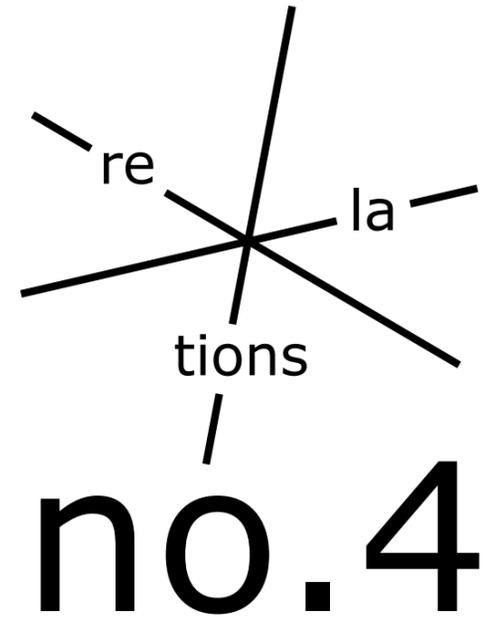


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Rethinking Europe

Every definition of identity involves misunderstandings and is guided by ideological interests. The discussion about a “European” or “pan-European” identity is no exception. How can current cultural projects and institutions usher arts and politics into a dialogue without themselves being instrumentalized? In that one forgoes control and allows a certain space of uncertainty, says Okwui Enwezor in an interview with Martin Saar. Accepting an invitation from “relations,” the curator and the political scientist met in New York and used the distance to take a look at European ideas, modernities, and self-conceptions.

Martin Saar: One of your most recent projects has been to write up a concept for the planned Bauhaus Europa cultural institution in Aachen. Its supposed mission is – in the words of the founders – to provide “a space where Europe can think about itself.” How did you react to this task? Does Europe really need such a space?

Okwui Enwezor: Well let me begin [by saying] that it was never my idea. I had the great honor to be invited to participate in thinking about an institution that is to be constituted around the terms of the evolution of European identity and European history. My initial skepticism – given that I’m not a European, nor do I really live in Europe – was slowly worn away by the formidable promise of a project of this sort, an institution that will help us think much further than other museums of history have attempted in the past. The terms of “Europe” do not belong to Europeans alone any more, given the formidable and widespread influence of European culture, European ideas, and European policies across the world. So in a sense we are all, in different degrees, inheritors of this European idea, however much we struggle with it, however much we try to develop autonomy from it.

Saar: Are you comfortable with the very concept of a “European identity”? The term comes up in so many discussions at the moment – it was a constant presence in the controversial process of ratifying the constitution – and is invoked for many different purposes.

Sometimes its use testifies to the desire to define some common ground for contemporary European politics.

Enwezor: Obviously no identity, regardless of where you see it from, is singular. All identities are fraught with different kinds of misunderstandings and different ideological inner tensions that are often instrumentalized to make the identity bend to the wishes of the people who want to use it. The current struggles in Europe really reveal the problems with the whole idea of any single European identity. However, the Bauhaus Europa began as a project to think about pan-European identity, not a single European identity – and even that pan-European identity itself was and still is very much contested, given that there are members of the European community who are not properly integrated into the concept of the larger Europe. The project is not necessarily about European identity as such. It is dedicated to looking at the evolution of the modern European context today. It goes beyond identity because it looks at the intersections of European history with other histories and at the ways in which Europe’s history is constantly uprooted from its base. These are the intersections of different movements currently going on in Europe, as we see with Islam, with immigrants; all this is part of that process of uprooting.

Saar: The European project appears to be double-sided. It promises universalization, that peoples can transcend their national ter-

ritories and thereby move to a transnational community based on consent, and maybe even intra-European democracy, which sustains plurality and affirms diversity in a balanced, non-violent form. But empirically and historically, that promise came and still comes with a shadow: namely, political aggression and, often, violent geopolitical maneuvering.

Enwezor: The promise echoes the early conception of European identity. Post-war Europe was very much a site of trauma, and pulling together was a way to mediate it. Is this promise being realized today? There are all kinds of different processes of exclusion, intolerance, and discrimination. The promise implies constant inclusion of all the various facets of the current European context, and that includes immigrants, post-colonials, Muslims, Hindus, Jews – it includes as many possible configurations as one can bring together, and that is the promise and the challenge at the same time. How can Europe create a context that is not about totalization but about this series of contiguities, existing in mutual recognition? If we begin from the point of view of exclusion, for example, in the question of Turkey, then we defeat the very notion of the possibility and the promise of Europe.

Saar: In much of your earlier work the problem and the historiography of modernity was very prominent. How would you relate your work on what you have called “African modernity” or “modernities” to this debate, given that Europe always saw itself, and was constructed as, the origin and the only carrier of modernity in the “proper” sense?

Enwezor: My fundamental intellectual project, really, is to unsettle these notions that are already far too totalized to be useful for the kind of disarray that we are witnessing within the concept of modernity itself. It’s important to account for these different poly-vocal, poly-focal streams of modernity, and allow these different aspects of modernity to be legible in our consciousness and our historical understanding of the term “modernity.” European modernity is not simply a carrier of positive values alone; it also has the negative values it shares with other modernities that it has exported and received back. What we see in the negotiations – call it cosmopolitanism, call it multiculturalism – that are currently ongoing in Europe is part and

Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers, Dortmund

Essen wants to be the Capital of Culture. We don’t! Experience in the Ruhr Region and Croatia shows that decentralized structures and non-hierarchical networks definitely have their advantages: in praise of peripheries. Pages 3-5

De/construction of Monument, Mostar

Until now, Mostar was known for its bridge and its division, which is yet to be overcome even though the war has ended. De/construction of Monument and Urban Movement Mostar want to change this: in the city park, the world’s first Bruce Lee monument was unveiled as a symbol of the struggle for justice beyond all national affiliations. Pages 6-7

WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL, Dresden

Can private property in post-socialism save one from capitalism? Can biographies make the various experiences of economic systems comprehensible? Investigations into apartments, cities, and the public realm in Dresden and Sofia from the perspective of contemporary art. Pages 8-9

thinking through

Traditions, markets, communication and transformation processes: participants of the symposia held in Dresden, Frankfurt am Main, and Leipzig investigate the interactions between art, politics, scholarship, and the city. Pages 12-17

Overview

A short description of the “relations” projects. Pages 18-19

Agenda

“relations” locally: all the currently planned activities. Page 20

parcel of this ongoing project of modernity that is about both consensual and non-consensual modernity; the latter being, of course, colonialism and imperialism. Precisely when the European Enlightenment started, the darkness set in for other cultures. So there’s the contradiction, and obviously I wanted to include it very clearly in my work, without really having to make anyone go on a guilt trip for Europe about conquering other places. But the more important move is to say that European modernity, both the consensual and non-consensual aspect of it, has had a formidable influence in the way we conceive of ourselves all over the world. Today, you cannot be outside of “the West” in this respect. You cannot leave modernity without being included in this inner set of norms.

Saar: When seeing the exhibitions you did and reading your essays, I always had the very strong impression that from your point of view the separation between art and politics is not axiomatic, but something to be questioned. You always point to the entanglements and intertwinement of political and artistic (or aesthetic) interests, practices, and ambitions. Should we retrieve this connection, which might be lost in much of contemporary “western” post avant-garde art, and bring the aesthetic and the political into dialogue again?

Enwezor: I have definitely long tried to articulate something like this in my own projects. Again, in the case of Europe, it is necessary to move it from the idea of origin to an analysis of the very notion of European modernity. Then we have a much more interesting project and what will come out of it will obviously have a very clear political dimension – but it will also have a very clear aesthetic and cultural dimension. Rather than disentanglement and separation, I prefer to see a soft border between art and politics. Autonomy in the strict sense is not possible, not even conceivable, in the complex political, social and economic, and cultural ecology in which the world functions.

Saar: But how can your own projects evade the danger of being hijacked by political interests? From an inner-European perspective, given the current debates and ideological temptations, all these new emerging cultural European institutions are in danger of being used for the wrong purposes, for creating some new legitimate myth of Europe.

Enwezor: Every project of this nature cannot escape this anxiety of being instrumentalized or appropriated by political ideology or by populism, but I think the greater danger is in not trying. Critique cannot simply function from the position of a pure outside; critique can also function when it is definitely implicated. I approach these projects with a healthy skepticism and try to work towards a more manageable and realizable position. Yes, there’s this enormous danger in the possible appropriation of the Bauhaus Europa project for a populist project, and that would be sad. You have to remind politicians in Europe that sometimes they really need to give up the illusion of total control and allow a certain space of uncertainty, especially when it comes to cultural forms. This can produce fantastic results, because it’s not predetermined but leaves some forms of indeterminacy. The Bauhaus Europa project now might be at a stage where it is dangerously moving towards the model of a history museum, a history archive, which might be giving in to the impulse of trying to be populist and to appeal to people’s already-confirmed views of themselves, which is not challenging. This is one of the reasons why I suggested that the Bauhaus Europa project should give the artists

an integral part in the process on a continuous basis. It’s not about artists making “public art” on some public property, but about artists constantly acting on the institution in ways that are challenging so that the institution itself has an ongoing relationship with the artistic sphere. It is about bringing people together and going back to the concept of a living institution that is engaged with its own project which is pledged to the present.

Saar: This might be the most important function of cultural projects in democratic societies: to make political communities allow space for these uncertainties so that there’s the possibility of destabilizing prejudgments and fixed meanings. This is probably something Europe needs at the moment, because Europe might also be in a phase of trying to determine, trying to fixate, of losing its openness and indeterminacies.

Enwezor: Absolutely. This will be a risk, but a risk worth taking.

Okwui Enwezor is a curator, author, and art critic. From 1998-2002, he was the artistic director of Documenta 11 in Kassel; he is currently the director of the Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de Sevilla. Other exhibitions include the “Johannesburg Biennale” (1997) and “The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994” (Munich, Berlin, Chicago, New York 2001). He has written numerous publications. He was born in Nigeria and lives today in New York and San Francisco. Since 2005, he is Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President of the San Francisco Art Institute. In November 2005, he took part in the ACADEMY REMIX symposium staged jointly by the Städelschule Frankfurt am Main and “relations.”

Martin Saar is assistant lecturer in the field of political theory and intellectual history at the Political Science Institute of the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. He currently holds the Theodor Heuss lectureship at the New School for Social Research, New York. Martin Saar has published extensively on Foucault, Nietzsche, Heidegger, contemporary aesthetics, and theories of collective memory.

Dear Readers!

Do we still find what we are looking for in the centers, or is it the peripheries that have long emerged as the productive places of uncertainty? And can we perhaps conceive of some areas of (urban) space as real or imaginary boundaries of which a capitalist economy is unable to transgress? The projects Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers in Dortmund and WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL in Dresden pursue these and affiliated questions in colloquia and exhibitions. Preceding these two events are long, intensive processes of cooperation, communication, and confrontation with their partner projects in Zagreb (Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000) and Sofia (Visual Seminar), respectively. The last three issues of our “relations” newspaper delivered insights into these projects. In addition to these questions, we look at the material out of which an event – the unveiling of a monument dedicated to Bruce Lee – was woven to induce the international media to report about a Bosnian-Herzegovina city like Mostar some ten years after the war. Nino Raspudić, one of the initiators of the monument for a hero from a better world, gives us his insight into the complex history of its realization, and a selection of international press clippings reflect on its reception.

The second section of this issue revolves around a thematic field that has always played an implicit role in the thirteen projects developed in the framework of “relations” over the last three years: the artist, citizen, and scholar interchanging ideas and perspectives with society and becoming active in the public realm – and doing so in extremely heterogeneous local contexts. We have invited six authors from Moscow, Dessau, Sofia, Leipzig, Belgrade/Brussels, and New York to reflect on these contexts. The three symposia held over the last few months in Dresden, Leipzig, and Frankfurt am Main formed the starting point for these reflections: WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL, Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given, and ACADEMY REMIX. Fear not, these contributions are no simple recounting of past discussions but provide us with an inlet that allows us to become immersed in ideas that take up, reflect, and think through the impulses generated at these symposia. After participating in the ACADEMY REMIX symposium, an interest in thinking through consequences is what moved Okwui Enwezor to meet up with the political scientist Martin Saar in New York. In their discussion, which you can read on pages 1 and 2, they call for nothing less than rethinking the concept of Europe – and that artists should be given the necessary space to contribute to this process. Europe should not grasp uncertainties, gaps in definitions, and open ends as deficits but as opportunities. We would like to sincerely thank all our dialogue partners and the authors who contributed to this issue. We would also like to thank Maria Ziegelböck for the photographic work “Tu m’écoutes?” featured in the second section of this issue, a work that portrays places of communication of the most diverse kind as an open invitation for analysis and debate.

We warmly invite you to take part in our discussions and, above all, to visit our events, symposia, and exhibitions!

Katrin Klingan, Artistic Director, and Samo Darian, Managing Director

Peripherie 3000

Strategic Platform for Networked Centers

Together with the Ruhr Region, Essen aspires to become the European Capital of Culture for the year 2010. But why? For some time now, the essential things, according to the project Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers, no longer take place in the national capitals but in places where peripheral positions facilitate a new perspective on social and cultural foundations. The periphery, and not the center, has become a place of productive uncertainty. Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers is a project of the Hartware MedienKunstVerein Dortmund in collaboration with the Croatian network Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 and “relations” that investigates structures and cultural production beyond the centers.

In Praise of Peripheries

by Inke Arns

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In April 2006, the project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 (ZCK 3000) will be hosted by the Ruhr Region. ZCK 3000 is a heterogeneous network of originally four and today eight independent Zagreb culture initiatives active in the areas of visual arts, media art/theory, collective curatorial praxis, software design and development, theater and performance, and urban planning and architecture. They have been collaborating for just over two years. The reason behind their visit is the project Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers, which has been developed together with the Hartware MedienKunstVerein Dortmund, various cultural institutions and initiatives from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and “relations.” The project coincides with the pending announcement of which city is to be the European Capital of Culture in 2010. The city of Essen has submitted a joint bid with the Ruhr Region.

Gaining the title of European Capital of Culture is tied to the hope of enhancing a city’s status and quality of life through infrastructure investment, the staging of prestigious events, and the resulting media attention. Whereas at the start of the cultural capital tradition the designation was awarded mainly to capital cities (e.g., Athens 1985, Amsterdam 1987, Berlin 1988, Paris 1989), today it is primarily “non-capitals,” cities on the periphery or with populations of fewer than a million, which are being chosen as cultural capitals (most recently Graz 2005, Cork 2005). In the process, “Capital of Culture” has become a label and a marketing tool that enhances the reputation of cities and regions beyond the national capitals and likewise makes them more attractive.

While the number “3000” in the title Peripherie 3000 clearly refers to Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, the concept of the “periphery” plays on an understanding of a (cultural) capital as a center and expressly counters it: here the periphery, i.e., on the outskirts or a site of frayed edges, is a position that allows for a different perspective on shifting social and cultural foundations. The Ruhr Region – and, beyond it, the region between Dortmund and Rotterdam – possesses a specific network structure that Rem Koolhaas has characterized as

“a city of centers.”

Structural Change Revisited

Westfalenstadion, Phoenix Hall, Zeche Zollverein, and the “Profigrill” in Wattenscheid – more Ruhr Region than a trip down Federal Highway 1 is barely possible in an afternoon. Taking up the invitation of the Dortmund Hartware MedienKunstVerein, members of the Croatian project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 gained an impression of the Ruhr in December. Together they are working on Peripherie 3000, a project initiated by “relations.” A discussion with Ivet Ćurlin, Vesna Vuković, Ivana Ivković, Sunčica Ostoić, and Tomislav Medak on the comparability and transferability of experiences and structures from regions in transition.



Henrik Sander, orange.edge, Dortmund
Hindu temple, A2 near Rhynern

That was a classic tourist excursion you did today. What are your impressions?

We were surprised at first – presumably like most people who visit the Ruhr Region for the first time. We had assumed that, after the dismantling of traditional industry, the Ruhr Region was left idle and unexploited, and the opportunity to hook into the postindustrial transformation had been missed. In a certain way that is the case, for the new global geography of centrality tends to follow flows of capital and capital markets, and in this respect the Ruhr Region, just like Croatia, is generally ignored. However, in the meantime a strong IT industry has evolved here in Dortmund, and throughout the Ruhr Region old industrial plants are being refurbished into cultural locations. This situation mirrors the paradoxes of the long-standing discourse on structural change: new industries are established, new jobs created – but these industries and jobs cannot offset the loss of the old, employment-intensive branches. The new economy is simply unable to generate enough jobs. And even where jobs are created, most of the long-term unemployed don't have the necessary skills. The course “structural change” has taken allows us to surmise that society's capability to effectively reform itself has indeed been lost and a thinking geared solely towards self-enriching recapitalization has gained the upper hand.

Croatia is also going through a transitional phase. Can comparisons be drawn?

In Croatia, the discourse on structural change dominated the late 1980s. But the project failed. What followed was a severe collapse that saw the economy grind to a halt and swept many industrial plants from the socialist era into a kind of structural and urban invisibility. The industrial legacy in the Ruhr Region is much, much larger in comparison. All these plants

and mining complexes are so monumental that there is no danger of them ever becoming invisible. In Croatia and particularly in Zagreb, however, everything is in upheaval again. Two years ago one of our groups, Platforma 9,81, mapped dozens of disused industrial plants located throughout the extended center of Zagreb so as to identify suitable sites for public usage, especially for cultural events and projects. But almost all of them have been snapped up by investors in the meantime and are being used privately. Public interests are being almost completely abandoned in the course of privatization and gentrification. That is why we are trying to put pressure on political decision-makers and, at the very least, recapture the few remaining sites for public and cultural use. In this respect the excursion through the Ruhr Region, where many industrial complexes have been transformed into cultural locations, was a brief glimpse into a possible future.

What is your assessment of the transformation processes that you've seen here?

Varied. On the one hand, whatever seems to have no aesthetic value has to go. On the other, the Zeche Zollverein, now recognized as a World Heritage site, has been polished to a shine. It's almost too striking. But at the same time you can gauge that change here has taken place over a long period and has been very structured and organic, and that talk of change has genuine political significance. Things are different in Croatia. Structural change there was triggered by the collapse of the political system. Old structures disappeared before new ones were put in place. We live in a society obsessed with private redevelopment in which even rhetoric about structural change is rendered obsolete.

What role can Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 play in the transformation process in Croatia?



Henrik Sander, orange.edge, Dortmund
Living behind the noise barrier, A40 Ruhr Region



Henrik Sander, orange.edge, Dortmund
The landscape of leisure time, A42 Ruhr Region

Because we cannot build on old cultural policy structures and cultural practices we have to establish new ones ourselves – and help to maintain what is worth maintaining. One example: different groups from the independent scene joined forces to ensure that the Council for New Media and Youth Culture was reestablished after the Culture Ministry had decided to abolish it.

That sounds like the kind of leverage which would be inconceivable in Germany. From where do you draw such strength?

In Zagreb, we work in a very local and central context. Seventy per cent of Croatia's cultural production takes place in Zagreb. That's why we also try – for example, with Clubture, a nationwide network for program exchange between independent cultural actors – to support initiatives outside the capital in developing projects. Together with these initiatives we are striving to improve the general framework conditions for independent culture in Croatia.

This kind of centrality is very different to that of the Ruhr Region.

Very much so. You search in vain for a center in the Ruhr Region. But this is precisely why we wanted to test Peripherie 3000: to see which organizational forms make sense in this cultural environment. Through collaborating with our partners in the Ruhr Region, we also wanted to learn how the independent cultural scene positions itself vis-à-vis official institutions in the German context.

The excursion generated a host of impressions. Do lots of impressions generate lots of ideas?

The first ideas came immediately after the excursion. Something like small-format interven-

tions in public space. A jazz concert at a gas station on Federal Highway 1, which is nothing less than the main artery through the Ruhr Region. Or creating connections through journeys with different means of transport, for example, a boat tour on the Rhine-Herne canal. Another idea is to engage with former workers' organizations or garden plot associations. Perhaps the results of our interventions will contribute to a positive reevaluation of the slightly negative concept of periphery. In the sense that they provide a critical look at the emerging global geography of centrality and envisage a new form of collaboration between the peripheries which resist being caught up in the grid of centrality.

Interview: Tobias Bolsmann

Tobias Bolsmann lives in Herne and is the cultural editor at the “Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung.”

Further information about Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 on page 18.

Topographies of the Future

The East is shrinking and the Ruhr Region is emptying out at an ever-increasing rate. The only growth is in the amount of people moving away, the percentage of old people, and unemployment. Is the old West becoming the new East? Or, 17 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, will everything remain as it is – and Halle, that'll always be where the others live!? Inquiries from a focal point of de-centrality.



Photos: Platforma 9,81, Zagreb 2005



by Julia Grosse and Gudrun Sommer

Vienna must not be allowed to become a second Chicago! This was the slogan the populist FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party) proclaimed at the end of the 1990s to warn of the Austrian capital's impending decay. “Redeveloping the East cannot be allowed to lead to a degradation of the West,” was the warning issued by the mayor of Gelsenkirchen a few years later: Gelsenkirchen is also a part of Germany (see the campaign, www.du-bist-deutschland.de), but must it for this reason become a second Halle?

On the other hand, has it not become so long ago? The press conjures up angst-ridden headlines, complains about unemployment, people moving away, a rapidly aging population, and juggles around with jobless numbers whose gravity are by no means alleviated either through a collective sense of being German nor, as proclaimed by a popular tabloid, the pride felt in the new Pope being a German. Cities like Gelsenkirchen, with over twenty per cent unemployment in some districts, have long become the nightmare scenario of a demographic development in the Ruhr Region that, in terms of numbers, is inexorably hurtling towards the loser cliché used to label the East. Secondary schools in “social conflict hotspots” are considering whether it wouldn't be better to prepare their pupils for a life of unemployment instead of upholding the illusion of career choice. Moving away is the prevalent trend in comparable regions in eastern Germany, and what's abandoned is diligently dismantled or senselessly redeveloped. Statisticians have estimated that by 2020 the East will have lost 12.5 per cent of its population to the West. In contrast, the deserted industrial complexes in the Ruhr Region are not new but fixed and organic components of a landscape. What's the use of demolishing something when the resultant gap is not going to be filled in? The East is withering away, at least here and there, and the Ruhr Region – despite any considerations given to urban agglomeration – is also pretty empty. But does emptiness make something new out of the old? The East out of the West? One thing is certain: no mayor draws comparisons of this sort. Gelsenkirchen

has elected a new town elder and remains what it is: Germany, reunified. Halle, that's where the others live, even 17 years after the fall of the Berlin wall. If the Ruhr Region is not to turn into the East what should it become instead? Liverpool, Manchester, or Pittsburgh, so the urban planners Frauke Burgdorff from the Carl Richard Montag Foundation in Bonn and Yasmine Ut'ku from the Institute for Urban Planning at Dortmund University, provide a more cogent orientation for modeling post-industrial areas. As a focal point of de-centrality (Burgdorff), the Ruhr Region is unique in Europe, precisely because in its urban dimensions it is an “in-between city.” Urbanity, readily measured according to the European image of an ideal city, supposes a historically evolved, compact concentration. But the Ruhr Region, or “Ruhr City” to evoke one of the area's latent fantasies, is most definitely not Siena, Florence or Paris. The Ruhr has no center. Along with its mono-structural industrial heritage, the specific urban dimension of the Ruhr Region is the key to understanding not only its weaknesses but also its potential strengths. The Ruhr Region has proven this strength in how it turned one of its alleged weaknesses, the ruins of the industrial age, into a spectacle. According to Burgdorff, the achievement of the Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) in 1999 was to invent the industrial forest and to claim that birches on rubble constitute a forest, or that the cesspool –i.e., the Emsch drainage system – is in fact a river, and that industrial culture is beautiful. The splendor of the IBA lent the region is essentially philosophically, when the core activity of philosophy resides in creating new concepts, positing original arguments, and being productive (Deleuze/Guattari).

Untouched by IBA productivity, the Ruhr centers fell by the wayside. Which is different from what's happening in eastern Germany, where attractiveness is being developed purposefully through the re-historicizing of city centers: Leipzig, Dresden, and Görlitz are all becoming tourist destinations by revitalizing their respective past. In contrast, the city centers in the Ruhr are left to eke out a miserable exist-

ence. The idea of what the Ruhr Region wants from a (its) center is still half-baked, and this indecisiveness finds its corresponding aesthetic expression in the interchangeable stretches of bland consumerism lined with shops selling per kilo, per cent, or in a permanent state of clearance sales. The bull is being taken by the horns elsewhere. What the center lacks is being established on the outskirts, brand new and grand: event arenas like the indoor ski run in Bottrop or the Schalke Arena in Gelsenkirchen document the longing to substitute ruins with dream factories. And ultimately Los Angeles is de-central as well. In the process the Ruhr Region, whose transport system and road network reaches into every last corner, could easily become sufficient unto itself. Urban planners even speak of the suburban Ruhr Region as the topography of a future in which the classical center would lose its importance. The city dwellers of tomorrow scatter to the green belts, live on the outskirts, commute to work, and take care of the rest somewhere in between. But the visionary factuality of the Ruhr Region is still a step or more ahead of the people living there. For all the talk of a region, boundaries are readily drawn on a municipal scale: residents of Wattensheid, traumatized by their administrative dissolution and incorporation into Bochum, now regard shopping in Essen as a matter of principle; someone from Dortmund is in truth a Westphalian, and the heart of every Duisburger beats for the Rhineland, but when it comes down to soccer there is, unsurprisingly, only one winner anyway.

But the Ruhr Region's economic problems are also slumbering in the topographical superstructure, claims Dr. Dieter Rehfeld, director of the research group Innovative Spaces at the Institute for Labor and Technology in Gelsenkirchen. For decades, everything functioned according to the solidarity principle, exactly like the communities based on the steel and coal industries from the old days: everything is distributed amongst everyone. But when every city wants to be able to offer everything, then from the outside it is very difficult to recognize what

the region actually stands for today. This is not due to a lack of potential: a handful of highly professional companies are pursuing seminal activities (IT, logistics) in the Ruhr Region, not to mention the new boom in the steel business. Companies are already interconnecting in a way that is loosening the somewhat self-enclosed structure of the Ruhr Region: the chemical industry in the northern Ruhr is cooperating with nanotechnology firms in Münster, while logistic field firms in Duisburg are working together with the Lower Rhine. This does not disrupt existing structures but creates potential centers. In contrast, as a place of recreation, the Ruhr Region is still a unique experimental field. The IBA's idea to cover the Ruhr Region with decentralized fixed points which will eventually grow together into a recreation and cultural network, has yet to come to fruition: well spread out from one another, at times the individual projects seem like cathedrals in the desert. But didn't the first hotels in dusty Las Vegas once stand like lonely giants in no man's land? Shrugging off an image requires time, and this is especially true for transforming one of the largest coal and steel regions in Europe into a post-industrial cultural location: the old tissue must first accept the new before they can grow. And that has definitely happened over the past few years: today exhibition halls hide in enormous gasworks which line the highway like giants who have fallen asleep. In their bowels, Christo has already stacked countless oil barrels on top of one another, and Bill Viola has let angels plummet into the depths. Colored coiled neon lights transform the former smelting works, today a landscape park in Duisburg-Meiderich, when darkness falls onto a postmodern Sunset Boulevard, which doesn't look as mournful as one would suspect. Quite the contrary in fact: because of their humorous megalomania, the dimensions of many projects make reference to the queen of the exaggerated gesture, Las Vegas. At a place where there is no longer anything, suddenly everything is permissible again.

For a long time the negative effects of the “old” Ruhr Region's decline were cushioned, perhaps for too long, but it is nevertheless askew to want to compare this decline with how industries in eastern Germany were simply abandoned, triggering severe consequences. While in the West, post-industrial structural change took place in a decentralized region, economic transformation in the East amounted to nothing less than a structural collapse that spawned a de-industrialized territory. Here it is less a matter of adapting to rapid modernization; it's about life in cities that were forced in part to “close down.” It is not without a certain tragicomic twist that the “old West” and the “new East” encounter one another again in the course of their bids to become Europe's Capital of Culture for 2010: Essen and Görlitz have made it to the final round. The small but important difference in this inner-German competition is, however, that unemployment figures and migration statistics are, for once, not being reckoned against one another.

Julia Grosse studied art history in Bochum and moved to London in 2004, where she is working on her dissertation and is a freelance correspondent for cultural and social topics – for the taz and FAS, among others. She is a founding member of the correspondent network, Weltreporter.net.

Gudrun Sommer is director of the Duisburg project docs! Dokumentarfilme für Kinder und Jugendliche and selects and organizes film programs (“passengers – dokumentarische Positionen beim Anblick der Grenze,” 2001; “was bisher geschah: erinnerungstechniken im dokumentar- und experimentalfilm,” 2002) and exhibitions (including “G.R.A.M.,” “Peter Piller,” “thanatronics”) for the Duisburger Filmwoche.

going public De/construction of Monument

In any other city of the world a monument for Bruce Lee would be a monument honoring an actor – except in Mostar. In the city traumatized and divided by war, where reconstruction has turned into a continuation of the war with other means, and even municipal elections are contested as a life-and-death struggle between ethnic groups, the monument for the universal kung fu fighter is far more: a recapturing of public space beyond ideology, a pointer to the fictitiousness of all heroes, and, above all, a reminder of the fight for justice, irrespective of social or ethnic background. Nino Raspudić retraces how Urban Movement Mostar, supported by the “relations” project De/construction of Monument, erected a Bruce Lee monument in Mostar’s city park.

A Hero from a Better World

by Nino Raspudić

On Saturday, 26 November 2005, the world’s media, after an absence of several years, once again considered the city of Mostar to be news-worthy. The news broadcasts of the large television stations, usually overflowing with the latest news on terror attacks, epidemics, natural disasters, and political scandals, reported on the unveiling of a shiny bronze sculpture of Bruce Lee in the city park. The film clips had a strange effect, as if the kung fu master came from another world, a different dimension. Ten years before, Mostar had provided, duty bound, the world’s media its quota of destruction, blood, and suffering, which is today being met by Baghdad and Kabul. The city was a symbol for the recent Balkan wars, first through the destruction and then through the partition, which brought with it an insular, almost autistic cultural exclusion. How could the idea for the world’s first Bruce Lee monument originate in this city of all places? How did it all begin and why was one of the world’s best-known monument initiatives of the last few years founded here in Mostar?

In July 2005, the board of Urban Movement Mostar (of which the author of this text is a member) publicly announced plans to erect a Bruce Lee monument and invited artists to submit proposals. After the announcement filtered through the local media, a minor miracle took place: the news echoed incredibly throughout the whole world. The resonance was especially overwhelming in the former Yugoslavia. Bruce Lee in Mostar – where in the 1990s people had experienced horrific destruction, a traumatic political-economic transition, and the breakup of long-standing social structures and forms of cultural identification. The idea prompted a heated debate about monuments and the meaning of public spaces and remembrance. At the same time, the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art launched De/construction of Monument, a project supported by “relations”

that focused on the same problematic. Those involved in this project viewed the initiative for the Lee monument as an original, theoretically sound intervention in public space and actively took part in its realization. Despite numerous difficulties (above all, in attaining the required administrative approvals), the initiative reached its goal triumphantly after two years and four months of toil. The wonderful, 1.68 m-high bronze statue, which depicts a life-size Lee in a defensive pose, is located centrally in the city park on a stone pedestal bearing the inscription “Bruce Lee, 1940-1975. Your Mostar,” very close to where the frontline once ran. And already, after just a few months, life has returned to the desolate park. The monument is an attraction: people pose for photographs with the statue, children climb up onto the pedestal and give Lee a hug, passers-by salute him, and some even respond to his open, outstretched hand with a playful slap (“give me five”). Even an act of vandalism, during which one of his fighting sticks was pilfered, only proves that this is a “living” monument that provokes reaction. If a monument was erected in memory of Bruce Lee in any other city in the world, one could well understand it as reverential gesture for an esteemed actor (e.g. the world’s second Bruce Lee statue was erected in his home city of Hong Kong, only one day after that in Mostar), or as a bizarre idea concocted by provincial kung fu fans. In divided Mostar though, things with Bruce Lee are more complex and multifaceted, and we’re glad that most of the media didn’t treat the news as a joke but appreciated it as something genuinely serious and well thought-out. During the wars fought on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, it was Mostar perhaps that suffered the worst fate. In this city laden with a history, in which all three ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina lived, two wars were fought in succession, and both were slugged out right in the city center. At the end of these wars, the city’s residents found themselves divided

into two communities, a Croatian and a Bosnian. The painful reconstruction and the even more painful reunification are continuing. Even if the city is formally a municipality, because of resettlement, this construct still functions factually as a loose brace for two ethnically homogenous entities. Under these circumstances, urban regeneration has turned into a “continuation of the war by other means.” Each of the two halves strives to impose “their” mark on “their” space, appropriating space by building religious and cultural objects and symbols. Technically speaking, the work done is of a staggeringly poor quality. This is in turn exacerbated by a general disregarding of laws, manifest in the destruction of public space through building illegal houses (undertaken predominantly by the nouveau riche, the profiteers of the war, and anarchic transition). It is thus understandable why Mostar residents are increasingly overcome with the sense that this is no longer their city and are neglecting their own public space.

The initiative to erect the Bruce Lee monument was not only an attempt to give back public space some of its lost significance, but also to call into question the symbolic meaning of old and new monuments and, thus, the venerated greats. Theoretically, the idea behind the monument may be generally understood as taking a postmodern approach: the commingling of “high culture” (monuments, monumentality, and bronze) with “low” genres (mass culture, kung fu, and childhood heroes) generates a short-circuit in one’s ingrained response. The “high” is deconstructed, while the “low” – which recalls the small things in life, things which do not explicitly refer to politics and ideology and do not disunite people or nations but connect – is elevated. The function of the Bruce Lee bronze in the city divided by war is obvious, and we do not shy away from the most superficial of interpretations: with this statue we want to mock the cult and general mythomania surrounding the figure placed on the pedestal. Lee became popular as a film fiction, and, in this respect, his monument stands in space like a large, bronze question mark. It reminds us that our “heroes” are quite often fictional. The citizens of this city, traumatized by war and still divided, carry such an onerous burden of prejudice that even municipal elections are styl-

ized as a life-and-death struggle for each of the respective ethnic groups.... In a run-down and plundered city, the governing authorities deliberately shift problems onto an ideological level and maintain a balance of fear. Politics and ideology have seeped into and poisoned all areas of everyday life throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, in such times, with Lee’s monument we want to remind people that a large chunk of our lives – childhood memories – and values have nothing to do with politics. Hence, one crucial concern of the monument is to defend the field of the non-political and to lend it dignity.

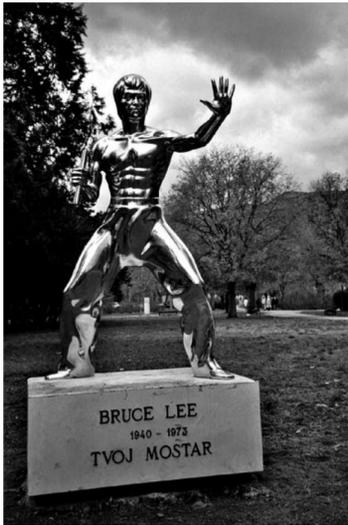
This does not mean that we are putting forward a case for the apolitical, and we are most certainly not advocating a flight into an infantile realm. We simply want to mark out a few spheres of life and recall other things that are also part of our identity – and in whose name nobody has to kill or be killed. In a city where everything is divided into two, we want to remind people that there are numerous things outside the spell woven by nationalist conflicts, things which all of Mostar’s citizens share and connect them – Bruce Lee appeals to everyone, to Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, to left- and right-wingers.... Lee is universal, and what’s more, he is a concrete image that arouses specific emotions. For the generations that grew up in the 1970s during Lee’s lifetime and after that with his films, he stood for integrity, protecting the weak, and above all, the fight for justice. For this reason, one can say that in Mostar a monument was erected not only in honor of an actor or figure embodying these virtues, but for the idea of justice itself.

And last but not least, Bruce Lee was a symbolic bridge between East and West. At the unveiling ceremony, the German and Chinese ambassadors to Bosnia-Herzegovina spoke eloquently and ingeniously about this aspect. The child of a Chinese father and an English mother, he migrated as a young man to the US, where he preceded to make not just Eastern martial arts popular in the West, but Eastern culture in general. Inasmuch, it is hardly surprising that we chose Lee to stand between east and west Mostar. His statue has already become an attraction. It is on the agenda of every tourist visiting Mostar. Even a stamp featuring the Bruce Lee monument is to be issued. Thus, “official” institutions like the post office recognize an initiative that emanated “from below,” from a citizen’s organization. Immodest, we hope that this monument, which stands for the small things in life connecting all of the city’s citizens, may contribute, as the smallest common denominator, to the formation of a new civic identity. We hope that one day a passer-by in Berlin, asked what they associate with Mostar, does not immediately think of the war. But spontaneously replies: “Mostar? Isn’t that the city with the Bruce Lee monument?”

Nino Raspudić is a co-founder of the Urban Movement Mostar. Since 2000, he is a lecturer at the Institute for Romance Literatures at the Zagreb Philosophy School, where his doctorate thesis was on “The Construction of Croatian ‘Otherness’ in Italian Literature.”

Bruce Lee, Mostar, and the Media

The official unveiling of the Bruce Lee monument on 26 November 2005 in Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina) generated an enormous resonance in the media – especially after one of the chains on the hero’s fighting sticks was stolen the same night. A look at the international press.



Photos:
Franziska Sauerbrey
Branimir Prijak



“New Monument in Mostar – Balkan Honor for Bruce Lee”

They all revered Bruce Lee, the fighter for good, justice, and a better world, in the heyday of his popularity in the 1970s: Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, leftists, and right-wingers. The Hong-Kong born son of a Chinese father and an English mother had propagated kung fu throughout the world, in both the East and the West, as a means of securing world peace. In Mostar, his determined gaze is henceforth wisely directed towards the unburdened north. The unusual location of the film hero in bronze has already caused a stir worldwide, with good news finally coming from the Balkans, and enriching Mostar with another (but this time untainted) landmark.
Wok Woker M., “Neue Zürcher Zeitung,” 11.22.2005

“Kung Fu in the Balkans”

The idea of erecting a monument for a hero from their untarnished childhood world in Veliki Park(next to Tito’s partisans) is probably the most radical one they could have come up with in this war-shattered city: 1.70 meters tall and made of bronze, with a small drinking well in the pedestal. Anyone who wants to drink from it must bow to the master. That’s not just a bit of fun. It’s a cry for help.
Stefanie Flamm, “Der Tagesspiegel,” 11.26.2005

“Bruce Lee – Pioneer for Bosnia”

Bruce Lee gives us an ironic answer to the deadly serious messages of political and religious monuments. He reminds many people of Yugoslavia’s golden years in the 1970s. He inspires a “Yugo nostalgia” that is not tinged with political bias but slumbers in individual memory. He defends the life stories they share with one another against the divisive doctrine of national histories.
Andreas Ernst, “NZZ am Sonntag,” 11.20.2005

“Strange Honor for Bruce Lee”

Today everybody knows Mostar as the city whose bridge was destroyed. Perhaps it will one day be known as the “city with the monument for Bruce Lee.” His figure on the marketplace is probably the only one that all ethnic groups could agree on. Unless it turns out that Bruce Lee had a Serbian grandmother.
Hanns-Georg Rodek, “Die Welt,” 9.15.2005

“Methods of the ‘Little Dragon’ too weak for Politicians”

Several hundred, predominantly younger Mostar citizens attended the unveiling ceremony. Not a single politician was present, but, frankly speaking, that was a good thing. For integrity and justice are concepts which Mostar, thanks mainly to its politicians, cannot claim to embody at present. At least the mayor, Ljubo Bešlić, apologized for his absence, citing a tight schedule. “No problem! It’s not a bad thing at all that no politicians are joining us today. We didn’t send them extra invitations, nor do we consider them to be anybody special,” declared Gatalo. For two years “nut cases [had to fight] nut cases and the clever the clever” before they could realize their idea.
“Oslobodjenje,” 11.27.2005

“Poor Bruce Lee”

The monument in Mostar dedicated to the great fighter and fist-philosopher Bruce Lee is an ironic-serious appeal intended to help restore the inner unity of this divided city. And indeed, the whole of Mostar attended the official unveiling at the end of last week. Shortly afterwards, however, local hooligans joined forces, snapping the chains off of the great athlete’s fighting sticks, and damaging the whole figure – to the horror of Mostar’s citizens. Unity of this sort had not been expected.

“Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,” 11.29.2005

“Why Mostar is a Lost Cause”

It would have been fantastic if Nino Raspudić and Veselin Gatalo, the intellectual creators and enthusiastic planners behind the erection of the monument for Bruce Lee in Mostar, had been able to realize their original idea. That they failed, the fact that someone was so quickly on the spot to damage and destroy their many years of work, confronts us with a truth which is painful and terrible, but is no less correct because of it: it’s not worth fighting for a normal Mostar. This city is definitively a lost cause, whether viewed from the eastern or western part of the city. MOSTAR? Read: failed!
Senad Avdić, “Slobodna Bosna” (Sarajevo), 12.1.2005

“The ‘Little Dragon’ from the Neretva”

When talking about Mostar the latest sensation is something that has already caused a stir for more than two years now and not only on the Internet. In this abnormal, small city, on Saturday, November 26, in charming surrounds a monument was finally unveiled for one of the 20th century’s greatest legends, teachers, and world-class masters – for the deceased Bruce Lee, the staunch fighter for justice, truth, equality, etc. [...] The rightfully ironic initiative of the Mostar planners, which runs counter to the context of the past 15 years, ended, almost inevitably, ingloriously. In this backwoods wasteland, at this place where according to some sources the West collides with the East and, whenever the world powers need new mandates in our vicinity, the leading minds (repeatedly and anew) clash and burst like overripe rosehips in front of the eyes of television viewers in the countries of the former entente; in such an environment, skeptics would say that it is simply stupid to even ponder doing something – and even if it is only virtually – that could be meaningful and have a positive effect.
Venislav Džidić, “Nin” (Belgrade), 12.1.2005

“In a Hero’s Nest: How Bruce Lee Is Given a Hard Time in Mostar”

So this is how it will go down in the annals: the Mostar monument for the “little dragon” was the first in the world, just as the stone Tolstoy in Selca on the island of Brač was the first monument worldwide for the classic Russian author and the stone John Paul II at the same place was the first statue worldwide devoted to this pope. This is where we are: 65rd place in economic growth, 89th place in the fight against corruption, but always first when it comes to building monuments. Sometimes in honor of kings, sometimes in honor of unknown heroes, sometimes in bronze, sometimes in stone, but mostly pure invention. [...] Likewise with the monument for Bruce Lee: when one day patina covers his highly polished muscles it will not recall the silver-screen fighter against injustice but a time in history that missed him badly, at least in one country and one city in which every idea and every memory of a plain, romantic, simplistic understanding of the law – as Bruce Lee had administered it with his fighting sticks – was destroyed.
Boris Dežulović, “Globus” (Zagreb), 12.2.2005

going public WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL

The WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL project of the Kunsthaus Dresden, realized in cooperation with Visual Seminar, Sofia, and “relations,” has been investigating transformation processes in post-socialist cities since the fall of 2004. Artists and cultural theoreticians have analyzed and discussed the rearrangement of urban space, altered cityscapes, and concepts of the public realm in a series of workshops, symposia, and artistic works. An international group exhibition in the Kunsthaus Dresden to be held in the summer will mark the project’s conclusion. Torsten Birne and Sophie Goltz, co-curators of the project, speak here about WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL and the process of exchange.



Antje Schiffers: “In Sofia,” 2006

The Limits of Capital

by Torsten Birne and Sophie Goltz

WHOEVER KNOWS ONLY HALF, KNOWS NOTHING – this slogan advertising the magazine “Capital” hung from a high-rise at the Bayerische Platz in Leipzig for a few weeks last year. The Leipzig artists Jan Wenzel and Anne König presented a snapshot of the ad at the WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL symposium held in Dresden in August 2005. They depicted the changes in their city since the fall of Communism not only through visual materials however, but also eavesdropped on Leipzig’s acoustic transformation as well: from the changed public address system at the main train station to a comparison of the engine sounds made by a Trabant (a well-known car produced in the former GDR) versus those of a BMW.

“Whoever knows only half, knows nothing”: this slogan could also be an apt description of the working process undertaken by the WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL project, out of whose first phase – the gathering and exchange of information and impressions, followed by discussion at the symposium – the second phase now follows, the exhibition of artistic works. From the outset, the encounter between artists and theoreticians from Dresden and Sofia was structured to facilitate a steady convergence of different approaches, a passing through several phases within which opinions and preconceptions about capitalist processes of development were to be refuted, differentiated, and finally reformulated into new insights. How are concepts of the public sphere changing? How can the experience of a new economic system be made comprehensible through biographies? Which aspirations or longings are coalescing with the capitalist system and which experiences of disillusionment? Where do the different spatial concepts and the interests pursued by the actors clash? And can we really

apprehend “space” as a real or imaginary border that capitalist praxis cannot transgress, as the Bulgarian cultural theorist Ivaylo Ditchev claims?

“In a way, space is one of the fundamental limits of capitalism: the intuition of space implies otherness; the underlying belief of capitalism is that anything can be replaced by another.” Ditchev introduced this idea into the discussion at the Dresden symposium. Given the preceding initial encounter between the project’s participants from Dresden and Sofia and the frenzied system change which has thoroughly shaken living conditions in Sofia, it was not initially clear from a “western” perspective whether Ditchev was formulating an opinion or a hopeful expectation. After all, the choice of WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL as a title stemmed from the observation that capital seemingly overcomes every conceivable limit and spurs on relentless “exchange”: from signs on facades to personal histories, from workplaces to clothing, from supply and demand. The regulated egalitarianism of state socialism was exchanged for the repressive individualizing of capitalism.

In Ivaylo Ditchev’s view, what resists this attempt in the first instance – at least in Sofia – is something totally unexpected of post-socialist societies: privately-owned apartments. Private ownership – 90 per cent of all households – was the norm under the Communist regime in Bulgaria, and this was not only the case for the mixed districts built in the 1950s close to the center but also extended to the concrete high-rises built later along the city’s outskirts. To this day the sacrosanct private apartment for Sofia’s citizens forms a boundary, a final bastion against a besieging alien power determining

their life-world and heralding social downgrading. But isn’t this boundary an illusion, a chimera?

The works on show in the summer exhibition, the finale to the WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL project, investigate these and other questions revolving around the relationship between space and capital. In the Kunsthaus Dresden, Eva Hertzsch and Adam Page (from Dresden) will stage a citizens’ assembly. A fictive live broadcast of the session behind closed doors shows video footage where city mayor Rossberg backs the sale of all of Dresden’s municipal apartments. The background: sixteen years after the fall of the Berlin wall, the Dresden city authority has managed to maneuver itself into a debt of such dimensions that only the privatization of 48,000 municipal apartments would appear to offer a way out. The bid by the American financial investor Fortress stands at around a billion euros – the end of the line for a city authority, its coffers now drained, which after 1990 had sought to set limits to the incursions of capital through its housing policies, through controlling the housing market, cleverly devised planning and models, and byelaws regulating space usage and advertising.

The works of other artists also address the expansionist impulse of capital, which goes so far as to even impede the promises of happiness it generates. In the laconic object of an elevator booth, Ivan Moudov (Sofia) has identified a fitting metaphor for the experience of shifting circumstances, reflecting advancement up the social ladder and the yearning for freedom. The hitch is that upon pressing the button the only thing that elevates is the floor.... Along the same vein, Krassimir Terziev’s artwork merges the separate routes of spending and earning

money, which pave their way through the city. He stages a collision between two buses, one with working migrants from eastern Europe, the other with western European tourists. The wreckage is accompanied by excerpts from a performance at the Semper Opera and a monitor displaying job ads. Andreas Siekmann (Berlin) investigates in his “theatrum oeconomicus” the role played by a company known as Treuhand in the privatization of the East German economy. In pictograms, charts, diagrams, and texts, but also a figurine merry-go-round, the rise and fall of Treuhand is staged as an example of corrupted political structures and the degradation of human labor to a mere statistical item. In contrast, the Dresden artist group Reinigungsgesellschaft experienced the privatization of the textile industry by a Serbian “Treuhand,” delayed by the civil war, as a tentative success story. Javor Gardev (Sofia) is to play the role of Major J. Stefanov, a leading figure in the newly formed “Sofia Taste Police.” Stefanov/Gardev will be interviewed by six of Bulgaria’s most popular television presenters. Through the authority exuded by the medium of television, this fiction turns into reality and aesthetic taste into a generally accepted law.

Against the backdrop of Dresden’s development into an “imaginary city,” and similar to how the sociologist Karl-Siegbert Rehberg has analyzed the pictographic arrangement of the Baroque in the city, the exhibition WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL depicts how both the influence of capital as well as the imagined limits of capitalism are leading to a reevaluation of social relations in post-Socialism.

See page 20 for more information on the exhibition.



thinking through

Nobody doubts that art, scholarly research, politics, and society stand in direct relationship to one another. Nevertheless, there is hardly any direct exchange amongst the protagonists from the different “systems.” “relations” wants to foster this communication and to this end initiates not only international networks but also provides a concrete physical space for discussion. In 2005, three first-rate interdisciplinary symposia were initiated where artists, theoreticians, and an interested public productively argued controversial issues: at the “ACADEMY REMIX” symposium, organized by the Städelschule and held in the Portikus im Leinwandhaus in Frankfurt am Main, about the methods and possibilities of art academies today; at the “Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given” symposium, organized by the Institute of Theater Studies of the University of Leipzig and held at the Schaubühne Lindenfels, on revising the approaches and writing of art history; and at the “WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL” symposium, organized by the Kunsthauus Dresden and held at the Dresden World Trade Center, on the transformation processes occurring in post-socialist cities. For the following contributions “relations” asked six symposium participants to think through the discussions. Which roles do “the artist,” “the scholar,” the “city dweller” adopt in society? What are the interactions between the city and politics or scholarly research and art? Big questions admittedly – and that’s why we would like to warmly thank the authors for tackling these questions and giving their answers in these short texts.

The Author as Representative

by Joseph Backstein

By the 1920s at the latest, artists in Russia saw themselves as “ideological patrons” – they represented others who were not in a position to do so. Nevertheless, they were well aware of a distance to the working class: in the 1970s, at the time of the second Russian avant-garde, they observed their own culture from the outside like ethnologists. Things have changed since the end of the Soviet Union. From patrons and ethnologists, the artist has moved on to become the representative of a new culture. Joseph Backstein writes here on the loss of critical distance and an increase in political importance.

In his essay “Artist as Producer” (1954), Walter Benjamin discusses the attitude artists in the Soviet Union had elaborated upon in relation to the subject they were to present and describe – the proletariat. He supposes that because the proletariat was not in possession of a language suitable for (self-) critically articulating, describing, or representing its class interests, the task falling to the artist was to supply the proletariat with such a language. As a result, the artist took on the role of an ideological patron for the proletariat, an ambivalent role for an artist. I understand the term “ideological patronage” to designate a situation where the artist takes on the role of representing others who are not in a position to articulate or represent their own interests, such as a proletariat without language, or if the social institutions of representation in any given society are lacking, as throughout Russian history, or had been dismantled, as in Nazi Germany.

This role of the artist as ideological patron is very typical for the whole history of Russian art and became even more important in the Soviet

Union. “The poet in Russia is more than a poet.” They are philosophers, visionaries, and misanthropes. And no doubt, for Russia Leo Tolstoy is more than a writer. Although art in Russia was unable to function as an autonomous social institution, artists nevertheless remained free or liberated individuals, producing works with autonomous meanings. In fact, the political situation under both the Tsars and Soviets ensured that the rich Russian tradition of hidden meanings, which was always regarded as quintessential to Russian art, was continued with, a form of conceptualism before Conceptualism: an art in which knowledge about an artwork’s context is more important than the aesthetic message of the artwork itself. We could say that the main antinomy of Soviet culture was based on how it was possible for the artist as an intellectual to continue to exist as an autonomously thinking being, so to say, as an ideological patron of him/herself, under the conditions of a totalitarian regime.

In the 1990s, Benjamin’s model of the artist as producer kept its role as a reference point, especially if its prerequisites were formulated in the manner of Hal Foster’s statement that “the site of political transformation is the site of artistic transformation as well...and that political vanguards locate artistic vanguards” (Hal Foster, “The Return of the Real,” Cambridge 1996). This coincidence of the political and the artistic was characteristic of both classic Russian avant-garde art referred to by Benjamin and the second Russian avant-garde, that is, the unofficial Russian art in the 1970s. Independent art has of course a marginal status in society and tries to keep a distance from the dominating culture, while concentrating all its efforts on creating a language of description powerful enough to offer a critique of the dominant culture. In Russia, however, because of its totalitarian character, the dominant culture was unable to produce self-criticism, and this had profound consequences for independent art, blocking any critical perspective.

The present-day situation of art in Russia is in many ways comparable to that in the West: it follows a multi-cultural paradigm which forces post-Marxist thought to reconsider the production model and especially the role of artist as producer. One of these reconsiderations stems from Hal Foster, who suggests a model of the artist as ethnographer. It is certainly interesting to retrospectively align this model with the situation of Russia in the 1970s. What kind of insights does it generate? Firstly, we can say that independent art was clearly aware of the ideological distance between its own position and that of Russian society. Indeed, there were artists who took their orientation – both directly and indirectly – from the values of the international art scene and took a position of the “Imaginary West” by considering themselves as representative of “western views.” They occupied the position of external spectators, the position of ethnographers, studying the local culture and the forms of local knowledge from this “western,” external perspective. This position, along with the fact that independent art produced an interpretation of Soviet phenomena which provided the proletariat with a language of self-criticism, ensured that artists, analogous to the situation of the 1920s, once more adopted the role of ideological patrons. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it then became very important for them to use or transform this position of ideological patronage into a method or aesthetic strategy.

Since the 1990s, the position of an external spectator of the new official culture appears to be inappropriate to many artists. The dominant aesthetic during Soviet times was that of conceptualism. The artist described Russian life as an ethnographer would a strange, aboriginal culture, while – and this was historically unique – combining the experiences of an ethnographer with those of their subjects. In contrast, today the Russian artist no longer describes from a position of critical distance. Instead the artist represents, as Oleg Kulik in his

performance “Rabid Dog” (1994), where he got down on all fours to act out wild Russian capitalism. The work of contemporary Russian artists can be read as a representation of the local social situation. The artist is no longer an ideologist or ethnographer, but a representative of that culture. The model of representation here is not aesthetic but political.

If in the 1970s Russian artists became ethnographers during the isolation of Soviet society, since the 1990s an impenetrable complexity is in the ascendancy. Now the role of the artist is being read as that of the representative. Western interpretations of Russian art are either mediated or negotiated through these two frameworks. And they are tinged with certain national stereotypes circulating in the West as the result of economic and political changes in Russia. (As Ilja Kabakov exhibited an installation entitled “Toilet” at the Documenta IX in 1992, many western colleagues asked me in all seriousness: “Are Russians really used to living in toilets?”) From all this we may conclude that in the art world – both in Russia and internationally – the scales are once again being tipped in favor of the political over the aesthetic. At the same time though, the generally held wish for more dialogue, reciprocal understanding, and cooperation in the field of culture will only be achieved if artists are able to refuse their current status as representatives of their own culture. But maybe this would mean the return of Benjamin’s “Artist as Producer” model.

Joseph Backstein is the coordinating curator of the Moscow Biennale, associate director of the national center for museums and exhibitions ROSIZO, and director of the Institute for Contemporary Art in Moscow. His numerous curatorial activities include the Russian pavilion at the 48th Venice Biennale (1999) and the Russian exhibition at the 25th São Paulo Biennale (2002). In November 2005, he took part in the “relations” symposium “ACADEMY REMIX” in Frankfurt am Main.

“I’m Interested in What I Can Give”

An interview with Sislej Xhafa

Beautiful Kosovar pickpockets in Italy, the Beatles in Tirana, or a cozy oriental police station in Ghent: for the last five years Sislej Xhafa has shown his works, realized in diverse media, in an international context. In museums, galleries, and best of all, on the streets. In 2005, Xhafa, born in Kosovo and currently living in New York after sojourns in Italy and Britain, represented Albania at the 51st Venice Biennale. A discussion about the artist as social visionary.

First of all, thank you for agreeing to talk with us about a topic as overwhelming as “the artist and society.” I would like to begin with a small detail, one could even say with a small-minded detail: what do you write down when you are asked to name your profession in an official form?

Sislej Xhafa: When dealing with bureaucracy I have no problem with calling myself an artist.



It makes things much easier. In the art world though, I would never describe myself as an artist – there I call myself a simple worker. The first time I stated my profession as “artist,” or to be more precise “pintore,” was in fact when I needed an Italian identity card and had to write down something. That worked – until I moved and had to renew the card, and the public officials wanted me to furnish proof that I was an artist. While most other people can prove their profession by submitting bills or the like, this kind of economic proof of existence is not so simple for artists. So I asked if I could give them a little performance. The officials refused my offer. The situation was really comical. In any case, since then my ID card states “no profession.”

Can you remember when you began to see yourself as an artist? And if yes, what did it feel like?

When I was eleven I lived in the center of Prishtina. On 11 March 1981, I remember as if it were yesterday, students took to the streets to demonstrate. A peaceful protest, I watched it from the roof. The students were protesting for university reforms. Then I saw police beating students at the fringes of the demonstration. In the evening news the student movement was

portrayed as nationalist and separatist, that it was seeking to unify Kosova and Albania. But that had absolutely nothing to do with what the students took to the streets to demonstrate for. I asked myself: How can that happen? How can thousands of voices not be listened to? I have been concerned with voices that go unheard ever since. I was only 15 when I completed my first project, “Museum for Our Identity.”

A monograph published last year called you “Xhafa, the Troublemaker.” Is this an accurate job title?

If Shkëlzen Maliqi calls me a troublemaker, then I have to respect that. Of course that involves a value judgment, depending on the standpoint of the observer. Personally I think that I’m a quite sensitive person. Even rather sweet. (Laughs) Perhaps it is my creativity that rocks the boat. I prefer to ask questions rather than give answers. And it is probably this questioning that creates the trouble. My work is geared to directing attention towards social problems, but always only through questions, never through answers. My research is not ideologically driven. And it is not “politically

closed. I really like to work in the city because it is so difficult to challenge the city. And I really like to work with people’s energy. It is true that collaboration is important to me, with institutions as well. In Ghent, I worked with a police station. In Frankfurt, I’m planning on a work in the Deutsche Bank. One should also work with McDonalds on a globalization project, simply because it is always better to work with than against something or someone.

What is the relationship between art and society, between art and politics? Should art reflect such relationships or be political in itself?

Creativity sustains a whole number of systems: justice, economy, and politics. This is very important, and I have great respect for the work done by judges, politicians, doctors, and so on. But they are pragmatic. Creativity must also give a vision of society. That is the role of the artist: to give a vision. For me art is not entertainment but contributes responsibly to a community. The people must listen to the poets. Whereby the challenge need not be political, it can also be aesthetic.



Does that mean that the artist bears a social responsibility?

No, the artist’s foremost task is to produce good art. That is sacrosanct. But secondly, art is produced in a social context and thus has a social responsibility – for example, the responsibility of naming the problems plaguing a society. If this is done with creativity, a vision arises from this almost automatically. And the vision forms the backbone of a society.

Does the publicly funded support artists receive today, at least in western Europe, inhibit their ability to formulate critical perspectives and compromise their independence?

Artists need support. But too much help makes one sluggish. I always had to struggle to survive and this struggle has made me richer, stronger, and more independent. I don’t really wish it on anyone, but at the same time, everyone should have to fight in some form. That is why I left the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London after just six months: because everyone there was good. How could everyone be good? Because they paid. I then worked as a kitchen hand, together with a Portuguese boss, an Italian chef,

and a Polish cleaner. The energy was unbelievable. The energy of sweat. I became an autodidact and have learnt solely through my own research. The street is the best art academy.

But you studied art for five years in Florence.

Yes, but in truth I was only enrolled because I had to be enrolled somewhere to become eligible for a residency permit.

You were born in Kosovo, studied in Italy, and today live in New York. Why did you take responsibility for the Albanian pavilion at the Venice Biennale?

Identities change constantly. Therefore, the national pavilions at the Biennale must call themselves into question. It would be brilliant if these standardized pavilions would place their space at the disposal of others – ultimately it is the artist’s provess that should draw the public’s attention and not the thinly veiled stereotypes of national identities. I wanted to challenge this traditional notion with my presence, to shift the boundaries running through art and geography.



Why do you still refuse to call yourself an artist today?

Because I still don’t know what it means to be an artist. Who invented the word used to define your individual creativity? How does instinctive action, how does magic materialize? Who are you? I can’t explain myself as an artist. But I can explain myself as a sensitive, creative person... perhaps as a sensitive troublemaker.

Interview: Christiane Kühn
Christiane Kühn lives as a freelance journalist in Berlin.

Sislej Xhafa was born in Peja, Kosovo, in 1970. He lives and works in New York. Solo projects include: “Miedo Total,” Fundació La Caixa, Barcelona 2004; “Twice upon a Time,” Maggazzino d’Arte Moderne, Rome 2005; “Motion in Paradise,” Deitch Projects, New York 2002; “Syium,” Aarhus Kunstmuseum 2001. Group exhibitions include: “Identity & Nomadism,” Palazzo delle Papesse, Siena 2005; e-flux Video Rental, KunstWerke, Berlin 2005; “DEMOCRACY IS FUN?” White Box, New York 2004; “OUR HOUSE IS A HOUSE THAT MOVES,” Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana 2004; “Further Passages – A Survey of Eastern European Video,” Renaissance Society, Chicago 2004; Manifesta 5, Ljubljana 2000. In November 2005, Sislej Xhafa took part in the “ACADEMY REMIX” symposium (see page 19) in Frankfurt am Main.

Capitalism without Bourgeoisie

by Luchezar Boyadjiev

The archenemy of the October Revolution was the bourgeoisie. That's why they were eradicated. Neo-capitalism is now giving birth to its own monsters: rising from the ashes of the hero of socialist labor is the neo-consumer, while beckoning from the glittering lifestyle ambience of the new "super cities" is the neo-bourgeoisie. Traditional civil engagement is alien to them – they take Europeanization to mean a new definition of the concept of private property. How is public space to be defended against incursions when one comes from a country where there is not even a word for "privacy"? Some thoughts by Luchezar Boyadjiev.

The neo-capitalist situation creates "super cities." That does not mean that such urban entities are necessarily economically vibrant or attract an immense influx of migrants to the point of bursting. The term "super city" simply

working definition. Let's say that I will be talking about visually detectable neo-capitalism. Neo-capitalism is one of the many types of capitalism. It's the kind of capitalism that originated in what was known in the former Soviet Bloc as late socialism. Neo-capitalism is rooted in the post-socialist situation and its main problem: the re-distribution of the common (public) "wealth" accumulated prior to 1989. The resolution of this problem is masked as a process of re-definition of the concept of property, private property more specifically, and the construction of a framework for its legal and fiscal fortification. There is always a plan for the construction of neo-capitalism, no matter how ironic that may sound after the command economy of socialism built on "five-year plans." Supposedly, in theory, there is a concrete model for the construction of neo-capitalism – the model of the western European market economy and parliamentary democracy. In reality, the construction follows its own logic of seemingly obvious decline, which is actually a mask disguising the fact that behind the shabby façade, elite(s) are re-grouping, property is being redistributed, and new political and economical alliances are being forged; henceforth, a position in the new social fabric is entrenched.

form of socialism subsequently realized were so successful in carrying through their project of social modernism (and modernization) that it entirely eradicated the initial enemy of modernism – in some socialist countries "épater le bourgeois" reached a point where there was simply nobody left to "épater." But it is clear today that this was a Pyrrhic victory, and so the new phase of "modernization" (or "civilizing mission") of these ultimately backward societies (like Bulgaria) comes under the guise of all-round "normalization," "Europeanization," and so on. This is, however, nothing other than a camouflaged reintroduction, reconstitution, and recreating of the bourgeoisie. The process is linked to the debate about public space in the neo-capitalist cities, its use, regulation, and definition. It seems to me that the process of negotiating public space in neo-capitalist cities is lacking a clear referent, and I think that's because there is simply no clear notion of what "public" might exactly mean. At least in the context of urbanity, the presence of a historically evolved bourgeoisie created historically formed notions of what it meant to live in a city. The notion of public space was related to the notion of "polis" as a political community and urbanity. However, one key aspect of the social-

It is entertaining to observe how the development of neo-capitalist societies has resulted in a twin birth: the birth of the consumer from the ashes of the hero of socialist labor and that of the neo-capitalist from the "apparatchik" (a high-level member of the nomenclatura). I am not saying that the neo-bourgeoisie is formed only from the ranks of the former socialist nomenclatura; on the contrary, many crossovers and interspecies are abundant. The main product of a neo-capitalist society is the creation of something like a bourgeoisie lifestyle environment, which is the overriding characteristic of urban visuality in neo-capitalist cities. These are probably the best examples of places that control human subjects, which, ironically, are constructed by humans themselves. These are places that both reflect and project a public space that is raped by private interest. The result is that the urban environment is turning into a media space. The active agent in this kind of city environment is the potential neo-bourgeois. He/she may come from any social strata; the factor defining and unifying them is their participation in defining a city's visual environment, either on the corporate or the neighborhood level. Either way, they strive to be present in and construct the media space of the city. In

The Return of the Traders

by Regina Bittner

The kiosk is the man in the street's answer to the radical economic changes taking place in eastern Europe. Likewise is the suitcase trade that links Moscow, Smolensk, and Istanbul: small-scale private enterprise markets have become the arena for a new model of transnational relations that oppose the monopolistic level of capitalism. Commuters and traders are altering geographies and creating new urban spaces. Regina Bittner takes a look at urban actors battling it out on hard-fought terrain.

The entrances and exits of the metro station Ismailowski Market in Moscow are overflowing with people, as on every Sunday. Located on the former Olympic site, the flea market is a massive array of warehouses, makeshift stands, open markets, and a half-completed theme park. In the adjacent parking lots, giant cardboard boxes and bags are being tied up or sealed and then stacked onto the cargo areas of buses bearing destination signs like "Saratow,"

ies or teachers in the garages converted into drugstores and boutiques. Many commute with the bus to Moscow twice a week to buy cheap goods. In the meantime, the city authorities in Smolensk are placing restrictions on the kiosks. With the change in consumer patterns and consolidation of the gap in income levels, they are now keen to also get rid of these providers of this "wild capitalism" in the city. Another change of scene: since the early 1990s, the Istanbul district of Laleli is a center of textile trade between the countries of the former Eastern Bloc and Turkey. As the borders were opened, Turkey's cheap textiles attracted droves of women traders from Russia to Istanbul. They bought as much as they could fit into their suitcases and bags to then resell the goods in Moscow. In this way they not only serviced the demand for consumer goods in Russia, but also contributed immensely to Turkey's economic upturn. Initially coined "Natasha trade" and thus associated with prostitution, this trade has become professionalized in the meantime. Hotels now offer Russian businesswomen organized shopping tours which last from Sunday to Thursday – so that the goods can then be sold at the market in Moscow on a Saturday. Most of the traders in Laleli can now speak good

so low that people saw themselves forced to secure their livelihood through a combination of informal jobs, subsistence economy, and formal employment. (1) Kiosk trade can be described as market-related informal activity: entering the market is easy, capital investment is low, and profits are, despite a lot of hard work, modest. Social recognition is correspondingly low. Self-exploitation or the exploitation of workers is the order of the day. (2)

The rapid opening to the world market after 1990 initially enabled goods and labor to flow back and forth unregulated. The substantial price and exchange rate differences gave rise to extensive, transnational trade and smuggling. The economic boom in Istanbul's Laleli district reached its peak during these years, while Moscow sunk into a mire of kiosk markets. People of various professions commuted between Istanbul and Moscow to resell vast amounts of textiles and fabrics in Russian cities. This development has prompted the Turkish sociologist Deniz Yükker to formulate the thesis that the restructuring of the world economy over the last few years has led to a revival of the market model Fernand Braudel elaborated upon in his analysis of economic life: the market as a zone

people have spent generations trapped in an insular society. The physical space of Russian society – we only need to call to mind the limited travel opportunities or the "propiska" registration system – was just as enclosed as that of its social space, evident in the lack of social mobility. Traders are regarded as the source for Russia's misfortune, and not only because they work for themselves instead of for the state. They are so threatening because their livelihood is based on the exchange of products over borders. (5) And in times of insecurity and disorientation, where practically everything – from street names to ownership structures – has or is changing, the territory (i.e., the locality) provides virtually the last bastion of collective certainty.

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1. Neef, Rainer: "Zum Begriff und zu den sozialen Funktionen der Schattenwirtschaft in Osteuropa," in: "Soziale Welt," no. 54 (2005), p. 265.



implies that in these cities a number of issue(s) acquire immense urgency: the pressure on urban communities and their existence; the rivalry between public and private space(s) and interest(s); the role of politics vs. the role of the economy; the structures and development of the city's visual interface as a reflection of the local configuration of global processes, etc. Irrespective of the size of a neo-capitalist city, these issues usually heat up the social as well as visual "temperature" of urban centers disproportionately to their role/status in the global economy/world. In other words, life itself in such cities is (most often unconsciously) a negotiating process that "questions" the very nature of what a city is. That's why they are "super cities" (or urbanopolises, whatever that means – but I like the metaphor), or "too-much cities," human environments that are overly contested by their own inhabitants, too contested for their own good.

But what is "neo-capitalism"? Although wary because I am neither an economist nor a political scientist, I would like nevertheless to offer a

Neo-capitalism proper becomes visible only as the re-distribution/re-grouping comes to an end and as a country undergoing this process embarks on a course of stabilization and "normalization." At this point, interference and surveillance by powerful international institutions and alliances with highly visible economical and/or political profiles is wished for and requested, such as the IMF, the World Bank, the EU, etc. We have neo-capitalism in its purest form when the whole process is legally channeled within the parameters of negotiations for full membership into the EU, with all its unavoidable consequences of tight monitoring and stricter regulations of all activities, profound changes in the legislature and the overall framework of the economy, as well as a modest degree of growth and secured basic human comforts for the population. The early stages of neo-capitalism will be over, at least in the case of Bulgaria and Romania, when the countries enter the EU (well, maybe). Neo-capitalism, at least in its early stages, is capitalism without a bourgeoisie. That's because the October Revolution and the

ist legacy is a lack of concepts for private and public, and hence their distinction. And in Bulgaria it's even more complicated because Bulgarian has no equivalent word to the English for "privacy." How can one negotiate "public," "publicly," and so on, when there is no clarity as to the limits of "private" and "privacy"? And that's not just a linguistic problem.

Furthermore, neo-capitalism is consumer society without consumers, or at least at present. There are, of course, the rich and poor. But there are no consumers yet! True, the process of city area(s) being defined according to wealth has recently started. But the consumer identity in neo-capitalism is only visible in the visual interface of its cities, mainly in places inundated with advertising. The process of bourgeoisie re-birth is linked to the process of imposing a new type of urban identity – the educated consumer. The question is, however, who are these specific human agents in this process, and how exactly is this process visible in the urban interface?

contrast, "regular" city dwellers, among them artists, are rarely able to react to the neo-capitalist urban surroundings in any other way but through activist gestures of questioning and transgression, which may look like an attempt by the educated elite to socially dominate the urban environment. Sad but true: capitalism without a bourgeoisie may also imply a neo-modernism without a telos.

Luchezar Boyadjiev is an artist and lives in Sofia. He is a member of Visual Seminar, Sofia (see page 18) and took part in the "relations" symposium "WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL" held in Dresden in August 2005. His exhibitions include: "Play Sofia" (Kunsthalle, Vienna 2005); "Urban Realities – Focus Istanbul" (Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin 2005); "Boundless Border" (National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest 2005); "The Collective Unconsciousness..." (Migros Museum for Contemporary Art, Zurich 2002).

"Krasnodar," and "Smolensk." The passengers have had a hard day: the traders embark on long, mostly overnight journeys to Moscow twice a week. For years Moscow has acted as a hub, a central reloading point for the transnational suitcase trade. Here is where the routes of traders and products from China, Pakistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the Caucasus intersect. The goods on offer originate from textile and leather manufacturers in Turkey and massive factories in China.

Change of scene: the kiosk market Kiseljovka in Smolensk is located at the terminus of tram no. 7, in the middle of Mikrorayon Papovka/Kiseljovka. Up until the end of the 1980s, here six rows of garages for Moskvichs, Ladas, and Saporochets were allotted to the prefab high-rise residential buildings. Since the mid-1990s, the garages have become the homes of kiosks. Besides the pensioners who today proffer homegrown potatoes and carrots on wooden boxes, at the Kiseljovka market one also encounters former accountants, secretar-

Russian, and they have changed their product lines to cater to the taste and preferences of Russian businesswomen; advertising is in both languages, and the deals are done in dollars. These three scenes are different arenas of an emerging model of private enterprise and transnational relations in eastern Europe, into which cities are embedded. The commuters and traders have become the new urban actors, and out of their activities a new geography has evolved that is made up of transnational flows, of people, goods, and capital. The kiosks were the answer the man in the street gave to the radical social upheavals in eastern Europe after 1990. Whereas the central European countries had already passed through the "transformation recession" triggered by radical privatization by the mid-1990s, in Russia the economic decline was delayed until the turn of the millennium. Here, for political reasons, the state had propped up employment in large industrial complexes, a strategy that was, however, only practicable by drastically cutting wages. While incomes may have been guaranteed, they were

of small profit and pronounced competition demanding high personal risk, and so characterized by insecurity, pitted against capitalism as a zone of particularistic profit, enormous concentration of capital, and monopolization. (5) Large enterprises are today operating beyond national boundaries in the same way as the increasingly developing shuttle trade. Cities in the former Soviet Union are thus becoming arenas where the marketplace is enjoying a revival. Local and transnational social practices converge here, and new urban spaces evolve out of the traders' activities. These spaces are thus the disputed terrain in a post-socialist society like Russia, where against the backdrop of growing social insecurity and instability, it is precisely the national, ethnic, and local elements that assume the function of providing a new sense of community. (4) In this context, the traders in a post-socialist urban space are perceived as a threat. The recourse to nationalist justifications of community is not just filling the ideological vacuum left behind by the collapse of Communism. It is also inherent to a context in which

2. Altvater, Elmar/Mahnkopf, Birgit: "Globalisierung der Unsicherheit," Münster 2002, p. 95.
3. Yükker, Deniz: "'Embedding' Trust in a Transnational Trade Network: Capitalism, the Market, and Socialism." <http://www.colbud.hu/honesty-trust/yukseker/pub01.doc>
4. Kaschuba, Wolfgang: "Geschichtspolitik und Identitätspolitik," in: Binder, Beate/Niedermüller, Peter/Kaschuba, Wolfgang: "Inszenierungen des Nationalen," Vienna 2001, p. 20 ff.
5. Humphrey, Caroline: "Traders, Disorder and Citizenship Regimes in Provincial Russia," in: Burawoy, Michael/Verdery, Katherine (ed.): "Uncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Post-Socialist World," Lanham 1999, p. 22 ff.

Thinking the Relationship – Art, Society, and Scholarship

by Michael Wehren

Where do cultural studies stand in relationship to the subject of its inquiries? What is their relationship to society and politics? Should they keep a distance or must they intervene – and if the latter, then what form should their engagement take? Michael Wehren, student and participant in the Leipzig symposium “Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given,” attempts a positioning.

Given the provisions of the present in which we live and the varying crisis-ridden historical, political, social, and ethnical positions and orders, scholarship cannot remain neutral. It cannot “sit on the fence,” and, in any case, it is hardly possible for scholarship to remain locked away in its ivory tower. Scholarship must open up to

irritation. The second example reveals a sensibility of how important it is to undertake cultural translation, to transgress academic borders.

What follows is not a critique of these models. Rather, I would like to sketch out a variant that takes their intentions seriously while offering an alternative. My experience at the Leipzig symposium “Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given” forms the starting point of my deliberations, and in many respects they are an extrapolation of my own symposium contribution, “Who Can Narrate without Translating?” My premise is that the call for a more direct exchange between scholarship and other forms of praxis does not mean speaking the same language, but that one listens to the language used by the other, that one exposes oneself to it. This can be irritating and painful, but that’s precisely the point.

As a eulogy of unnaturalness, scholarship must first translate the self-evident, the familiar of our pluralist present into its own languages. It queries what is routine by estranging and then rearticulating the everyday. In the hybrid space of culture, scholarship is a place from where voices, both those of others and one’s own, reverberate and then return as something strange, almost like an echo. Through this chance to perceive itself differently, it creates the possibility of change – in order to achieve it though, it must communicate with other forms of praxis. Formats like the East Art Map of the Slovenian artist group IRWIN (see page 18) contribute significantly to such communication.

When scholars and theorists open up to the makeshift arrangements of the pluralist present, they enter the arena of social conflict. In this respect, it was appropriate that the “Mind the

topographical features are observable. Take a map of the city where you live and go hiking.

That’s one aspect. The other is to hike with a strange map through your hometown. Encounters, discoveries, threatening and surprising experiences await you. Only by enduring and negotiating ambivalent experiences are new spaces of possibility opened up. The translation work of scholarship can contribute to the cultural perception of and respect for what is different, if not alien, which is also, but not only, intrinsically one’s own. But the experience of the symposium teaches us another thing as well: translation is not only a challenge in the aforementioned sense, but also affects scholarship’s encounter with itself. Just as heterogeneous claims in the cultural field collide with one another, so, too, do they impinge on one another in the different conceptions of scholar-



conflicts, to what’s different, to the non-contemporaneous, and to the contradictory claims of our living worlds.

By and large, this is a rightly-held widespread view. However, answering the questions which emerge from this conclusion – How is scholarship to become engaged? How does it take part? – is far more difficult. Or to put it differently: there are good reasons to be skeptical towards most approaches to this problem.

Broadly speaking, there are two paradigmatic examples of such approaches: firstly, the demand that scholarship becomes political, that scholarship be geared towards political action; and secondly, the demand that scholarly theorems be retranslated into a “more accessible” or “comprehensible” everyday language. The first example points to the necessity of grasping scholarly work as intervention, intrusion, and

Because the claims and demands made of scholarship in the intercultural field are not clear-cut, scholarship – in so far as it is aware of the necessity and inevitability of taking a position – can only do justice to the required urgency by temporarily withdrawing. In contrast, however, if scholarship responds to the claims made by the political field with a superficial self-politicization in the sense of “becoming political,” it will not be able to do justice to what may be described as the situation of responsibility. And in the same way, scholarship cannot relieve art of its work, it cannot perform any kind of other, “different” work on art’s behalf.

Scholarship steps up to art, society, and politics in difference. Stepping-up-in-difference means issuing a challenge to translate. A challenge because by withdrawing scholarship necessarily ruptures the alleged (or ideological) homogeneity of the arts, politics, or societies.

Map!” symposium was staged outside the university, at the Schaubühne Lindenfels, a well-known location of cultural production. Only by allowing itself to be unsettled by praxis, and so experience its own limits, can scholarly theory (re-)form responsibility as praxis. On the other hand, it delineates the limits of other forms of praxis and so extends their sense of possibility.

Possessing the potentiality of an interval, the phase of encounter and negotiation always harbors the possibility of critique: not as the application of prescribed rules but the invention of new rules. Scholarship in exchange with other forms of praxis facilitates experience – a searching out of new paths. Recalling Alexander Kluge, I would like to formulate a thought experiment. Imagine you are in a landscape: it is craggy, with lots of blind corners, and there is no single vantage point from where all of its

ship and scholarly engagement. Scholars are certainly neither immune to ignorance and moral resentment, nor the ill will not to listen to others. But the opposite is also true.

Michael Wehren studies theater and philosophy at the University of Leipzig. He is a co-organizer of the interdisciplinary colloquium “What is Community?” and co-editor of “Misery and Noblesse: Leipzig’s Magazine for Theater Culture.” In October 2005, he took part in the symposium “Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given” in Leipzig (see page 19).

Theory and Performance: Positions

by Bojana Cvejić

Can art be generated discursively? Is critique performed? Coming from the eastern European context of collective artistic production, what does it mean to be active in the West, where the right to artistic expression is regarded as the epitome of personal freedom? The theoretician and performer Bojana Cvejić on the limits of textuality as an intellectual mindset and work as an open-ended process of knowledge production.

As a theorist from the East living in western Europe, you are implicated by a distribution of roles confronting you with questions: who has the right to art? Whose access to art was and

to identify with. Why? Because the mechanism of such identification was never in force there. Having no ideology invested in liberal individualism, the right to art as the sublime epitome of individual freedom isn’t self-evident in your book. It is rather imbued with the concern: what is to be done? Or better still, what is problematic in the way that it should be undone? You arrive in the West with your knowledge of theory – the absolute noun “theory” standing for the material and linguistic practice of theories such as post-structuralism or bio-politics – and your analytical apparatus in the moment where criticality is the attitude prided by them all. Theory is everywhere: it lives itself out in concepts, approaches, ideas, and even buzzwords in the daily practice of self-reflection and self-representation, but also in marketing. Beyond any moral judgment, theory’s ubiquity should be seen as the common ability to man-

a background in musicology and performance studies who enters the performance scene in the West, your jobs are numerous: performer, dramaturge, critic, teacher. The modes in which you participate in the practice of theory are the modes of theory in the performance field. Theory is performed, and the particular genre of “lecture-performance” is only the symptom which makes explicit the realization of what a tool-machine theory became for performance in the past decade. One could list off the books which figured in the works of performance in the 1990s in various ways. The whole pragmatics of theory in the performing arts today comprehends a range of usages. Theory for instrumental reading means reading theory to devise a procedure based in appropriating and translating knowledge from an area outside performance into performance. In criticism, theory is (rarely though) sought to frame and naturalize

retical work motorized by critique can only be reductionist. Reducing a discursive position to transparency is no longer a viable strategy for the simple reason that it won’t bring the effect of change where it critically targets it. You conclude that you have to rethink the role of theory and how you should practice it now when you have experienced and become fully aware of the neo-liberalism which, among other things, recuperated theoretical criticality. To reorient theory from interpretative and critical to experimental and inventive work – this means to invest in searching for those conditions in which new theorizations, new practices, new forms of work and life can possibly emerge. You need theory to overcome your cynical and opportunistic moods, the moods in which you see the relation with the possible in as much as it is possible. So you make an effort at transforming contexts of problematization, producing situa-

remains a theoretical one? Your position in the context of your origin grew out of such reasoning: if the territory of the performing arts in the East is blank, then it needs the work of theory to produce art discursively. If artists cannot produce themselves out of the art doxa, theory will produce performing arts theory, so perhaps it will take a critical mass of theoreticians and artists educated in art theory for the performing arts in the East to shift their paradigm. This was a mission you pursued in your country.

Coming out of post-socialism, out of a country without the history of a nation-state and, therefore, without the Modernist institution of authorship, you always operated within different frames of collectivity, and this made one skeptical of the aura surrounding the natural, naïve, yet veiled profundity of the artistic practice. Artists’ resistance to theory – with the notions of intuition and self-expression – is what you observe from the outside, from a place where you cannot subscribe to the mechanism of the artist representing free individuality for an audience

age amidst continual innovation, in the act of communication where what counts is less the “what” than the pure and simple ability to say. The Italian theoretician and operaist Paolo Virno underscores the pervasive tonalities in the contemporary forms of life as curiosity – a “degraded and perverse form of love for knowledge,” an “insatiable voracity for the new in so far that it is new,” and as “spontaneous epistemology” or “idle talk” – the possibility of understanding something without previously making the thing one’s own.

So, if theory is yet another super-structural development of late capitalism where knowledge features as the immaterial form of informational commodity, it also empowers its subjects with language skills for self-reflection and an inclination to learn. The field in which you are testing this assumption is the performing arts in Europe. You wonder where to search for theory there. You ask bluntly: who is doing theory? – and you immediately find yourself practicing it in multiple roles. As a theoretician with

concepts alien to “normal” practices. When the work remains vague and incomprehensible due to a lack of articulation, theory may be called in to justify it.

Performing and instrumentalizing theory for artistic practice, interpreting and justifying by theory – all these activities reveal a mindset based in textuality. Textuality as a mindset with which we write concepts for applications for subsidies, our program notes and reviews, in which we present and produce ourselves, aim at a critique by interpretation, or by a proposition which critically re-reads, re-interprets, poses itself against the essentialist heritage: it says, it utters this is, this could be performance as a contingent statement. This is the problematization, the task of undoing that seems problematic and your theoretical access to art made it your concern. Now that the goal of producing theoretical knowledge in and for the field of performance is completed, as theorization has expanded and affirmed itself in different modes of art practice, you can agree that further theo-

tions from the assumption that the capacity to act is greater than the means to realize it, that the potentiality is really different than the possibility understood as opportunity.

You begin using theory to rethink autonomy from predefined frames, in concrete procedures such as organizing one’s own working conditions or exploring and exchanging knowledge without ownership. You organize yourself and you invite others to do the same, to make work an open process of knowledge production without immediate, pragmatic instrumentalization.

Bojana Cvejić is musicologist and performing arts theoretician from Belgrade, based in Brussels. She has staged experimental music theater performances and developed and performed a textual theater practice with the Dutch theater director Jan Ritsema. She also collaborated with choreographers and directors Xavier Le Roy, Eszter Salamon, Emil Hrvatin, Christine Gaigg et al. Regularly writes for a number of performance journals. In October 2005, she took part in the symposium “Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given” in Leipzig (see page 19).

Agenda

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Peripherie 3000

A project of the Hartware MedienKunstVereins, Dortmund, in collaboration with Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, Croatia, and “relations.”

April 21, 2006

Klub Peripherie 3000
Sissikongkong, Dortmund

At an informal get together cultural actors from the Ruhr Region will meet the participants of the international colloquium “What kind of cultural institutions do we need? On the (political) effects of structures.” Besides featuring the European premiere of the new video work by the Dortmund media artist Thomas Köner, “Périphériques,” and a presentation by Klaus Heid on his research into Khuza culture, this meeting will also focus on the upcoming decision, to be made in May, on the “Essen for the Ruhr Region” bid to be European Capital of Culture 2010.

April 22, 2006

Colloquium: “What kind of cultural institutions do we need? On the (political) effects of structures” (in English)
domicil, Dortmund

At this colloquium, open to the general public, representatives from different international cultural institutions and initiatives will present theoretical positions and practical models of organizational structures. Featured speakers include Vasif Kortun, Gerald Raunig, and Bojana Cvejić.

April 23, 2006

“Discovering Zagreb (via Dortmund),”
public excursion in Dortmund, presented by stadtraum.org (Düsseldorf);

“Cruising Identity – the Ruhr Region,”

Phoenix Hall Dortmund, presented by orange.edge (Dortmund) and Platforma 9,81 (Zagreb);

“Solo: Cycle / 1 / Project On Labour,”

dance performance by Željka Sančanin, Phoenix Hall Dortmund, presented by MeX (Dortmund) in collaboration with the Center for Drama Art (Zagreb).

WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL

A project by the Kunsthau Dresden in cooperation with Visual Seminar, Sofia, and “relations.”

May 28 – July 31, 2006

Opening: May 27, 2006

Exhibition, lectures, film program, concerts,
Kunsthau Dresden

The international group exhibition WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL, which has emerged out of the intensive exchange between the participating artists and a multistage working process, features works by: Pavel Brăila, Chişinău; Lučezar Boyadjiev, Sofia; Ivaylo Ditch-ev, Sofia; Fucking Good Art, Rotterdam; Javor Gardev, Sofia; Ute Hörner/Mathias Antlfinger, Berlin; Svetla Kazalarska, Sofia; Andrea Knobloch, Düsseldorf; Anne König/Jan Wenzel, Leipzig; Boyan Manchev, Sofia/Paris; Ivan Moudov, Sofia; Observatorium, Rotterdam; Eva Hertzsch/Adam Page, Dresden; Dan Perjovschi, Bucharest; POP 8, Dresden; Reinigungsgesellschaft, Dresden; Christoph Schäfer, Hamburg; Antje Schiffrers, Berlin; Adam Scrivener, London; Andreas Siekmann, Berlin; spot off, Dresden; STAFETA, Dresden; Krassimir Terziev, Sofia; Ingo Vetter, Berlin and many more. There will also be an accompanying publication.

Curators: Torsten Birne, Sophie Goltz, Christiane Mennicke

Lost and Found

A co-production of “relations” and ICON FILM.

A film by Stefan Arsenijević, Mait Laas, Nadejda Koseva, Kornél Mundruczó, Cristian Mungiu, and Jasmila Žbanić (winner of the Golden Bear at this year’s Berlinale). Since its premiere as the opening film to the International Forum for New Cinema at the 2005 Berlinale, “Lost and Found” has featured at numerous international festivals, including Belgrade, Sofia, Vilnius, Cannes, Linz, Leipzig, Oldenburg, Brussels, Edinburgh, Warsaw, Haifa, Rome, and Barcelona. Since January 2006 “Lost and Found” is also showing in German cinemas.

The next dates are (selection):

April 6 – 9, 2006

Kulturzentrum Platenlaase, Jameln

May 5, 2006

Kleines Kino, Frankfurt/Oder

June 5, 2006

Obala Meeting Point, Sarajevo

July 26, 2006

Gegenlicht Kino AG, Oldenburg

ALTE ARTE

A project of the Center for Contemporary Art Chişinău (ksa:k).

Since January 2005 the only Moldavian TV arts magazine presents contemporary art to viewers of the state-run station every second Saturday. As of early 2006, ALTE ARTE is also presenting itself at international film and media festivals. In addition, with its Artist in Residence program ALTE ARTE invites artists to Chişinău to produce contributions for the magazine locally.

Dates (selection):

April 6 – 12, 2006

ALTE ARTE guests at the goEast-Festival in Wiesbaden.

May 2006

ALTE ARTE will be broadcast on the Dutch “Kunst Kanal.”

May 30, 2006

ALTE ARTE guests at the Bucharest Biennale.

Project Publications: New Publications this Spring

East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe
Publisher: IRWIN, London and Boston: Afterall/MIT Press
2006, ISBN 1-846580-22-7
500 pages, 192 color reproductions

Book presentations (selection):

April 25, 2006

St. Martins School of Art, London

June 1, 2006

The Kitchen, New York

July 6 – 8, 2006

Center of Contemporary Culture, Barcelona

For further dates, see www.eastartmap.org

Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given.

A Documentation of the Symposium

Edited by Marina Gržinić, Günther Heeg, and Veronika Darian, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver 2006, ISBN 3-86588-165-5

WILDES KAPITAL / WILD CAPITAL

Edited by the Kunsthau Dresden (Christiane Mennicke, Thorsten Birne, Sophie Goltz), Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, ISBN 3-938-821-46-9

Approx. 250 pages with numerous color reproductions

“relations” as guest:

May 13, 2006

tranzit workshops, Bratislava

PATTERNS

A discussion on publications, exhibitions, and the blind spots in the discourse on central and southeastern Europe (in English)

Participating in the roundtable are Konstantin Akinsha, Boris Buden (moderator), Vit Havranek, Georg Schöllhammer, Katrin Klingan, N.N.

Followed by a finissage party

This is an event of Kontakt – The Arts and Civil Society Program of Erste Bank Group in Central Europe and is part of the exhibition “Kontakt ...works from the Collection of the Erste Bank Group” (March 16 – May 21, 2006, MUMOK, Vienna, and tranzit workshops, Bratislava).

www.kontakt-collection.net

Further information available at:

www.projekt-relations.de

Other initiative projects of the German Federal Cultural Foundation:

Within the framework of its Central and Eastern Europe thematic focal point, the German Federal Cultural Foundation is actively engaged in a number of projects fostering cultural relations in Europe. Besides “relations,” these are the Büro Kopernikus, which develops joint German and Polish projects (www.buero-kopernikus.de), and Bipolar, a project that deepens relations between cultural actors in Hungary and Germany (www.projekt-bipolar.net). Projects devoted to supporting and promoting a European public realm – for example the online culture magazine www.signandsight.com or the internet platform Labforculture – extend the Foundation’s European thematic focal point.

For further information, see www.kulturstiftung-bund.de

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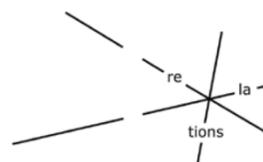
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