104	-----	Kari Yli-Annala on Jani Ruscica	<i>About the Creation of Worlds</i>
108	-----	Juha-Heikki Tihinen on Antti Laitinen	<i>Quae Vide – See These Things</i>
112	-----	Poka-Yio on Antti Laitinen	<i>Swamp Man</i>

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The pictures of house project *Life on a Leaf* are from the construction phase. The house will be ready in the autumn of 2009. Two web cams show the progress of the building process in real time on the house's web site: www.anderssonart.com/leaf

Yrjö Haila on Jan-Erik Andersson

Life on a Leaf: A House and Its Contexts

"Art objects are characteristically 'difficult'. They are difficult to make, difficult to 'think', difficult to transact. They fascinate, compel and entrap, as well as delight the spectator. Their peculiarity, intransigence, and oddness is a key factor in their efficacy as social instruments." (1)

Jan-Erik Andersson opens his presentation of the project *Life on a Leaf* on his internet homepage with the following question: "Have you ever wondered why among all these millions of box shaped buildings, you will never see a house shaped like a shoe, a flower or a leaf?"

Well, who has? But perhaps we should start from the question: Why should there be houses shaped like shoes, flowers, or leaves in the first place? Andersson gives his own answer with the *Life on a Leaf* project which forms the main part of his doctoral thesis at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (2), and I will get back to it in a moment. I will first ponder upon the background: What sort of factors and processes influence, perhaps even determine, the shapes of houses we see in our surroundings?

Houses make up the most substantial part of the human-made artefactual world in which we live. This is such a simple fact that it is easily forgotten. We all have lived in one house or an-

other throughout our lives. On the other hand, none of us was asked what sort of a house we were put into at birth. Even later in life, the range of choices in this regard has been, for most of us, quite limited. Consequently, it is hard not to take the actually existing houses we are surrounded with for granted. But this, exactly, is what Jan-Erik Andersson and his collaborator Erkki Pitkäranta advise us not to do. *Life on a Leaf*, the project for a private house that the duo Andersson and Pitkäranta have been working on for a decade or so and that will be completed in the city of Turku in the summer of 2009, is a tangible invitation to give a second thought to the house.

Jan-Erik Andersson, sculptor and performance artist, and Erkki Pitkäranta, architect, started to collaborate in the mid-1990s in a project of designing new headquarters for the cleaning company SOL; interior designer Jari Inkinen was the third member of the team. The director of SOL, Liisa Joronen, wanted to create a new type of headquarters office for the company. The office was meant to be a part of a complex hosting various types of cultural activities. She had bought a six-storey school building located in Töölö, a residential neighbourhood not far from downtown Helsinki. The project was called *SOL World*. The plan in the first

stage was to rebuild the interior of four of the floors as office space and space for SOL's collection of naivistic art, and later on to redesign the two lowest floors to offer space for various kinds of cultural events. To create a coherent whole, the designer team composed a fairytale about what elements of nature one might come across when climbing from the surface of Earth toward the sky; the protagonist of the tale is a small bird that has fallen on the ground but finds its way back to the nest. Each of the four floors was designed following a particular guiding image, from the ground floor upwards, respectively: "water and ice", "fields and meadows", "mountain tops, tree tops" and "sky, space, clouds".

The project *SOL World* never happened. What remains as the result of half-a-year's work by the designer team is a scale model of the four floors. (3) The plan met strong opposition within the top levels of the city administration. The officials made use of a formality: a special permission is required for changing the function of a building from a school to a mixed-purpose office and cultural centre. The permit was refused on the grounds that the antiquity department of the city of Helsinki gave a statement demanding that the interior of the school building be preserved as cultural heritage. But in reality,

the decision was not so innocent as it seems. A group of influential modernist architects were strongly opposed to the project and were actively lobbying against it. One of them, for instance, tried to persuade the neighbourhood association of Töölö not to support the plan – but failed. Ultimately, however, the opponents of the project won. (4)

So, in fact, the story of *SOL World* gives rise to a question which is a preliminary to the question Andersson asks concerning his project *Life on a Leaf*, namely: "Have you ever wondered why all the thousands of offices each one of us visits in the course of our lives look so anonymous, dull, sterile and oppressive?"

Spaces

The whole title of Andersson's doctoral thesis is *Life on a Leaf. My House as an Iconic Space*. The theoretical text of the thesis consists of two parts. In the first one Andersson reflects upon the role of imagination and ornaments in the history of architecture, drawing particularly upon the tradition of Art Nouveau but also its precursors such as the Arts and Crafts movement. The second part describes in detail the plan for his house *Life on a Leaf* as well as the earlier project *SOL World*. In the beginning of the first chapter of the theoretical text, Andersson presents a

Adel Abidin, *Construction Site*, 2006, installation view and still from the video, 01'30. Photo by Heta Kuchka.



Bottom: Adel Abidin, *52 Guaranteed Affection*, 2006, video installation. Photos by the artist.

Bottom: Adel Abidin, *52 Guaranteed Affection*, 2006, video installation. Photos by the artist.



citation from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*: "(T)he house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream."

Designing and constructing office interiors and houses does not happen in a void. Quite to the contrary, such activities are strongly constrained by a whole range of factors. Taken together, the constraints can be metaphorically viewed as shaping a 'possibility space' for designing and constructing. In the beginning, any novel construction project, whether *SOL World* or *Life on a Leaf*, is an idea gradually taking shape. Factors influencing the realization of the idea are variables that give shape to the possibility space. If an idea is not realistic at all, a corresponding possibility space does not exist. In the case of a potentially realistic project which comes across constraints and difficulties of various sorts, the spatial metaphor helps to identify the constraints

and figure out how different constraints interact, that is, how they either reinforce one another or damp down one another's effect.

What factors shape the possibility space of constructing houses and designing office interiors? One set of constraints can be thought of as arising from practical concerns. On the one hand, boxes are easier to construct than houses with more complicated shapes. On the other hand, box-shaped houses are more conveniently filled with the type of furniture we westerners are accustomed to filling our houses with. However, with a closer thought, these practical concerns are tied to a specific cultural context. There are plenty of houses in the world which do not resemble boxes and which people living in them find functional. (5) Furthermore, new construction materials are taken into use all the time, and the possibilities of giving a house some other shape than a regular box are getting more and more realistic.

A more important set of constraints is due to the historical heritage of architecture. Architecture is tied to a canon that cannot be violated. This is what ultimately sealed the fate of *SOL World*. An office complex designed following the lead of a fairytale that was written for that particular purpose breaks against some powerful codes. The type of *Gesamtkunstwerk* Andersson and the rest of the team wanted to create gave rise to complete rejection. Now, this sort of a reaction does not really make sense purely in itself. One can surmise that there was something else at the background, perhaps something like a principle of "functional purity" which the opponents felt was threatened by the project.

The functionalism of 20th century western architecture represented a break away from older architectural canons. In this context, however, the existence of a canon and the political dynamics of guarding the canon are more important than what the canon consists of.

The fact that there are codes that can be broken is what has to be hidden.

A brief examination of the western architectural canon is fruitful at this point. I take up two important historical stages, using the guidance of historian of architecture Joseph Rykwert. First, the origins. (6) The term *kanōn* was adopted in classical Greece in the fifth century BC or thereabouts. It got a fixed meaning with reference to a rule or standard of excellence in the visual arts and architecture. The ancestry of the term is hoary, but at the background are meanings such as a measuring rod, a mason's level, or the beam of a balance. The proportions of the human body came to define a basic standard of the *kanōn* for the arts; sculptor Polykleitos made a particularly famous model of the canonical proportions of the human body.

The metaphoric similitude between proportions of the building and the human body played a central role in Greek architecture. According to Rykwert, the

Top: Adel Abidin, *Jibad*, 2006, video installation, 03'27. Photo by Heta Kuchka.

Top: Adel Abidin, *Jibad*, 2006, video installation, 03'27. Photo by Heta Kuchka.



proportions of the body formed the original model for the Greek 'Orders', that is, the original shapes of the Dorian and Ionian columns. Rykwert's interpretation is grounded in his reading of Vitruvius, a Roman architect whose extensive treatise *De architectura* is the only comprehensive classical text on architecture that has survived. Vitruvius composed the treatise sometime around 25 BC and dedicated it to Augustus,

the first Roman emperor. Vitruvius was not particularly successful as a practising architect. His importance lies in the written corpus in which he summarized the Greek legacy as far as it was known to the Romans of his era. But most importantly, Vitruvius gave an authoritative expression to the close intertwining of imperial power with architecture as its external facade. Cultural historian Indra Kagis McEwen has analyzed this

part of the Vitruvian legacy; she concludes, "To encase imperium in a stony skin as permanent and impermeable as that of the cuirassed statue of Augustus from Prima Porta: that, ultimately, is the point of assembling and ordering the knowledge Vitruvius calls *architectura* into a complete *corpus*. *De architectura*, the perfect body of empire." (7)

The Greco-Roman model dominated western architecture well into the

times of modernization and urbanization from the 18th century on. The Greek Orders, for instance, have a universal presence where-ever western civilization (as it is called) has consolidated the grip of its institutions over extensive lands, as testified by the façades of bank and post offices all across the United States and Australia, or railway stations in Stalin's Soviet Union. One would be hard put to find in the central parts of

Bottom: Adel Abidin, *52 Guaranteed Affection*, 2006, video installation. Photos by the artist.



any western city a view in which the Orders do not have a presence.

The pathway from the temples of Augustan Rome to the western city façade has not been straight, however. Another important stage in the consolidation of the architectural canon was the origin of modern architecture in the 18th century. (8) France occupies a central position in Rykwert's story. It is impossible to summarize his rich arguments in this context, but I take up one point which has echoes in the controversies aroused by the interventions of the duo Anderson & Pitkäranta into the contemporary architectural scene. Physician and architect Claude Perrault (1613-1688) redefined the terms of discussion by formulating an argument that there are two beauties in architecture: The first is a positive, an *a priori* beauty which is inherent in harmonious proportions and is evident to everyone. This view of Perrault was very much inspired by the ancients: among other achievements, he "made Vitruvius speak French" through a translation of *De architectura* in the 1670s. On the other hand, as Rykwert writes, "the secondary – or arbitrary –

beauty in architecture is produced and appreciated by the irrational faculty of taste, compounded by the most corruptible parts of human nature." The task of the architect, therefore, was to cultivate taste, guide it against corruptibility and waywardness.

A similar dichotomy is detectable behind the controversies of today. At stake is what is harmonious *a priori* and what, in contrast, is "irrational" and stems from "corruptible parts of human nature" (although few of the discussants would use quite these phrases). Where the boundary between primary and secondary beauty is drawn, and who does the drawing, has obviously an important effect on the shape of the possibility space of designing houses.

The experience of *SOL World* had a formative influence on the work of Andersson and Pitkäranta. As a follow-up, they established an artist-architect team called *Rosegarden Art & Architecture* which has become well known for its imaginative house and interior designs. Their guiding principle is to take into account the needs of the customers as comprehensively as possible. One of the first of Rosegarden's projects

was the cowshed *Kumina* ("cumin") designed for an ecological dairy farm (completed in 1997). The duo describes the project as follows: (9) "The interior of the house is designed so as to please the cows. We talked with the farmers and they gave a lot of detailed information of how the cows live, their habits and what they like. Since they like to be in the forest, we made the supporting construction of a bunch of old telephone poles. ... The cows can also have eye contact with each other, as well as with the calves, who are placed inside an oval fence in the centre of the building, around which the cows stand. And if they look up, they can see the stars at night, through a transparent plastic cover made of recycled greenhouse plastic in a part of the roof."

Another project which Andersson takes up in his theoretical text as a preparatory project for *Life on a Leaf* is the design for an extension building of a gardening high school; the building was called *Gerbera* (completed in 1998). The design utilizes the shape of *Gerbera* flower as its model. The central part of the "flower" serves as a winter garden and a space for leisure time, and

the "petals", arranged radially around the central space, host classrooms and the teachers' common room.

Ornaments have a central role in the interiors designed by *Rosegarden*. In this, the duo builds upon Andersson's previous work as a sculptor. They deliberately take a stand in favour of "secondary values" of architecture, to once more refer to the dichotomy articulated by Claude Perrault. The oeuvre of *Rosegarden* is thus an intervention into the field of evaluating architectural forms. Natural forms, particularly but not exclusively shapes of plants, provide important inspiration for the ornamental patterns they use. The guiding ideas often derive from wishes of the customers. For instance, the classrooms of *Gerbera* were given their individual character by ornamental patterns depicting different tree species, according to a wish of the teachers of the school.

Worlds

Nothing less is at issue with the project *Life on a Leaf* than the creation of a new world. Houses not only provide space for inhabitants, they also create inhabitants. This is what Gaston Bachelard

Bottom: Adel Abidin, *52 Guaranteed Affection*, 2006, video installation. Photos by the artist.



hinted at with the word "daydream" in the sentence Andersson cites in his theoretical text. So, against this background we are ready to formulate Andersson's answer to why there should be houses of the most imaginative shapes: Let people have a choice as to what kind of worlds they want their houses to give rise to.

On his homepage, Andersson describes the overall style of *Life on a Leaf* as follows: "The aesthetics of the house is departing from the Art Nouveau concept about the house as a shelter for an individual soul, opposed to the modernist concept of the house as a machine for living."

"A machine for living" is a powerful formulation of what Andersson stands in opposition to. In the real world, machines never are solely "for" something, as if neutral tools that can be exploited at will. Machines shape people – whoever doubts this had better watch Chaplin's *Modern Times* one more time. A house designed as a machine for living gives shape to people who are obedient to the logic of the machine. In his ethos of opposing such a vision, Andersson gets backing from Malvina

Reynold's song *Little Boxes* (10) which begins with the following verse:

*Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky,
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same.
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.*

Houses as "machines for living" support the maintenance of social order. A house is a 'microcosm'. This is an old dictum among anthropologists. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who began his career as a social anthropologist in Algeria, for instance, described the Kabyl house as follows: "The house, a microcosm organized by the same oppositions and homologies that order the universe, stands in a relation of homology to the rest of the universe." (11) There is certainly a long distance from the Kabyl house to the "little boxes on the hillside" in California Malvina Reynold sang about, but the principle is not that different. In the modern world, neutral boxes support a neutral-

ized, consumerist mentality.

Quite a few of Rosegarden's projects are also social experiments in the same sense that, for instance, social psychologist Stanley Milgram made experiments: Perform something totally unexpected and observe how people respond. (12) Both *SOL World* and *Life on a Leaf* can be viewed as social experiments. Architects did not pass the test particularly well in either case: the story of *SOL World* is familiar by now, and as to *Life on a Leaf*, one of the original supervisors of Andersson's doctoral project at the Academy of Fine Arts was an architect who, however, resigned after having acquainted himself with the project, on the grounds that architecture is not about "living in a picture". (13)

Primarily, however, the social experiments of *SOL World* and *Life on a Leaf* put bureaucracies to test. The city of Helsinki failed the test, but the city of Turku adopted a different posture. As Andersson tells in his diary, administrators of Turku concluded that the project is important for the city and gave city officials the task of finding a suitable site for the building. The of-

ficials succeeded remarkably well: the house is located close to the harbour of the city, opposite to Turku Castle (14) across the river Aurajoki which flows through the city. The site has interesting historical connections: among other things, Per Kalm's botanical gardens were situated in the vicinity in the 18th century. (15)

As a performance artist, Andersson has made social interventions which resemble Milgram's "experiments". In his *Teoriboken, Del 2* he tells about his long-term fascination with the shapes of tables. In his art projects, he has made experiments with different kinds of tables: through its shape and size, a table modifies the "possibility space" of social interactions among people who sit around it. Andersson wants to add another, sculptural dimension to a table as a functional artefact. His functionalism is ingrained in a much more ambitious understanding of "function" than is ordinarily the case. Functionalism in its accustomed guise is oblivious to the social context in which a particular "function" is enacted; instead, it is assumed that "functions" have an *a priori* essence. No wonder that such puri-

Adel Abidin, *Refusal*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 145 cm. Photo by the artist.

Next page: Adel Abidin, *Vacuum*, 2006, site-specific video installation: broken safety glass on white paper sheets, single channel video projection, 09'25. Photo by the artist.



fied, context-free functionalism found a soul mate in the early 20th century positivism. (16)

Nature has had a formative role for the project *Life on a Leaf* all along. In his *Teoriboken, Del 1* Andersson ponders upon the relationship between the interior of a house and nature outside. He rejects the model offered by a paradigmatic modernist house such as Mies van der Rohe's *Farnsworth House*, in which nature is an outsider, visible through the large glass walls. Instead, he wants to bring similes of natural elements inside the house, in the shape of wall supports resembling tree trunks, and ornaments using natural forms.

The windows of *Life on a Leaf* all have different shapes; there is a "dropwindow", "heartwindow", "leafwindow", "lipwindow" and "Melnikov-window" (the last one modelled after the windows of the house of architect Konstantin Melnikov in Moscow).

Play is another element that has had a formative role for *Life on a Leaf*. As usual, Andersson has written a set of stories that offer background for various features of the project. For instance, the location of the house is backed by a story about the Swedish King Eric XIV and his Finnish wife of humble origin, Kaarina Maununtytär who was the Queen of Sweden for a short while be-

fore her husband was dethroned. Eric was kept as a prisoner in Turku Castle in the early 1570s while Kaarina lived with their children in a cottage on the other side of the river. In Andersson's story, Eric is dreaming about his wife in the room where he is kept in the tower of the castle, and he kisses the glass window facing the river. A leaf attached on the other side of the window comes loose and is flown by the wind across the river, and the leaf lands on a small meadow close to the shoreline, surrounded by woods and cliffs.

The significance allocated to imagination and play in Andersson's projects resonates with how Joseph Rykwert praises the necessity of play in the constitution of human culture, including architecture. Rykwert writes about his interest in the architecture of classical Greece as follows: "The reader may have noticed that I have not considered aesthetic issues here in any case, because my concern is not primarily with *aisthēsis* – the way things are seen and perceived – but with *poiēsis*, the way they are made." (17) This might be taken as a motto for the project *Life on a Leaf*.

Agency

"Difficult to make, difficult to think, difficult to transact" – these attributes

of art objects, formulated by anthropologist Alfred Gell (see the epigram), seem apt for describing *Life on a Leaf* as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Houses are usually not regarded as works of art. This is a misperception that is largely due to Kantian aesthetics which drew a sharp distinction between works of art which are devoid of function and artefacts which serve a useful function. Such a distinction excludes houses at the outset: it is impossible to think of a house that is devoid of practical aims. But as Alfred Gell reminds us, this distinction would exclude from the realm of the arts basically everything other cultures than the modern West have produced. This, of course, is a grave misperception. Aesthetics as a philosophical worry about the essence of beauty is a modern invention, but all human cultures have always appreciated their own types of artefacts as works of art. (18)

Whether houses are artworks or not, they have had a central role in the constitution of human societies. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss coined the term 'house societies' to describe the role of the house in keeping together the social fabric of human cultures. His primary data came from the Northwest Coast Indian cultures of North America, but he mentioned

Next page: Adel Abidin, *Vacuum*, 2006, site-specific video installation: broken safety glass on white paper sheets, single channel video projection, 09'25. Photo by the artist.



the feudal noble house of Europe, the *io* house of Japan, and the house institutions of the cultures of island south-east Asia as analogues. (19) According to the argument of Lévi-Strauss, the house represented historically a transition from kin systems to systems of property in the development of complex societies. This argument is not so "evolutionist" as it may sound. As the editors of *About the House* point out in their introductory essay, Lévi-Strauss's idea provided a jumping-off point "towards a more holistic anthropology of architecture which might take its theoretical place alongside the anthropology of the body."

The idea has other implications which carry it even further toward the present riddles of what a house is. Roxana Waterson argues that "the 'house' concept is open to ideological exploitation in a great range of social formations." The role of the house opened up the possibility of "appropriation of cosmology by the ruling elite, as they attempted to make their own houses a more and more elaborate microcosm." (20)

These commentaries on Lévi-Strauss's ideas about the house have an uncanny echo with what Joseph Rykwert concludes about the Classical order in architecture, and this is not a mere

coincidence. It is against such a background that the project *Life on a Leaf* inspires us to raise questions about the anthropology of art and house *in the current world*. A major point is that a house has agency, a house does things. Alfred Gell speaks about the agency of artworks which arises through their effect on both the producers and the viewers. Works of art have agency because "objectification in artefact form is how social agency manifests and realizes itself, via the proliferation of fragments of 'primary' intentional agents in their 'secondary' artefactual forms." (21) Humans who make artefacts are 'primary' intentional agents, but the actual 'sec-

ondary' effects that the artefacts have later on are never completely under the control of the primary agents. This is particularly true of works of art which invite interpretation and response but are never amenable to being interpreted once and for all.

Furthermore, as Gell writes, "artworks are never just singular entities, they are members of categories of artworks, and their significance is crucially affected by the relations which exist between them, as individuals, and other members of the same category of artworks, and the relationship that exists between this category and other categories of artworks within a stylistic

Adel Abidin, *Refusal*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 145 cm. Photo by the artist.

Adel Abidin, *Refusal*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 145 cm. Photo by the artist.



- (1) Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 23.
 (2) Jan-Erik Andersson defended his thesis in October 2008. The thesis includes a substantial theoretical text (*Life on a Leaf, Teoriboken, Del 1 & 2*) and a diary in which Andersson has documented the stages of the project since its start in 1999 (*Life on a Leaf, Dagboken*); both are available on Andersson's homepage www.anderssonart.com/ (in Swedish; an English translation is under preparation).
 (3) The model is permanently on show in SOL's current headquarters in Helsinki; pictures can be viewed on Andersson's homepage.
 (4) Andersson tells the story of *SOL World* in his doctoral thesis.
 (5) Paul Olivier's *Dwellings. The Vernacular House World Wide* (Phaidon, 2003) presents a comprehensive overview.
 (6) Joseph Rywert, *The Dancing Column. On Order in Architecture* (MIT Press, 1996).

- (7) Indra Kagis McEwen, *Vitruvius. Writing the Body of Architecture* (MIT Press, 2003); the citation is on p. 298.
 (8) Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns. The Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (MIT Press, 1980); the citation is on p. 468.
 (9) On the homepage.
 (10) Written in 1962. *Little Boxes* got a Finnish second cousin in 1967, in the guise of a cabaret song called *A Song of One Thousand One-Room Flats*, written by Marja-Leena Mikkola.
 (11) Pierre Bourdieu, "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed"; an appendix to his *The Logic of Practice* (Polity Press, 1990).
 (12) Stanley Milgram (1933-1984) became famous (notoriously, as is sometimes thought) for his experiments on blind obedience conducted at the University of Yale in the early 1960s. He was also intensely interested in contemporary arts, and some of his "experiments" could actually be viewed

- as performances; such as: creating a crowd by standing at a street corner and pointing toward the sky at nothing at all; or, standing outside an art gallery applauding people as they pass by, thus inviting visitors to the gallery; and so on (for an accessible appreciation of Milgram's career, see Ian Parker: "Obedience", *Granta* 71 (2000), pp. 99-125).
 (13) His letter of resignation is cited in Andersson's diary.
 (14) Turku Castle was founded around 1280 and rebuilt in stone in the early 14th century. It was the main administrative centre of Swedish rulers in the early modern era; the castle was modernized in renaissance style during the reign of Gustavus Vasa in the 16th century.
 (15) Per Kalm (1716-1779) was a prominent Finnish student of Carl Linneus (later known as Carl von Linné). Kalm made a famous trip to North America (1748-1751), bringing back many plant species that were successfully acclimatized.

- (16) Historian of science Peter Galison analyzes the close intellectual ties between classical positivism and the utopian functionalism of the early 20th century in his article "Aufbau / Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism" (*Critical Inquiry*, 16(4), 709-752; 1990).
 (17) *The Dancing Column*, p. 384.
 (18) Alfred Gell, *The Art of Anthropology. Essays and Diagrams*, edited by Eric Hirsch (Berg, 1999).
 (19) Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks* (The University of Washington Press, 1982). A useful collection elaborating upon the idea is *About the House. Lévi-Strauss and Beyond*, Janet Carsten & Stephen Hugh-Jones, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 1995).
 (20) Roxana Waterson, "Houses and Hierarchies in Island Southeast Asia", in *About the House*; citations on p. 53 and p. 60.
 (21) *Art and Agency*, p. 21.
 (22) *Art and Agency*, p. 153.

whole – a culturally or historically specific art-production system." (22)

Andersson's artist friends whom he invited to prepare ornaments and separate artworks in and around the house *Life on a Leaf* have had a crucial role in giving the final shape to the project. They include Shawn Decker, who participates with a sound installation inside the house; Trudi Entwistle – an environmental artwork in the surroundings of the house; Frank Brümmel – the tiling of the pavement & a table outside the house; Susanna Peijari – a footprint sculpture on a ceiling inside the house;

Karin Andersen – a laminated image on the kitchen table; Pierre St-Jacques – a video work installed in a hole in the floor inside the house; Leah Oates – photographs fastened on structures inside the house; Amy Young & Kenneth Rinaldo – a lamp installation inside the house; Jan-Kenneth Weckman – a relief-image on the hearth of the house; Ismo Kajander – the frame of a sandpit shaped like a pea pod in the yard; Yuichiro Nishizawa – an installation inside the house; Kari Juutilainen – ornament on the air ventilation pipes; Jyrki Siukonen – a bird's house; Robert

Powell – a leaf house.

Getting together such a collective is a great achievement in its own right. Jan-Erik Andersson's work, as individualistic as it may seem, is embedded in a strong social consciousness. There is a strong programmatic element in Andersson's work: he makes a deliberate effort to widen the possibility space of designing houses. Supported by Erkki Pitkäranta, he wants to create cracks in the confines of established architecture as they have been defined by professional gatekeepers. He wants *Life of a Leaf* to serve this purpose, among all

the other purposes it is meant to serve.

Andersson ends the theoretical text of his thesis with the following thoughts: "(O)rnaments, art, and details are what gives a building its soul ... It is through developing this dimension further by one more step, not shying away from using figurative elements, sound, and fantasy or from developing co-operation between architects and artists that we can provide tools for creating living environments good for the future. An environment in which people live well is also an ecologically good environment." +



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Suzana Milevska on Sasha Huber

Is There Racism on the Moon?

I will not keep you in the dark: before I even start with the attempt to extrapolate a few relevant aspects of the project *Rentyhorn* let me offer to you a direct answer to the question that was not in the title for merely rhetoric reasons: Yes, there is racism on the Moon!

So let me break the news to you: not only a promontory (Cape – headland – triangular area of peaks) on the Moon but also a crater on Mars were named in honour of Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz (1807-1873), the famous Swiss glaciologist, palaeontologist and Harvard professor who was known for fostering problematic concepts about racial difference among people. (1) Obviously I did not discover anything novel – let's face it, racism is widely spread throughout our universe and not only can racists get away with it but they can still even have mountains named after them.

Of course, one could argue that Agassiz's achievements in geology, palaeontology and glaciology (in 1837 he was the first scientist to propose that the Earth had undergone an ice age) were more relevant to his worldwide fame and the celebration of his name. However, one cannot ignore the fact that his

notorious advocacy of polygenism (a belief that races came from separate origins and therefore were endowed with unequal attributes), added to his fame, particularly in the US where he moved in 1846.

Agassiz's contribution to racism was by no means unique for his newly established context of a flourishing career in the US. He lent his name and scientific credibility to racism, however, thus enforcing its legitimation. Moreover, today he is held responsible for the overall genre of *scientific racism*.

Both earthly and lunar geological mapping of racism brings forward amazingly disturbing facts. There are still mountains, towns, neighbourhoods and various institutions (mostly in the US) that bear the name of Louis Agassiz. (2) Swiss-Haitian artist Sasha Huber (currently based in Helsinki) succeeded in drawing the general public's attention to this issue in a controversial context: the particular campaign *De-mounting Agassiz* (Démonter Louis Agassiz) which was initiated by Hans Fässler. Through her project *Rentyhorn* (2008), Sasha Huber emphasised the urgency of discussing racism in Europe

and moreover, of looking for ways to stand up against it.

She followed up the already existing initiative to change the name of the well known peak named after Agassiz with a proposal to call it 'Rentyhorn', after the name of a Congolese slave, a proposal which she has since distributed to many institutions and relevant individuals (such as Kofi Annan).

This particular name was proposed on the basis of a photograph (daguerrotype) of Renty, which was commissioned by Agassiz to serve as proof of his belief that there was unbridgeable difference between Afro-Americans and people with white skin. Renty's photograph belongs to the long tradition of photographic representation of the 'inferior Other' and therefore deserves the central role in Huber's project.

The photograph taken on a plantation in South Carolina in the 1850s was used by Agassiz to illustrate his theory that blacks were supposedly inferior to whites, but at the same time it became a monument to the manipulative power of the scientific implantation of various meanings to images.

By proposing the new name for

the peak, 'Rentyhorn', Huber expands the discussion on racism in an additional direction that is still closely related to but slightly narrows down the general debate on racist views, namely she brings forward also the discussion of the phenomenon of slavery. It is almost impossible to encompass all implications of slavery by simply pointing out to one single photograph and one particular slave. However, the most important factor here is that the proper name of the slave in the photograph was known and could have been traded for the name of the 'master'.

Sasha Huber's Haitian background serves here, however, as more than a mere point of reference. Her project is profoundly motivated by the troubled past of the Haitian slavery resistance movement and its goals. (3) 'The goal of *this* liberation, *out* of slavery, cannot be subjugation of the master in turn, which would be merely to repeat the master's 'existential impasse', but, rather, elimination of the institution of slavery altogether.' (4)

Sasha Huber's video performance *Rentyhorn* and the exhibition in Helsinki (which among the other archival ele-

Sasha Huber, *Rentyhorn – The intervention*,
21.8.2008, Digital c-Print, 75x51 cm.
Photograph by Siro Micheroli.



Sasha Huber, *Rentyhorn*, 2008, video installation, duration 4'30".



(1) *Wendmag*, "A Mountain, By Any Other Name, Would Reak Less of Racism" Wend Adventure Inspired Activism, posted October 5th, 2008 by kyle. Accessed 14 January 2009 <<http://www.wendmag.com/blog/2008/10/05/a-mountain-by-any-other-name-would-reak-less-of-prolific-racism/>>.

(2) According to Wikipedia the following places still bear Agassiz' name: Agassiz Glacier, the Glacier National Park, Montana, USA; Agassiz, a small community located in British Columbia's

Fraser Valley, USA; Mount Agassiz, 13,899 feet high peak in California; Agassiz Township in Lac qui Parle County, Minnesota, USA; Agassiz Peak, San Francisco Peaks, the second highest mountain of the U.S. state of Arizona at 12,356 feet; Lake Agassiz, USA; Mount Agassiz in California's Palisades; Mount Agassiz, Utah, in the Uinta Mountains; Agassiz Peak in Arizona; and Agassiz Glacier and Agassiz Creek in Glacier National Park. In addition, several animal species have been named

for him, including *Apistogramma agassizi* (Agassiz's dwarf cichlid), *Isocapnia agassizi* (Ahassiz snowfly), and *Gopherus agassizii* (desert tortoise).

(3) Buck-Morss, Susan (2000). "Hegel and Haiti", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 4., 821-865. In her paper Susan Buck-Morss discusses in full length Hegel's master-slave dialectics by bringing in breaking news that this dialectics was not only a philosophical concept deriving of Hegel's baby steps in speculative dialectics: she actually estab-

lishes a direct historic link between the famous Hegel's "master-slave" concept coined in his *Phenomenology of Mind* and the insurgencies of Haitian slaves.

(4) Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1967). *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Trans. J. B. Baillie 234, qtd in Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," p. 848.

(5) A concept developed by the post-Marxist theorist David Harvey, e.g. in his *The New Imperialism* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

ments included the video record of the performance executed on Agassizhorn) call for a very small effort to take this urgent step forward to make a clear-cut break with racist discourse and to overcome the 'Agassiz gap'. Her project transfers the whole debate to the art circles and thus allows us to address the issue from within the future, supposedly a time without Agassiz's 'peaks'.

What Sasha Huber actually recorded was her flight in a helicopter over the Agassizhorn at the end of August 2008 when she successfully landed on the peak and put a plate on it in memory of the slave Renty. In the video the Agassizhorn looks like any other mountain peak: high, cold and snow-white. Only

when Sasha Huber had chosen this particular peak to be the location of her very simple, but difficult-to-organise action, it became obvious that the peak had been for a very long time more than just a peak. It stood there as an allegory of the failure of human race to come to terms with its own shortcomings.

By not making the decision to change the peak's name, the Swiss federal government only proves that humans have yet to climb the mountain of democracy, mutual understanding and tolerance towards difference. It turns out that for humans it is much more difficult to accomplish such a reflective and critical break with the troubled past than to undertake any extraordinary

new scientific experiment and make splendid discoveries for the future.

Back in 2002, the Cambridge elementary school north of Harvard University known as Agassiz (located in a neighbourhood that continues to be known as Agassiz) was renamed as the Maria L. Baldwin School, in honour of the African-American principal of the school throughout 1889-1922. It actually happened on the initiative of an eighth-grader, Nathaniel Vogel, that the name of the school was changed. The renaming initiatives, regardless of how naïve and formal they may appear at first sight, regardless of whether they have been successful or remain uncompleted, have a special place in the 'mys-

tic writing pad' of history.

The constant overwriting of the historic mistakes of humankind can use the renaming procedure as a mnemonic tool wherein new names make way for new meanings. However, the power of renaming things, persons, toponyms, states, animals, etc. is on the edge of playing the game of 'accumulation by dispossession' (5) at large stakes. Therefore it comes as no surprise that Agassizhorn is still one of the highest items on the shelf of the democratic wish to discontinue the production of racial bigotry that is unfortunately still out of our reach and in hands of people who either undermine the relevance of names or overrate it. +

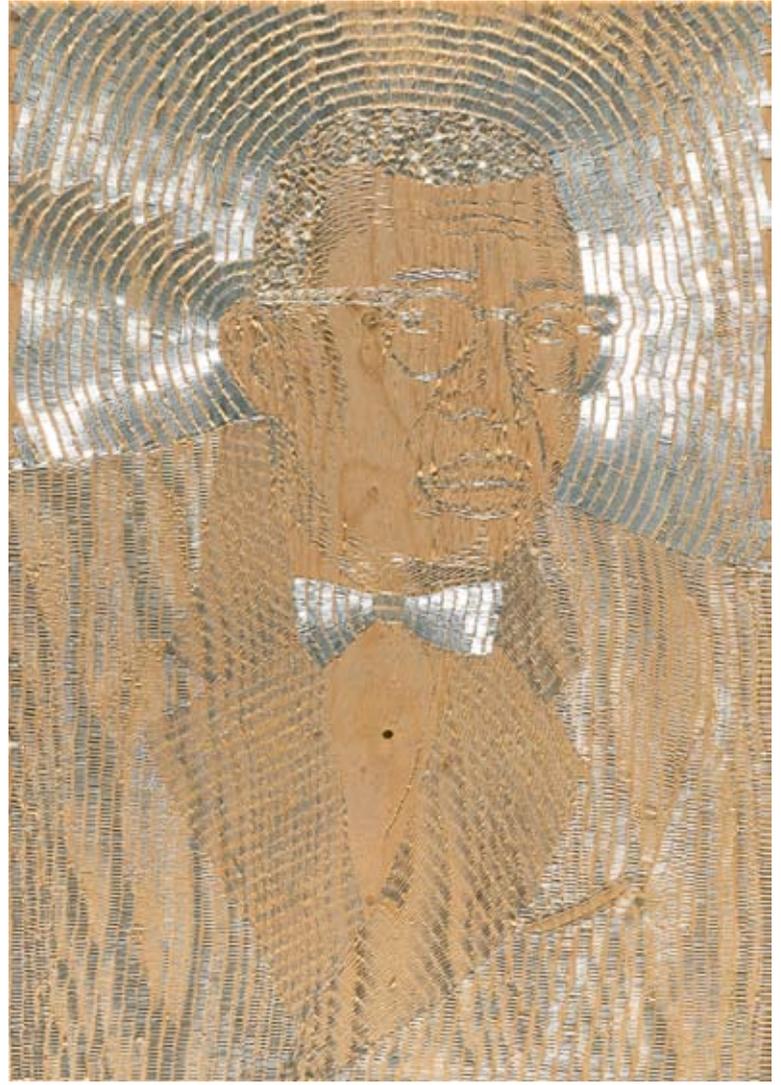
Sasha Huber, *The Rentyhorn metal plaque*, 2008, engraved aluminium on wood, 33x31.5 cm.



Sasha Huber, *Christopher Columbus (Conqueror, 15th Century)*, 2004, metal staples shot onto abandoned wood, 80x115cm.



Sasha Huber, *Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier (Dictator of Haiti, 1957-71)*, 2004, metal staples shot onto abandoned wood, 80x115 cm.



Hans Fässler on Sasha Huber

Blame it on Toussaint Louverture. Hold Haiti responsible. Say it happened by chance. But then, says a black Martinican friend living in Paris, there is no coincidence. ‘Nothing happens by accident,’ she says, and pulls from her handbag an old, tattered copy of the *Code Noir* of 1685. ‘What am I?’, she asks and answers the question herself, quoting article 44 of the French slave code, enforced until 1848: ‘Moveable property, chattel, a thing’.

So, it was not by chance that I came across Sasha Huber. Our paths were bound to cross. I had written a book on Swiss participation in slavery and the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, and Papa Legba, the voodoo god of crossroads, arranged for a copy of it to get into the hands of her sister and for an e-mail to get onto the hard disk of her Haitian mother’s computer.

Sasha contacted me in 2006, telling me about her *Shooting Back Portrait Series*. As I looked at the tens of thousands of staples forming the face of Papa Doc Duvalier, I thought of the hours I had spent on the veranda of the Olofson Hotel in Port-au-Prince, where Graham Greene had written his stunning novel *The Comedians* about the era of that bloody potentate. I looked at the tens of thousands of staples forming the face of his son Baby Doc Duvalier, and thought of the seven million francs which he had stolen from the Haitian people and stowed away on a Swiss bank account, where they still remain.

I met Sasha for the first time in the summer of 2006, and it was one of those strange and, at the same time, intriguing ‘transatlantic’ gatherings that I have since come to accept as being part of my political work. The place was a

bar in Wil, an obscure little town on the railway line from Zurich to Munich. There was Barnabas Bosshart, the world-renowned Swiss photographer, who had turned from fashion in London to the harsh realities of everyday life in China and South America. He was now living in Maranhão in northeastern Brazil. That was where some of the slave-produced cotton processed in Switzerland around 1800 had come from. He had returned to Switzerland to prepare an exhibition of his photographic art in Winterthur. ‘You can still see the huts where the slaves who produced your cotton lived’, he said.

And there was Sasha.

She talked about her Haitian grandfather George Ramponeau, the well-known illustrator and painter, who had contributed in the 1950s and 1960s to a style called ‘indigenism’ with works

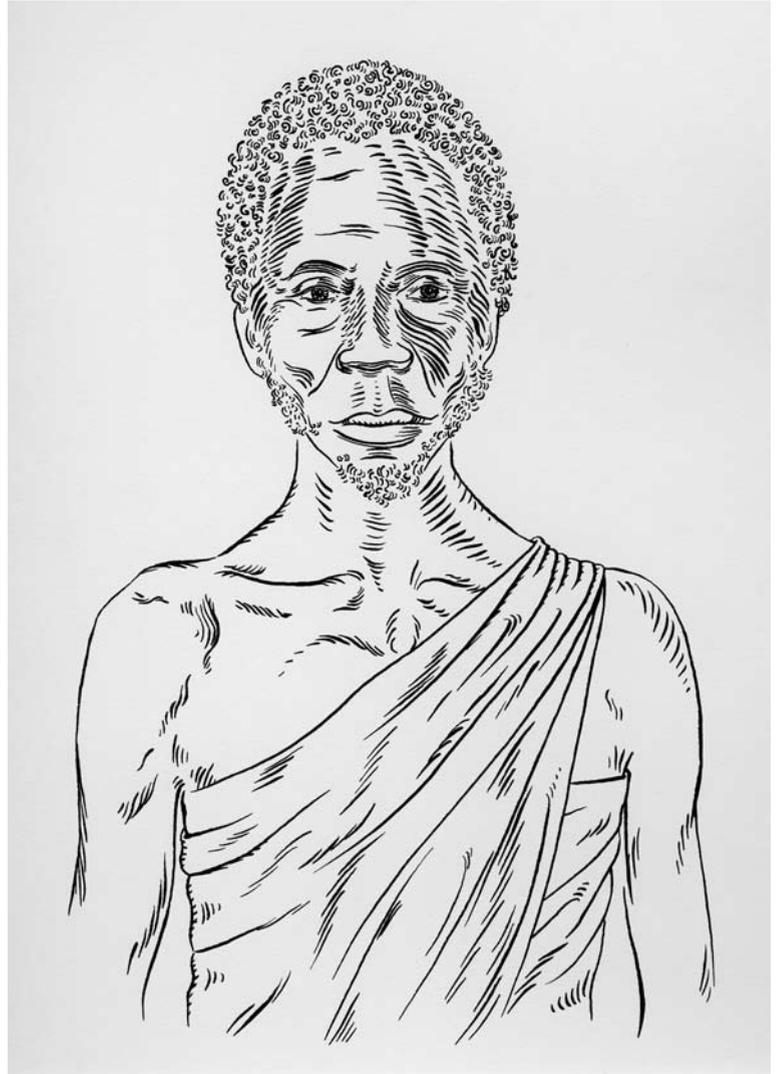
describing Haitian market scenes, landscapes, and genre painting. She told me about Zurich, where she was born, about Helsinki, where she now lived, about her work as an artist and a designer, and about Haiti, where she longed to go. I told her about St Gallen, my obscure little hometown on the railway line from Zurich to Munich.

A year later, Neuchâtel, a city in the French-speaking part of Switzerland which – on account of its numerous links with slavery and the slave trade – might be called ‘the Liverpool of Switzerland’, commemorated the 200th birthday of Louis Rodolphe Agassiz (1807–1873). An exhibition at the local museum of natural history highlighted his achievements as a founder of academic institutions, as a Swiss-American zoologist, as a researcher of fossil fish, as a champion of glaciology, as a pop star

Sasha Huber, *Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier (Dictator of Haiti, 1971-86)*, 2004, metal staples shot onto abandoned wood, 80x115 cm.



Next page: Sasha Huber, *Renty in traditional African clothing*, 2008, ink drawing on paper, 30x40 cm.



The writer is a grammar school teacher of English and History in Trogen (Canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden) in Switzerland. His various projects deal with Switzerland's links with Haiti, slavery and the slave trade. In 2007 he launched the campaign to have the 'Agassizhorn' in the Swiss Alps renamed 'Rentyhorn'. *Language editing Susan Heiskanen.*

of 19th century natural science. The little village of Môtier, where Agassiz was born a pastor's child in 1807, celebrated its greatest son, and the Swiss press told the story of the founding of the American National Academy of Sciences in 1863, when – according to a painting on the signing of the academy's charter – Agassiz was standing right next to President Lincoln.

And of course they told the story of the Alpine peak nearly 4000 metres above sea level on the boundary between the cantons of Berne and Valais which had been given the name of 'Agassizhorn' in the 1840s. But not a word was written on the fact that Agassiz had also been one of the world's most influential racists and a pioneering thinker of apartheid.

I had devoted a whole chapter of my 2005 book *Reise in Schwarz-Weiss* (Trav-

els in Black and White) to Agassiz the Racist. I had told the story of Agassiz's first encounter with an African American in a Philadelphia hotel in 1846, and of what he wrote to his mother about it: "I can scarcely express to you the painful impression that I received, especially since the sentiment that they inspired in me is contrary to all our ideas about the confraternity of the human type and the unique origin of our species. [...] I experienced pity at the sight of this degraded and degenerate race, and their lot inspired compassion in me in thinking that they are really men. Nonetheless, it is impossible for me to repress the feeling that they are not of the same blood as us. In seeing their black faces with their thick lips and grimacing teeth, the wool on their head, their bent knees, their elongated hands, their large curved nails, and especially the livid colour of

the palms of their hands, I could not take my eyes off their faces in order to tell them to stay far away."

Among Agassiz's friends was the notorious Dr. Samuel George Morton, who was then trying to prove the inferiority of the 'black race' by measuring the contents of skulls, thereby concluding that the volume of the 'black brain' was smaller than that of the 'white brain'. And among Agassiz's friends was Dr. Gibbes, a South Carolina slave owner and admirer of Morton, who offered him the unique possibility to analyse specimens of African slaves as if he were studying petrified fish in the Swiss Alps. 'Agassiz', Gibbes wrote, 'was delighted with his examinations of Ebo, Foulah, Gullah, Guinea, Coromantee, Mandingo and Congo Negroes,' and found enough evidence to 'satisfy him they have differences from other races.'

Agassiz hired a photographer from Columbia, J.T. Zealy, and of his many daguerrotype slave portraits, six have survived – to stare at us and to haunt us.

One of those Congo slaves on that South Carolina plantation was called 'Renty', or at least that is the name by which he has survived. When I saw his picture, when I looked at his worn-out body, his face empty and yet telling the story of a hundred years, I remembered that mountain in the Swiss Alps. It was carrying the name of someone who had strongly believed that racial intermixture was a 'sin against nature', who had spoken of the 'submissive, obsequious, imitative negro' and of the 'scientific duty' to establish a hierarchy among the 'races', and who had spread the thesis that in Africa had never developed 'a civilised society of black people'. This seemed intolerable to me, and so



I launched the campaign *Demounting Louis Agassiz*, which suggested – as a strong Swiss signal against racism – taking that mountain away from Agassiz and renaming it ‘Rentyhorn’ in honour of one of Agassiz’s victims.

Among the members of the *Transatlantic Committee* which I put together for my campaign, there were a Swiss pastor living in Nicaragua, a Danish TV-journalist, a Senegalese philosopher, a French novelist, a Swiss feminist economist and activist for apartheid reparations, and Barnabas Bosshart, the photographer.

And there was Sasha.

The campaign proved a great success during the first year. Dozens of newspaper articles appeared, radio and TV stations showed interest, scientific debates were launched, members of the Swiss federal Parliament took up the cause, and even the Swiss government was compelled to take a stand on the question of Agassiz’s racism.

Yet in the summer of 2008, the campaign seemed to be flagging. The media pack had moved on to other hunting grounds, the local authorities as well as the cantonal and the federal governments had refused to have the ‘Agassizhorn’ renamed, and interna-

tional pressure proved immensely difficult to build up.

But then, in August 2008, Sasha Huber booked a flight from Helsinki to Zurich, hired a helicopter, flew to the summit of the ‘Agassizhorn’, rammed a memorial plaque for ‘Renty’ into the snow and wrote a letter to Kofi Annan, who in his reply of December 5th expressed his appreciation and wished her ‘luck in her future endeavours’. Art had come to the rescue of politics, and the campaign was back on track, just in time to see the product of what Agassiz had considered repulsive ‘racial miscegenation’ being elected President of

the United States of America. On the petition website www.rentyhorn.ch, launched in September 2008, signatures and addresses of solidarity were pouring from cities and obscure little towns across the globe, from Finland and Switzerland to Burkina Faso to South Africa to Chile to Haiti to Djibouti to Kirgistan.

And, what’s more, Sasha gave Renty, the Congolese slave denuded by Agassiz to confront the cold eye of the ‘scientific’ camera, his dignity back by drawing him in traditional African clothing. She has my undivided admiration for that idea. +

Sasha Huber A Statement

A central starting point for my work as an artist is examining my roots and how they influence the process of building up my personal and artistic identity. In the early sixties my grandfather, artist George Remponeau gradually moved his family to New York as living in the dictator-led Haiti had become alarmingly dangerous. My Swiss father met my Haitian-born mother in New York in the early seventies. I grew up in Zurich, Switzerland but nowadays I live and work in Helsinki, Finland.

Being of mixed-heritage Haitian

and European roots, unable to visit my mother’s homeland – Haiti – because of security risks, I ally myself with the Caribbean Diaspora. I want to express political criticism by combining it with an aesthetic rendering of the subject matter.

I started off my identity work feeling upset with the historical injustice embedded in colonialism. *Shooting back* is a triptych portrait of, first of all, Christopher Columbus – the Western hero who killed 3 to 4 million Arawak Indians after arriving in 1492 in Hispaniola, later called Haiti. The two other personas in the

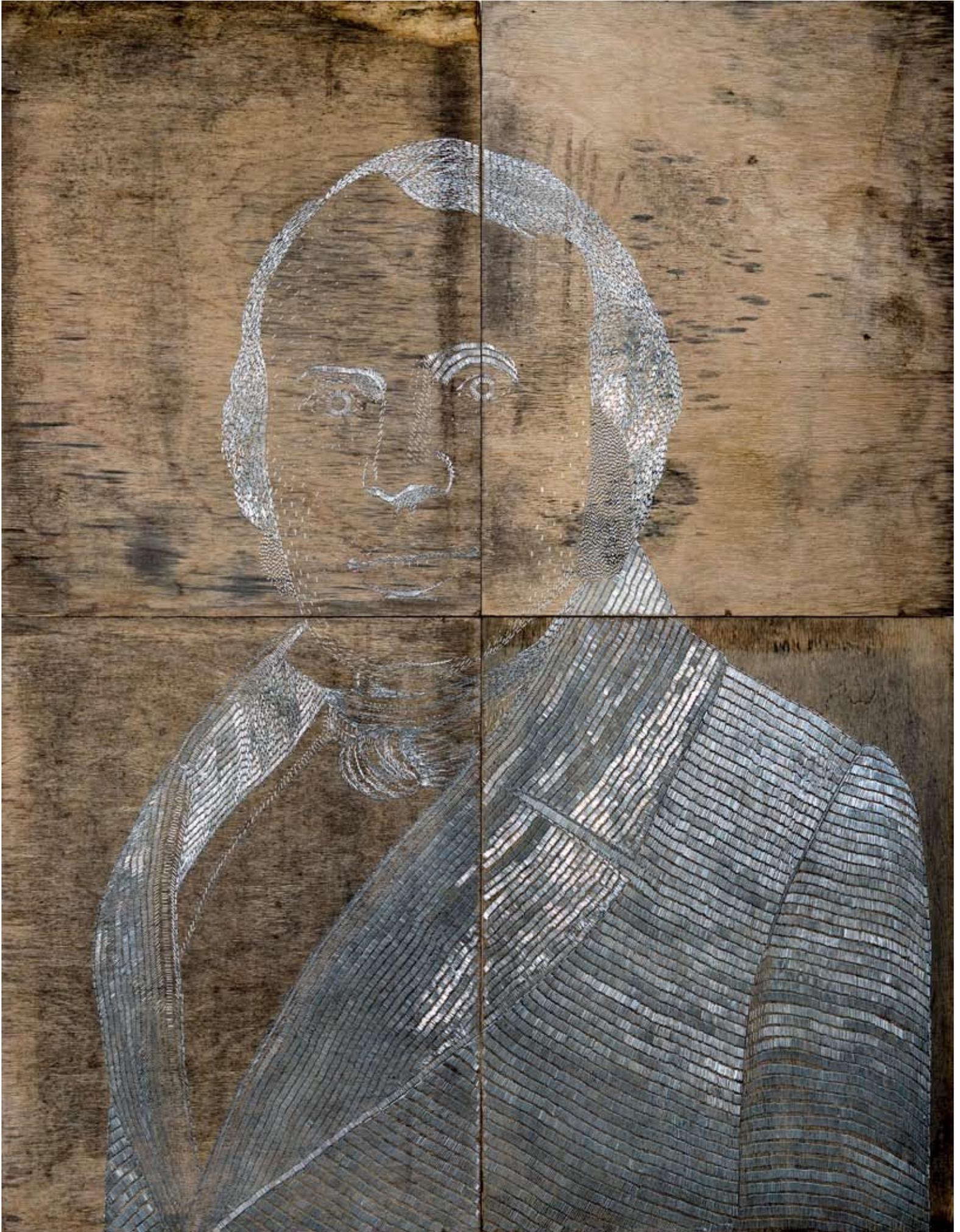
work are the Haitian dictators ‘Papa Doc’ and his son ‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier. I fired some 80 000 staples with a staple gun on found driftwood – my revenge was to literally nail the dictators. I later applied the same technique to other works, like the portrait of the executor of North American Indians and black people, the last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam (1647–1664), Peter Stuyvesant. The city is today called New York and is also one of the homes of my extended family.

My attitude to work has transformed from anger management to-

wards a quest for understanding, like in the case with endangered gorillas as a subject. I am also striving for a more interactive dialogue by means of intervention. Flying to Agassizhorn, a mountain in the Swiss Alps named after the Swiss naturalist and racist Louis Agassiz, and renaming it Rentyhorn after a slave he used in his research was one such action. My art became part of the international anti-racist campaign De-mountain Louis Agassiz, an effort to rename the mountain Rentyhorn for good and thus reshape collective identities. +

Previous page: Sasha Huber, *Rentyhorn – The intervention*, 21.8.2008, Digital c-Print, 75x51 cm. Photograph by Siro Micheroli.

Sasha Huber, *Louis Agassiz (1807-1873)*, 2008, metal staples shot onto abandoned wood, 115x150 cm.



The writer is independent writer, curator and associate editor of *Metropolis M* magazine based in Amsterdam. *Language editing Susan Heiskanen.*

Maxine Kopsa on Jani Ruscica

On Pulling the Viewer

Someone once told me about a short animation in which the protagonist, fiddling in front of the bathroom mirror, picks at the odd hairs of his beard. He finds a good one, partially ingrown, and pulls. And pulls and pulls while, after minutes of constant yanking, this one impossibly long hair twists around his body and envelops him almost completely. Then, all of a sudden, he reaches the follicle and – pop – the hair is deliciously freed.

I thought of this last night while I was pulling the hairs out of the shower drain. The same peculiar (sick?) feeling of satisfaction can arise, I think, from both these domestic activities: plucking at ingrown hairs and wrenching the seemingly incessant clumps out of your shower drain. With each little tug you get closer to the cleansed objective but at the same time you don't want it to end – you want the promise of fulfilment to go on and on. Different from the odd facial hair, the hairs found in drains carry more 'abjectional' worth, thanks not only to their definitive separation from the human body but also to their altered state – tucked away

beneath the shower floor they manage to become an inexplicably organic grey mass. Amazingly vile.

You'll be asking yourselves now why I mention drain hairs here and what they could possibly have to do with Jani Ruscica's work. Of course I have my reasons. But I think more importantly than any rational argumentation, I should admit that while crouched over the drain not thinking of anything but the tasty task at hand, Ruscica popped into my thoughts, unannounced. I believe an uninvited guest is often the best kind so shaking its unsolicited hand I followed my intuition and can sum up its visit in two words: Organic Satisfaction. I don't have to stick to only two words, though, I can use a whole murky sentence: Jani Ruscica's films exercise a power to pull you in, lock you – seduce you – into watching and, like with a flowing, undulating, gripping song, or an incredibly long ingrown hair, you hope they won't end.

A young girl carefully traces a white chalk line across the concrete floor of a large, empty enclosed space. She is

spot lit and the camera follows at close range, first her hand and the piece of chalk and then pans out to include her whole figure. 'This version begins here', she says in Finnish and looks up at the camera, at us. 'This line represents the biological timeline of the universe.' 'It's exact. Absolute.' She is barefoot and wearing white pants, a chequered blouse, her blond hair is held back by one barrette. She never stops tracing. The line gets longer, the camera pans out and the spot light allows for a wider circle. She's still drawing the line, crouched over, moving slowly step by step away from us when she says: 'There, we just broke 3 million years.' A few centimetres later, her head still bowed down, she tells us she is born 'here' on 22 April 1991 on Crete. And then she reaches the back rim of the spotlight, she stands up to face us: 'And this is now.' Cut.

Evolutions (2008) is an 18-minute single channel video work comprising seven stories. Seven encounters with young people between the ages of 12 and 19 who, each, in turn, lead the viewer as a guide would, pulling him slowly

through time. Intimately. The setting is always similar. Always the empty space, theatrically lit, spots flashing on props depicting parts of the story. Ilmari's for example starts off with him dexterously playing a video game. The time is 12.46 and 10 minutes ago he broke his own record, he boasts. We follow him into an adjoining space, he continues speaking with the camera (us) close behind him, saying, in present tense that he is 6 and that he receives the book *Our Globe*, which 'captivates' him. And, he adds, his sister is born, which is 'amazing'. He turns and motions us to look to his right, which we do, or the camera does, to where his sister (presumably about 5 years old) sits in a red dress cross-legged on the black floor, brightly lit from above, reading a picture book. She doesn't look up for she is a part of the set, she is part of Ilmari's story. Suddenly the lights go off, the screen goes dark and for a second we are left alone, until, close-up facing us, our narrator reappears. 'I'm now 4 and I've learned how to read', he informs us without skipping a beat. 'The pictures I've chosen there have helped me to

Jani Ruscica, *Evoluutioita* (Evolutions), 2008, 16mm film transferred to digital beta and HD, single channel, stereo sound.



Jani Ruscica, *Evoluutioita* (Evolutions), 2008, 16mm film transferred to digital beta and HD, single channel, stereo sound.



grasp the galaxy.' 'There' is, we see, 'his room', pictured here as another prop: a bed with a skeleton head patterned duvet, strewn with books full of images of the galaxy and the theory of evolution. 'That's enough', he soon tells the camera and we leave the bedroom. Still walking forward, moving backwards in time, he mentions that 'now' is when a meteorite hit the Gulf of Mexico and that the dinosaurs died out 'here', and a few seconds (steps) later, that 'this' is the birth of the universe. For the first time we are given a glimpse of the floor: at our narrator's feet we see we have come to the end of the chalk line once again, to the beginning of it all, to when it was 'all dark'. Ilmari looks off screen and yells out: 'Would you turn off the lights'.

Galaxies, universes, dinosaurs, meteorites, little sisters, books, and video games. We are moving here amidst the basics, the fundamentals of life. Amidst it ALL, really, not only in terms of the inconceivably BIG and BEYOND – 'our

solar system – but amidst the make-up of the smaller and the daily: social connections, human behaviour, personal mythologies.

In 1977 Charles and Ray Eames made a film called *Powers of Ten* for IBM, when IBM must have seemed like a potential key to the futuristic future. What you see in this 10 minute film is a portrait of the relative size of things in the universe. From the close-up of a detail of a couple having a picnic in a park, the camera moves steadily upwards to show the park, the city, the country, the continent, the earth up, up, up past stars and planets and galaxies to, ultimately, 10 to the power of 24 or 100 million light years away (approximately halfway into the film). Pure darkness. Nothing? After 'resting' there suspended momentarily like a thrown ball at its maximum height, the camera begins to redescend, more quickly now, past the same galaxies, planets, stars, eventually returning to the same park and the same blanket

and the same reclining couple. Now, though, the journey continues to zoom in past the details of their lunch onto and into the man's hand as it lies across his chest. At 10^{-1} we enter the human body getting an abject close-up of his skin's lines, his pores, at 10^{-5} , his cells, and finally after leaving his molecular DNA string and finally his carbon nucleus 10^{-16} or 0.000001 Angstroms behind, we reach, again, pure darkness: the end, or as we are of course meant to assume: the beginning?

Interestingly, each step in the power of ten, back and forth, is demarcated by a graphically illustrated white rectangle, not unlike the chalk line our youngsters were drawing on the floor of Ruscica's set.

'Unfolding' we learn in the last credits of *Evolutions*, is another term for 'evolution'. And unfold Ruscica's work certainly does, accurately collapsing time onto itself, folding it in and out like an accordion, seven times over, elegantly overlapping, carefully cross-

referencing. But *Evolutions* might also have been called 'Cosmologies'. For cosmology as the 'metaphysical study of the origin and nature of the universe' and its related phrases (Hindu cosmology, plasma cosmology, Buddhist cosmology, physical cosmology, Atacama cosmology, supernova cosmology, metaphysical cosmology, Iroquois cosmology) incorporates the machinations of belief systems in its 'unfolding'. While looking for and at the overall structure of the physical universe, cosmology is both specific and grand. It covers the beginnings of the universe – it covers IT ALL – and allows man to play but one of the many significant roles.

Ruscica, you could boldly and somewhat audaciously say, is fascinated by Man and his World. More specifically, you could say he is interested in location, in how one defines one's location, one's placement in the world, and how this definition changes – continuously, if necessary – according to personal, cultural or even scientific factors.

Jani Ruscica, *Evoluutioita* (Evolutions), 2008, S16mm film transferred to digital beta and HD, single channel, stereo sound.

Next spread, left: Jani Ruscica, *Batbox – take one*, 2006-2007, DVcam transferred to digital beta, single or double channel with 5.1 surround sound, duration 8'50".

Next spread, right: Jani Ruscica, *Batbox – alternate take*, 2007, S16mm film transferred to digital beta, single or double channel with 5.1 surround sound. Photos by Sini Pelkki.



Batbox/Beatbox (2008) is a two part video work, which joins and compares bat and human habitats. Part one, *Batbox, Take One*, takes place in a dark cave in England, where small bats are being scientifically scrutinized by a young chiroptologist. We watch as he carefully weighs, pulls, prods, measures and categories various species. He speaks to himself or to us as he works. In the next scene we are out of the cave. As though from the bat's viewpoint, we are in a dark forest, trees, shrubs and ground lit now and again by the strong beam of a flashlight. We hear the shrill squeaks of bats all around, testing, measuring. As the viewer you realize that this is their habitat, this is their location and this is them in the midst of defining it.

Part two is called *Beatbox, Alternate Take*. Now, in New York City instead of the woodlands of Dorset, the incredibly charming spoken word artist D'Janau Morales a.k.a. Vocab works together with beatboxers Kid Lucky and Shockwave to mirror the

bats' echolocation – first in words, as a poem, and then in pure sound. *Beatbox* opens with Vocab, on a sunny city street, telling us, the camera, close-up, her story. She starts telling about the subway, about the rhythm and the times of the subways, of the people waiting on the platforms. Of their 'Heads bobbing in....and..... out.' Of the 'visual poetry with their headbobbing'. Her voice is like syrup, she moves to the beat as she talks (sings? rhymes?) she smiles, she pauses, she lengthens a word, stops short on a K, draws out an M. And while 'they' watch the commuters on the train, she says, they 'like to look the other way, because [they] have all the time in the world.' 'All the beats to write a move to.' Just like the bats can use sound as a tool to locate themselves, they 'read the wrinkle lines on people's faces [instead of the paper] to tell [them] what's really happening'. Vocab finishes her poem and we're launched into the next scene, into the dark of what looks like a

basketball court at night. Maybe three (or more) beatboxers, on occasion lit by the strong beam of a flashlight, sometimes alone, sometimes standing together, mimic the sound of the bats' echo. Base beats, shrill long shrieks, short yelps and the swoosh of the bats' wings. Like the bat, they test the geography of their environment, measure the distance between the metal fence and the first tree branch, the concrete cracks on the ground and the parked car. It's all a relation to habitat. It's all a matter of placement and perspective.

Batbox/Beatbox, like *Evolutions*, like all of Ruscica's films, is meticulous in both image and sound. This portrayal of both the bat and the human claiming their social, natural position is lusciously heaving with spectacular close-ups of bat wings and rhyming beatboxing faces and bodies, with elegant shots of bats in mid-flight and people moving to their own rhythms. And always, always sharp, scrupulously incisive sound.

'Eventually, everything connects', Charles Eames said and to pay due honour, not only to him, but to Ruscica, I should return for a second to the long, now perhaps lost, ingrown hair. That grey mass coming back out the other way of the drain or the endless ingrown hair, both so satisfyingly organic, both so repulsively attractive, are *base* – 'base' in a Georges Bataille kind of way, base in terms of 'base materialism'. The stuff of matter and intuitive thought. Unquestionably part of us and yet continuously denied proper membership into the acceptably social, this is – Ruscica's films are – Man and his World, in broad, sweeping terms. Where the hair meets the hand that tugs it there rests the connection of the social and the natural. We navigate in the world with words, with sounds, through the making of diagrams and through the tugging at unwanted-wanted hairs. Ruscica knows this and shows us the beautiful underbelly of human cosmology. +



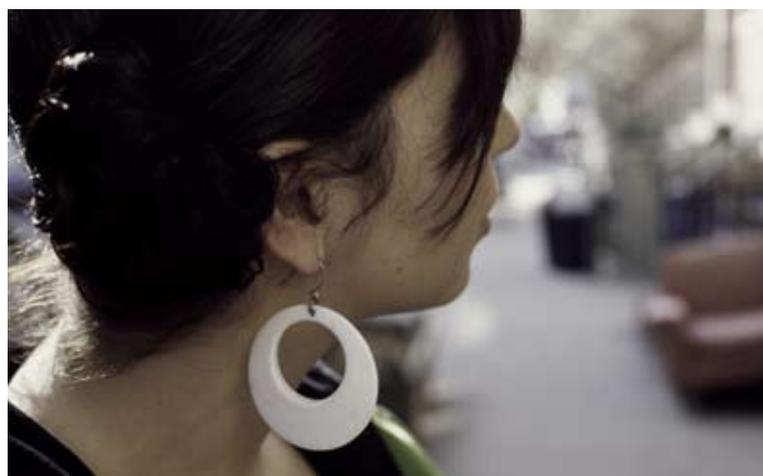
Kari Yli-Annala on Jani Ruscica About the Creation of Worlds

The writer is Helsinki-based artist, researcher and lecturer in the tradition of the artists' moving image. *Translated by Susan Heiskanen.*

I am about to meet Jani Ruscica at his exhibition at the Kluuvi Gallery managed by the Helsinki City Art Museum. Before he shows up, I drift into a conversation with a Finnish artist-politician who is greatly impressed by the works at the exhibition. When the artist arrives, my partner in conversation presents a hypothetical question whether the artist could make a similar personal profile of her as well. I am not surprised at the question. Ruscica's works are often unobjectionably empowering in a certain way that naturally brings out the forces of change which open out from the potential of the subjects portrayed. They are all about community, the collectivity of things and the ethos of collectivity itself. These are also themes for politics, where a connection to people and solutions to collective questions are commonly sought.

Black box
Evolutions (2008, S16MM film transferred to digital beta, 18'20"), made in the form of a short film and projected on a screen in a gallery space, is a work drawing on the methods of installation, experimental theatre and dialogical art in which young people between the ages of 12 and 19 speak of their world-views, the birth of the universe, evolution and life. The monologues Ruscica has written for the work are based on a dialogue born with the young people in interviews. The work has been filmed in a 'black box' of an empty studio space.

The phenomenal interaction between darkness and light is present in the work's reduced mise-en-scène where the set design and the direction have been focused to underscore the form of exhibition, which carries elements of theatre and installation. 'In a studio



everything can be changed', says Ruscica. All in all, teenage is a time when people build their own relationship to the world, and their own place and perspective in it. In the *Microcosm* series of photographs (2008, c-prints mounted on dipond aluminum, white wooden frame 40 x 40 cm / photographs 16 x 25 cm), a companion piece to *Evolutions*, the young people are featured in their own rooms, amidst their own 'microcosms'. The exhibition also includes the digital book *55 Variations on Origin* (2008, 3D animation, 93'40", black wooden shelf and 19" monitor / 4:3), which presents 55 myths on how the word was born.

Memory of the world and the individual

Evolutions begins with a white chalk line, which a girl by the name of Erofil

draws on the floor of an empty studio. As the girl places on the line the history of the universe and events in her own life, I am reminded of the moment in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958, 35 mm, 128 min) when Kim Novak sets her finger on the spiraled cross-section of a sequoia tree, and a corresponding moment in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962, 35 mm, 28 min.), a poetic science fiction 'photo novel' (photo-roman) told through still photos where the same scene is reenacted at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. These films, like Ruscica's works, are about the world's own memory which extends beyond all cultural memory and, on the other hand, the subjective, personal memory of an individual.

Ruscica studied the world of collectivity and myths already in his three-part projected installation *Con-*

trapuntal (Kontrapunkti, 2005). In the first part of the work, *Sawdust Theme* (2005, S16mm film transferred to digital beta, 6'00"), a man who could very well have stepped out of a piece of Finnish folklore, plays a saw in the middle of the forest, which has been cropped as a kind of ecosystem of small creatures, fable-like along the lines of Arne Sucksdorff's experimental nature documentaries. Some more mundane figures appear on the path built into the forest: pole-walkers, representing a more recent evolutionary stage.

In *Fluctuation* (2005, S16MM film transferred to digital beta, 6'00"), the middle part of *Evolutions*, a transition takes place into a 'Smithsonian' non-place, a huge construction site where a big choir walks and sings. Throughout the history of theatre the choir has often been assigned the role of witness

and collective narrator. In the closing shots personal gazes and gestures start to separate from the collectivity of the choir, perhaps to comment on the history of civilizations. In the final part, *Kiwano's Theme* (2005, DVcam transferred to digital beta 6'00") street musician Juha Kiwano plays his pots and pans as kind of master of ceremonies, producing what feels like timeless urban folk music. Buskers are probably as global an urban phenomenon as, for example, graffiti artists.

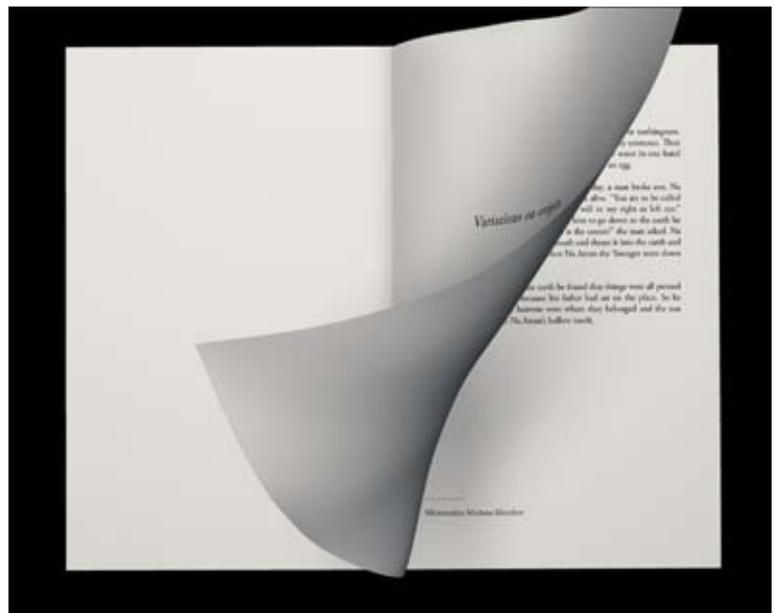
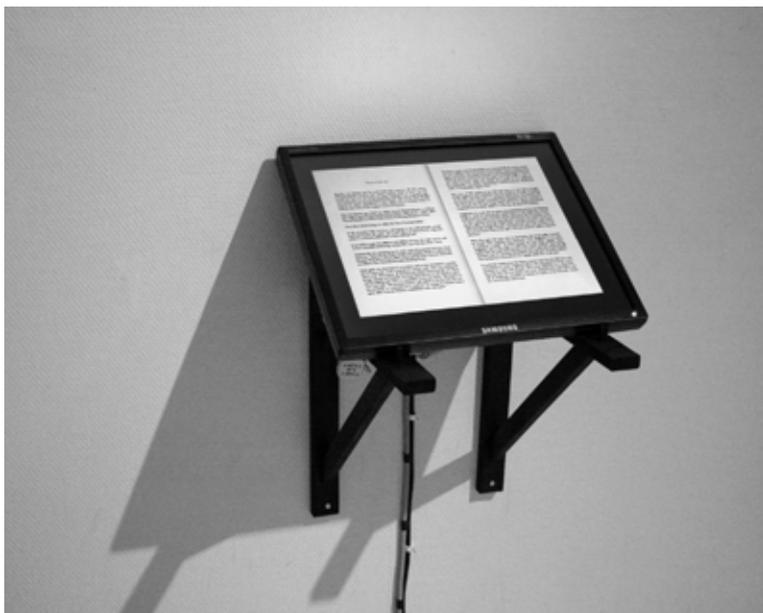
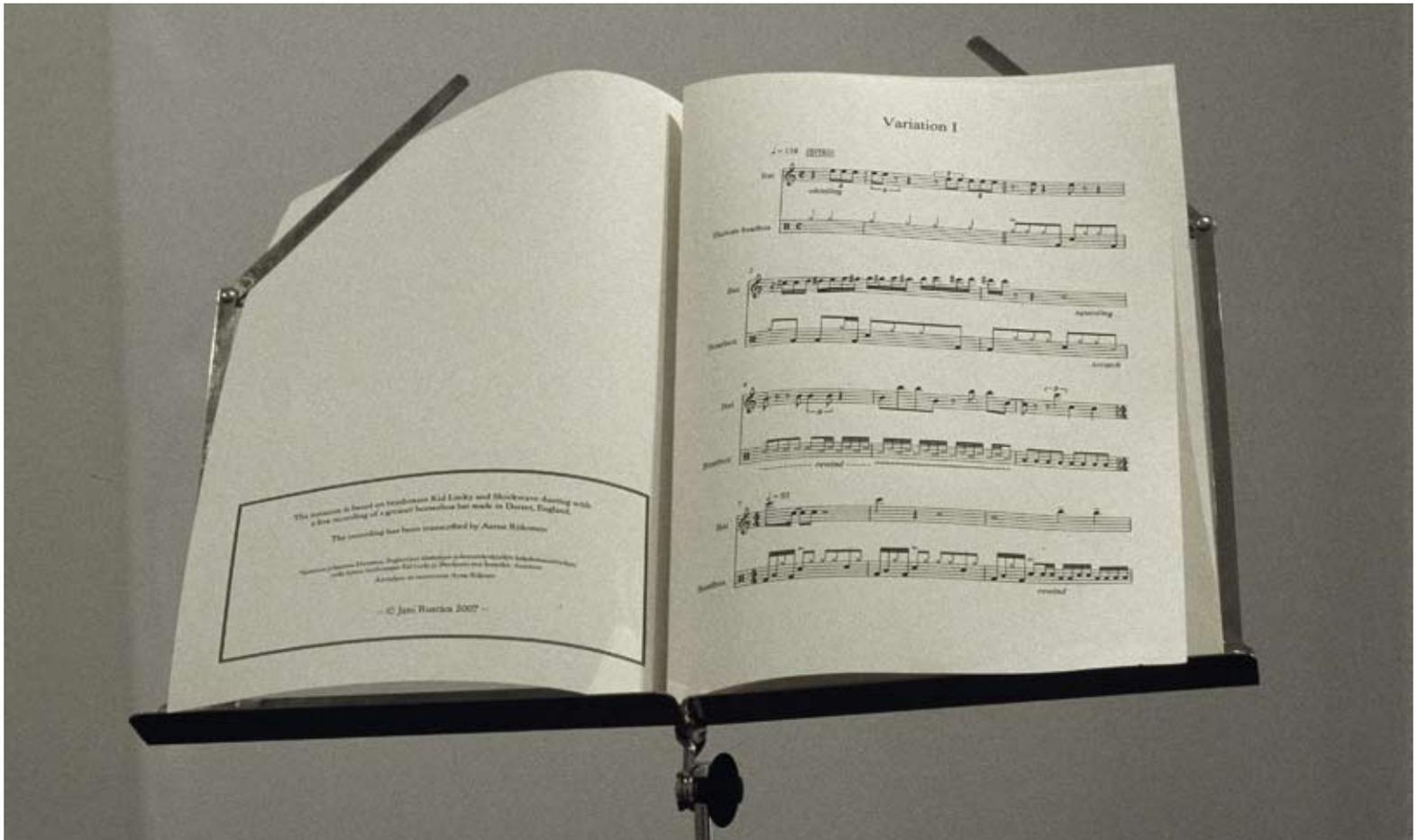
Echoes and songs

The street music of the younger generation is vividly present in the experimental short film *Beatbox, Alternate Take* (2007, S16mm film transferred to digital beta, 8'40"), which, interestingly pairs up with *Batbox, Take One* (2007, DVcam transferred to digital

Top: Jani Ruscica, *Variations on a theme – duet for greater horseshoe bat and beatboxer*, 2007, printed sheet music, music stand and two seats, Score transcribed by Aarne Riikonen

Bottom: Jani Ruscica, *55 variations on origin*, 2008, 3D animation with black wooden shelf and 19 inch monitor, duration 93'40". Animated by Henri Tani.

Next page: Jani Ruscica, *Swan Song*, 2004, S16mm film and DVcam transferred to digital beta, single channel, stereo sound. Photos by Sini Pelkki.



beta, 8'50'), presented also in the form of an installation. Featured in *Beatbox are Vocab*, a spoken word artist from New York, and the beatbox artists Kid Lucky and Shockwave who bodily produce rhythms and effects that sound like a drum machine. The urban subculture presents itself as an echo sounder of the various scenes beyond the watchful spotlights of authorities and high culture. The latter work, in

turn, documents the studies of bio-acoustics researcher Jon Flanders at the University of Bristol, applying a device called the 'batbox', which converts the acoustic frequencies of bat sounds into a form that the human ear can detect.

The more distant history conveyed by the Beatbox culture is linked to the notion that humans have for a long time already used their bodies and voices like animals to imitate the world

in order to transfer knowledge and experiences. We have only distanced song into a sphere of its own and developed the flowery language of love as its content. The bat sounds notated by musician Aarne Riikonen for Ruscica's work *Variations on a Theme – Duet for Greater Horseshoe Bat and Beatboxer* (2007, printed sheet music, music stand, two seats) and the voices of the beatboxers are bridged together.

Ruscica's earlier work *Swan Song* (2004, S16MM film and DVcam transferred to digital beta, 7'44") is about the relaying of a tradition in the form of a Sicilian love song through the faces, gestures and being of old people. The song comes across in the work as a kind of collectively shared meme. (1) At the beginning of the film there is a blank, white studio background, against which the Sicilian historical marionette

(1) The controversial concept of meme, which Richard Dawkins introduced in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976) means cultural ideas, symbols, practices and models which are transmitted in a way analogous to natural selection. Melodies are among the examples given by Dawkins.

(2) On the theme of rendering visible the work of cleaning in new Finnish art, I especially recall Eemil Karila's work (2009) for the Vartai Gallery in Vilna, which is made up of a photograph of 'Mrs Vanda' who cleans the gallery and ultraviolet light illuminating the gallery space. A substance

that reflects ultraviolet has been mixed in with the cleaning detergent so that the marks of the done work become visible in the space.

(3) According to the capitalist logic, which has solidified its ethos in the 1990s and even penetrated today's art world, a networked and individualized so-

ciety no longer seeks or delivers justice to done work or special skills. The work rapidly becomes invisible, which is why individuals have to be inclined and ready to link into new realms (Boltanski, Luc and Chiapello, Eve (2006). *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Transl. Gregory Elliott. London, New York: Verso).



figure, Rinaldo, first rattles his saber and then falls into silence. Metal letters clang out of darkness each at the end of their own chains, forming the title of the work. The video is, like a song, full of life, a reminder that songs are always linked to personal experience.

Finally: the empty stage

Ruscica often returns in his works to a starkly empty black or white stage, to

the background or plane where the different phenomena have surfaced. The method brings to mind modern theatre, Beckett and Brecht. The idea of revealing production structures, corresponding with the Brechtian concept of art, can be seen also in the closing shot of *Swan Song*. The people are shown on the monitor with their names, and the camera quietly pulls back to reveal the small-production tools of moving im-

age that the artist has used when making the work. Similarly, in the closing shot of *Evolutions* the young people collectively clean the floor of the studio, thus marking it as a stage of a completed work. (2)

Apart from the environment, today's hot topic, the great themes of our time have to do with collectivity and work: questions of close community, society, global tribe and alienation. (3)

Ruscica's works are connected to this discussion as art that emphasizes the significance of collectively shared tradition and historical evolution in relation to the various forms of communication that constantly affect the moment at hand. They sketch in front of us forms and portraits that remind us of the importance of stories, music, song, rituals and work to the individual and the community. +

The writer is an art historian and art critic based in Helsinki. He is studying for his PhD in art history at the University of Helsinki. *Translated by Susan Heiskanen.*

Juha-Heikki Tihinen on Antti Laitinen

Que Vide – See These Things

The use of Latin terms is one way of speaking about basic matters in a way that the mundane appears novel. The use of Latin can estrange, it can be seen as a pompous banality, or as a path back to the bare essence of things, which Raymond Chandler upheld as the model of excellence in his tight prose. The works of Antti Laitinen (1975) are in a way ‘new lookings’ which twist different things of our world into a strange and fascinating light.

Modus operandi (mode of operating)

Western thinking is obsessed with the significance of genres or categories. According to a certain poet, the naturalist Carl Linnaeus hated nature so much that he created taxonomy to sort it out and organize it. (1) Such systematicness is typical of a kind of thinking that emphasizes logic and doesn't believe in overlaps or ambivalences. A desire for stubborn systematicness is what comes into mind when I think about Laitinen's work, *Untitled* (Kolme kiveä, 2004), for which the artist dug the ground with a spade, first seven minutes, and then picked up a stone, then seven hours and picked up another stone, and, after seven more blessed

days, finally picked up the third stone. Is this work of art a sculpture or a performance?! In it both the dug hole and the three stones can be defined as material and three-dimensional objects. That is what they are. On the other hand, the work can be defined through its processive and ritualistic qualities. Is this more relevant in terms of type of work than the fact that a viewer at an exhibition saw three small stones? Three small stones, each on their own pedestal, is a very pure sculpture, for in it an object of nature has been brought into being art. At the same time, the category of art has been broadened. Or is it a question of bringing a fruit of work into view? Or is it the artist's way of speaking about the problematics of the transience of art and of the difference between an ‘actual’ work of art and its ‘documentation’? The significances of the stones are also linked to ‘seven’, the number of perfection, with strongly charged magical and religious meanings. Unlike God, Laitinen worked seven days.

Locus delicti (scene of the crime)

Laitinen's production to date has been diverse and divergent, but what can be

picked out as a kind of basic theme is the relationship between man and nature. There are works like *An Attempt to Split the Sea* (Yritys halkaista meri, 2007), in which he digs a track into the ice cover of the sea and *Bare Necessities* (Metsänpoika, 2002), in which he spends four days naked in the forest. In these contestations nature is an element which man can try to bring under control and at the same time test his limits. Nature is a mirror of man and, by the same token, a reality that measures an individual's ability to survive various trials. Laitinen's works reflect a kind of Robinson Crusoesque spirit, he may carve a felled tree into chips (*Puzzle*, 2007) and glue it back together or build his own island (*It's My Island*, 2007). In the latter work he piles together 200 sandbags in the sea and so creates his own island. The impression reminds of the classic English legend of Canute the Great who thought he could command the tide to retreat. The king got his toes wet, but it is likely that Laitinen relates to his struggle with the sea with more humour. A work of art is not permanent... At the same time he takes a critical view to the notion connected with the 18th century Robindsonades of

how a single person can build a replica of his culture. In the photographs of *Bare Necessities* (Metsänpoika) the artist, naked but for a pair of makeshift sandals, lives in the forest. He has made for himself only what he needs, and not created a perfect copy of his point of departure. Irmeli Kokko has written about how the videoed performance sets forth comic situations in which the artist tries to deal with daily necessities, such as eating or staying warm, without any utensils, and without any great success. This is a telling story of how difficult, if not impossible, it is to return to a state of innocence.

Much of Laitinen's art is quite physical by nature, building an island or carving a log into chips are obviously real work, but in *Sweat Work* (2004) Laitinen was literally sweating away. He built a man-sized treadmill, ran himself into a sweat and pressed an image of his body on photographic paper. As the prints hung on the walls of a gallery, the oldest ones started to fade out of sight. Thus the indexical documentation of the performance gradually disappeared and the work started to resonate melancholy – a melancholy with a mind for the transience of art and its makers. (2)

Antti Laitinen, *Attempt to Split the Sea*, 2006,
diasec mounted C-type print, 115x115 cm.



(1) Saarikoski, Pentti (1982). *Euroopan Reuna*. Helsinki: Otava, p. 104–5.
 (2) Tihinen, Juha-Heikki (2008). *Halun häilyvät rajat – Magnus Enckellin maalausten maskuliinisuksien ja feminiinisyksien representaatioista ja itsen*

luomisesta. Taidehistorian seura, Helsinki.
 (3) Kokko, Irmeli http://www.nettiehorn.com/Biographies%20and%20CVs/Antti_Laitinen_biography.htm
 (4) Ross, Stephanie. Oxford Art Online, Encyclopedia of Aesthetics.

Antti Laitinen, *Bare Necessities*, 2002, C-type print on aluminium, 150x175 cm.



The parts of the work are perishable by nature, and can eventually only be encountered through descriptions. The ritualistic qualities of the work were also stressed by repetition, as a version of prayer, practice or concentration. Repetition makes the running a ritualistic exercise and transports its 'objective' into a visible but disappearing goal. Similar physical effort is represented by *It's My Island* and the carrying and piling of 200 sandbags in more or less ice-cold water. A sculpture is born as a result of the performance: an island of sandbags and Laitinen's own miniature world. He is the only inhabitant of his island. (3) He is like a later-day Robinson, who builds a world to his liking. There is no Friday on this island as such, except perhaps in the form of the artist's alter ego. He doesn't need a subject or a servant to become the master of his world.

Ad locum (at the place)

As performances Laitinen's works are located in specific places or he moves in them from place to place. In *Walk the Line* (2004-) he has been walking a portrait of himself with the help of a GPS satellite recorder. Here Laitinen moves among a bunch of different art history terms. He is site-specific along the lines of the 1960s earth art or minimalism. On the other hand, the term *picturesque*, which emerged in the 18th century and was later mostly connected to painting art, comes handy here. The term describes the special qualities of places and it was widely used also in travel literature. (4) The era also entailed a rising romanticism, which gives great importance to self-portraits because through them artists could study their own creativity and specificity. Genius lives in the ingenious self-portrait of a great artist. As he walks and

draws his portrait into the landscape, which the viewers can even watch live on the Internet, he strips down the mysticism connected with the creation of a self-portrait. The artist studies his 'soul' right in front of our eyes and the model of the self-portrait is already given. At the same time, the mystical landscape, which gained sublime and religious significances from the Romantics, has turned into a terrain banalised by a technical device. The artist doesn't need to 'search' for the mind of the landscape or for himself in it, but resorts to a locator.

Finis

In his latest work, *Voyage* (2008), Laitinen rows in a barge with a palm tree seated behind him. The 'poor-man's version' of all earthly paradise dreams stays in motion with mere manpower. With his work, the artist concretely moves some-

where between performance and sculpture. His 'jollyboat' can be seen as a site and enabler of a performance loaded with readymade (palm tree). Laitinen travels like a modern-day Robinson, the video camera films his theatrical journey through the screen. Laitinen is like a hybrid of the resourcefulness of the original Robinson and the exotic adventuring of the Swedish Expedition Robinson TV-series (1997-). As if to honour the ability of man to make truth stranger than reality, Antti Laitinen was suspected of terrorist activities by the Thames Police Force as he rowed too close to the Houses of Parliament in his palm tree barge. What else could a character rowing a palm tree barge be than a terrorist of sorts? Laitinen thusly follows the advice of classicist Chandler who told crime writers that: 'When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand'. +

Top: Antti Laitinen, *It's My Island*, 2007, video installation.

Bottom: Antti Laitinen, *It's My Island*, 2007, diasec mounted C-type print, 115x115 cm.



Antti Laitinen, *Self-Portrait on the Swamp*, 2006, diasec mounted C-type print, 160x115 cm.



Poka-Yio on Antti Laitinen Swamp Man

What if all ponds were shallow? Would it not react on the minds of men? I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

'Gone to Croatan' read the cryptic message left by a group of early colonists in the New World. This mysterious disappearance of a whole colony and its exodus to Croatan has never become as legendary as Eldorado, maybe because Croatan was just a modest Indian territory with no gold whatsoever. Having said that, the legend of a jungle tribe with white skin and fair eyes did endure, another take on the story of the

search for the 'other self' surviving in the wilds. The flight to Croatan is just another version of one of the oldest stories shared by most cultures; the story of the Fall from Grace, the Lost Paradise or the Loss of Innocence and the struggle to return to Heaven.

Antti Laitinen is lost in the forest too. The image of well built men wandering in the woods is a motif engraved in common culture and collective consciousness. May that be Greystoke and his chimp attire or the Green Giant selling beans in his puckish green tights and leafy tunic, not to forget the early Nordic porn movies of pagan eroticism. In their entire splendor, these are mostly iconographies of naivety. The unspoiled smile on Laitinen's iconic

face is no less enigmatic than Rousseau's reclining beauty of the beasts. Does it derive from his contentment, his encounters with nature, or maybe from his sarcasm towards the deeds of contemporary art? And then when he is off to the wilds, does he truly switch off his art world BlackBerry or does he import his expeditions to its event calendar, and if so, termed as as what? 'A day off' or 'production shooting in the forest'? In his work *Bare Necessities* (2002), he stayed for four days in the forest without food, drink or clothes, but he did have with him his 'latest' camera equipment to capture his actions. Therefore, he was armed and protected by art paraphernalia and this device of his helped him survive the

The writer is an artist, member of the curatorial trio XYZ and co-director of the Athens Biennale. Language editing Susan Heiskanen.

difficult endeavor. Laitinen's captivating image as a Neanderthalish lad, naked and smeared with mud, probably bruised and chilled to the bone, is as appealing to a city person as the fairy of the forests is to a villager.

There is sheer attraction in the lustful works of Laitinen. It may be his physique that provokes it, but mostly it is envy of his innocently displayed narcissism. Do not forget that Narcissus also wandered in the woods only to meet his idol reflected on the fatal pond. Antti Laitinen's *Self-Portrait on the Swamp* (2006) resembles Narcissus vanishing into the pond; a moment immortalized by the photo camera's click, evident by the camera string visibly attached to his sinking arm. It also re-



minds me of the notorious comic hero, Swamp Thing, whose mission was to punish the anti-ecological villains and who – interestingly enough – is believed to be the source of inspiration for Donald Davidson’s philosophical construction called the Swamp Man. This theorem, in the fashion of philosophical zombies, could in our case give rise to the argument that Antti Laitinen, if met in person, looks the same, but is not the same, as his reflection in his swamp piece (or in any of his other pieces, for that matter). Speaking of reflections, it is this totally uncool, raw and explicit nature of his work, so direct like the poses one takes in front of the mirror when no one is watching, that makes it so irresistibly

appealing. It is his instinctive alertness that keeps him at a safe distance from the art canon of the ‘00s that ultimately adorns his work with a halo of authenticity, a prerequisite for his core subject of innocence.

In two different films, Hal Hartley’s *No Such Thing* (the loneliness of the cast away immortal beast) and Walerian Borowczyk’s *La Bete* (the erotic call of the beast) a similar issue is addressed; connecting with one’s (lost) inner self pictured as the beast or proto-man. It is, after all, a quest for ourselves that we are out there pursuing in the woods. As Thoreau beautifully wrote in the preface of his hymn on solitude in nature, *Walden*: ‘In most books, the I, or first person, is omitted; in this it will

be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference’. It is me I am going to speak of. And this is exactly it; a rite of passage, a self test of will and strength that brings one into adulthood and finally back to the community. The strength to survive with limited means, the million-times-told stories from Ulysses to Crusoe to *LOST*. But the reward lies in the level of difficulty in each deed. For a little boy it is his sand castle rising against the waves, for the big boy Antti, in his work *It’s My Island* (2007), it is the struggle to build an island with his bare hands, by carrying and stacking hundreds of sand bags within a period of months. A Sisyphean task, undoubtedly, it being the entropy of nature that he is messing with.

This male, romantic call for the great deed finds its equal in other ‘patriarchs’ of modernity, namely Robert Smithson and Richard Long, who dared to confront the elements of nature in challenging the anthropometry of themselves against the vastness of nature. Antti Laitinen goes a step further, though, in his work *An Attempt to Split The Sea* (2004), challenging the most renowned of all patriarchs, none other than Moses himself (probably the first land artist in history). But his instinctive maneuver is to wink an eye at these devastating patriarchs. He is the wild man Caliban, he is both innocent and crude. And like Caliban (whose name comes from the word ‘cannibal’), we cannot but remember that Laitinen’s

Antti Laitinen, *Voyage*, 2008. Performance on the Thames was stopped outside the Security Service MI5 (Military Intelligence, Section 5) by the Thames River Police. Photos by Cleo Fariselli

Antti Laitinen, *Voyage*, 2008, 4'31" video and performance.



art elegantly feeds from the self and its juices. Like in *Sweat Work* (2004), where his sweat and body temperature exposes his body print, with an outcome not much different from the one in the infamous relic called *Sacra Sindone* (the Holly Shroud) where the body of Christ is believed to be imprinted with his own blood. The row of large exposed prints (Laitinen must be about 20 centimeters taller than Christ was) are satisfactorily sacrosanct, although he has not been flagellated and crucified, but just self-subjected to a jogging session inside a huge mouse wheel. After all, art is a big rat race. Once again we have the narcissism of the suffering subject, but in a subtle manner as Laitinen masterly mixes his pain with irony in order to puzzle the voyeuristic beholders and sharpen their encounter, an element even more evi-

dent in his performances before an audience. In *Snowman* (2006) for example he is standing still in a glass case, in a statuary pose, while white flour starts dusting him and turning him into a snowman. A shiver must have electrified the unaware audience in the gaze of frost forming on his body, reminding us that reaction to someone else's pain can be easily recreated by means of presentation (or fake blood). This is exactly what visual arts have been doing for centuries now. Ignoring to mention the carrot nose he wears, one would however be drawing only half the picture. His snowman's carrot nose, like a dildo strap-on, pointing upwards, is both a raised finger and a comic relief, the finishing touch to an otherwise overtly dramatic performance.

Laitinen's latest Crusoe-meets-Buster Keaton performance, *Voyage* (2008),

is the perfect fall from (his own) grace of innocence; with the fake island -canoe – complete with palm tree – this becomes the climax of his sense of humor. A sense of humor, initially lurking in the woods, comes out loud and explicit now, even hilarious. Resembling the absurd bathtub rowing races or the funny flying machine contests, the rowing of his island in the Thames is the epitome of his oeuvre. How easy would it have been for Laitinen to rest on his heroic and Arcadian early performances. Visually captivating, differentiated, having the topology and even the scent of the Nordic nature infused on them, they were perfect examples of a body art that we love to embrace and protect, like an endangered species. But *Voyage* makes Monty Pythonesque ridicule of the land and body art amassment, boldly undermining or at least casting new

light on his earlier work. It is the bold structure of *Voyage* that could push Laitinen's practice even further, not so much because it is a 'seminal work' (if there is such a thing) but because it has all the potential of turning into a total flop, the same way as slapstick comedies and overtly dramatic movies do on occasion. It is the urge to stretch oneself and one's art to its limits that in the end distinguishes an artist's work and Laitinen has the guts to do it all the way. Not only does he dare to defy the strength of his own body, as in his previous works, but he also dares to reveal the absurdity of his alter ego, the absurdity of the Swamp Man, the absurdity of art. This is the much greater task he sets out to meet and he does so wearing an ever-serious face. A face only the best comedians manage to wear in the midst of the worst (flour) storms. +





Antti Laitinen, *Sweat Work*, 2004, C-type print, 215x106 cm, performance.

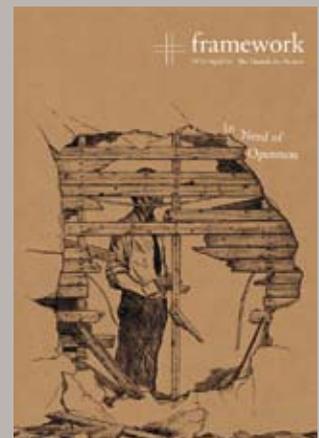
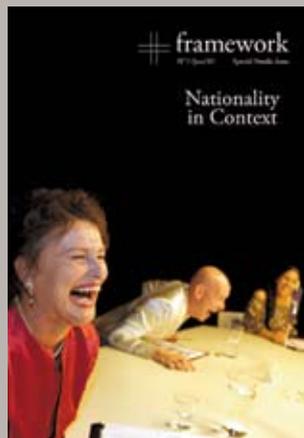
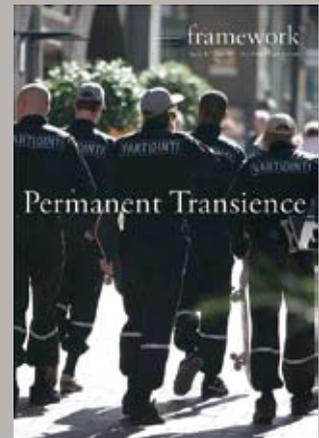
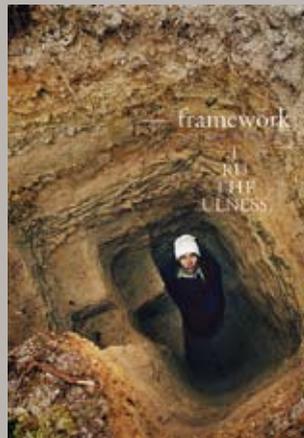
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The Finnish Art Review

Framework is a bi-annual magazine dedicated to contemporary art and culture, published by FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange. It is a discursive forum that allows space for varied visual material, as well as extensive articles, analyses and international commentaries. Framework emphasises and supports cross-disciplinary aspects of art that transcend conventional boundaries.

The publishing of *Framework: The Finnish Art Review* is made possible by the support from the Finnish Ministry of Culture. Two issues with a circulation of 4 000 copies are published per year.



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FRAMEWORK: the finnish art review, Issue 10

Editorial office:

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Publisher

FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange.

The publishing of *Framework: The Finnish Art Review* is made possible by the support from the Finnish Ministry of Culture. Two issues with a circulation of 4 000 copies are published per year. Frame in a Nutshell: www.frame-fund.fi

Editors of Issue 10

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Fire & Rescue Museum on pp. 49-72 is published also as a free copy exhibition catalogue on the occasion of the exhibition at the Finnish Pavilion in the 53rd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2009.

Graphic design

Patrik Söderlund

Web site design

Marjo Malin and Patrik Söderlund

Assistant for photo editing and proof reading

Elina Vainio

Translations and language editing

Susan Heiskanen
(if not stated otherwise)

Printing

Finepress Oy, Turku, Finland

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Cover

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ISSN 1459-6288

