

Bilder des Anstalts

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tions



*Art,
Text
and Music
from Eastern Europe
encounter German
realities.*

schauspielhannover

Prinzenstraße 9, 30159 Hannover

October 5–8

Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg

Kirchenallee 39, 20099 Hamburg

October 20–22

schauspielfrankfurt

Neue Mainzer Straße 17, 60311 Frankfurt am Main

November 2–4

2006

Bilder des Ostens

relations docking tour 01

hanover hamburg frankfurt
October 5 – November 4, 2006

“relations” pulls into the docks with an overseas container at three important cultural locations in Germany, for three days respectively. “Images of the East” will be presented and discussed in Hanover (*schauspielhannover*), Hamburg (*Deutsches Schauspielhaus*), and Frankfurt am Main (*schauspielfrankfurt*). Outsider and insider perspectives are to be set against one another; media surfaces will be entwined with experiences rooted in everyday life and cultural production. Art, theory, music, and literature from eastern Europe will tell stories of far-reaching social changes and of encounters with German realities. Complexities will be experienced concretely, opening up a space for discussion that we warmly welcome you to join in.

The Focus. The “relations” docking tour focuses on seven cities where “relations” has engaged in intensive exchange with cultural actors over the past four years: Chişinău, Sofia, Pristina, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. “relations” shows what only very few have managed to imagine, albeit 17 years have gone by since the fall of the Berlin Wall, both in the everyday and the intellectual and artistic life in cities of eastern Europe as well. These cities are the places our western thinking considers the “East” and, hence, intuitively as distant and strange. But since 1989, setting a breathtaking tempo, these urban centers have been catching up to western European standards. Rents are going up, public spaces are increasingly privatized, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. At the same time, niches of freedom have opened up, and these are not only restricted to careers in business: artistic production is blossoming and critical voices are making themselves heard. Contradictions are part and parcel of development everywhere. But, as is often claimed, are these processes in eastern Europe merely emulations which the “West” has already gone through? Are the so-called transitional societies really the stragglers and poor imitators, dragging behind the West? And furthermore, what does the “West” mean – when “you’re the West”? We, on the western side of the European “divide,” are still inclined to classify the above mentioned cities simply and trivially as the “East” – despite current and historical differences alike. And what’s more, there are circumstances where Hanover is closer to Sofia than Bucharest or Hamburg has more in common with Budapest than Berlin.

So let us take a differentiated look at things, one that takes leave of notions of the East and Communism and, hence, closes the file on those of the West and Capitalism as well. Let us fashion a position strong and flexible enough to deal with common features, differences, and parallel worlds, without rashly searching for orientation in the safety of clichés.

The “relations” docking tour will enable you to change your perspective and trigger a shift your sense of place. A container welcomes you, fitted with 20 monitors upon which television images from the participating cities flicker. News bulletins, talk shows, series, and ratings hits – ordinary programs from state and private broadcasters will be shown. Produced by the “relations” projects, video streams and uncut material showing characteristic locations from the same cities will unexpectedly intervene; people shopping, passer-bys strolling along boulevards, the goings-on in popular cafés. Documentary real-time images and media fantasies coexist, only to vanish again, one after the other.

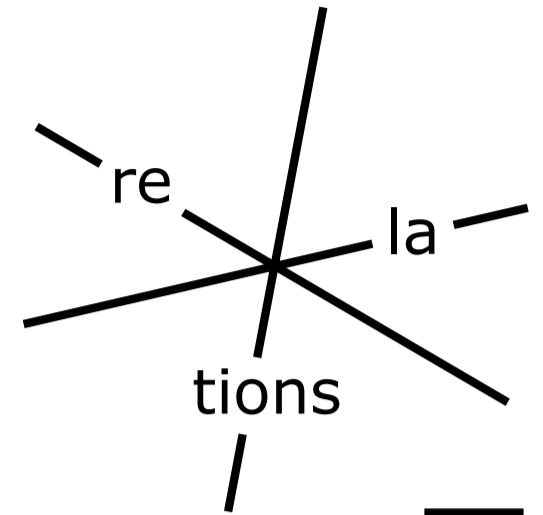
Whoever wants to plunge deeper into the everyday life and cultural scene in Chişinău, Sofia, Pristina, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Zagreb, and Ljubljana only need follow the cables leading from the container to the respective theaters. There the relations lounge will open daily at 2 p.m. Audio stations and video portraits featuring the international “relations” cast convey not only an impression of the individual artists, their thinking, and their work, but also, as a kind of synopsis, a portrait of the different art and culture scenes in these countries.

The evening events are the core of the docking tour. Visual artists, musicians, theater directors, writers, journalists, and theorists from Germany and eastern Europe will discuss and negotiate their own and foreign positions live. Analytically or sensuously, playfully or controversially – and most certainly always open for your intervention. The spectrum ranges from a film series, organized in collaboration with the Sarajevo Film Festival, to discussion panels featuring renowned contributors, to young Moldovan “hip-hop-folk-grunge.” As was the case for all of the activities undertaken by “relations,” the sometimes very sobering descriptions of prevailing conditions is only the first step – thinking further and going beyond such descriptions is our real concern.

Awaiting you:

Konstantin Akinsha Born in Kiev in 1960. Art historian. 1999/2000 deputy research director of Art and Cultural Property of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets. Since the 1990s Moscow correspondent of the magazine ARTnews, New York. Diverse array of publications, including “Beautiful Loot: The Soviet Plunder of Europe’s Art Treasures” (1996). **Elmar Altwater** Born in 1938. Professor of political science at the FU Berlin until 2004. Author of several publications critical of globalization and capitalism. 1999–2002 member of government commission of inquiry “Globalization of the world economy – challenges and responses.” Active for Attac and the World Social Forum. Most recent publication “Das Ende des Kapitalismus, wie wir ihn kennen” (The End of Capitalism as We Know It, 2004). **Sokol Beqiri** Born in 1964 in Peja, Kosovo. Since 1987 participation in numerous international exhibitions, including the Cetinje Biennale (Serbia-Montenegro 1997, 2002, 2004), “Blood & Honey: Future’s in the Balkans” (Vienna 2003), “The Failure of the Beauty, Beauty of the Failure” (Barcelona 2004), “The Joy of My Dreams” (Biennale Sevilla 2004). Since 2003 heads the “Missing Identity” project within “relations.” **Lucchezar Boyadjev** Born in 1957 in Sofia. Exhibitions include: “Hot City Visual” (Sofia 2003), a project for Visual Seminar in the framework of “relations,” “Blood & Honey: Future’s in the Balkans” (Vienna 2003), “Love it or leave it” (Cetinje Biennale 2004), and “Urban Realities: Focus Istanbul” (Berlin 2005). Boyadjev is a founding member of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia. **Pavel Bráňa** Born in 1971 in Chişinău. 2005 guest fellow of the DAAD Berlin artist program. Present at numerous international art exhibitions and film festivals, most recently “Collected Views – From East or West” (Vienna 2004) and “Beauty So Difficult” (Milan 2005). In 2002 his film “Shoes for Europe” was featured at Documenta 11. A solo exhibition will be opened on November 24 2006 in the Taxispalaais Gallery in Innsbruck. Project leadership of “ALTE ARTE.” **Boris Buden** Born in 1958 in Zagreb, lives in Berlin. Freelance journalist for a variety of European newspapers and cultural journals, including the Viennese journal “springerin.” Translator of major German-speaking works into Croatian (Sigmund Freud, Alexander Mitscherlich, Theodor W. Adorno) and author of numerous books, most recently “Der Schacht von Babel. Ist Kultur übersetzbar?” (The Shaft of Babel. Is Culture Translatable?, 2004). **Ivaylo Ditchev** Born in 1965 in Sofia. Since the 1980s editor and author in journalism and literature. Most recent publication: “Prostranstva na jelanieto, jelanie za prostranstva. Studii po gradska antropologia” (Spaces of Desire, Desire for Spaces. Studies in Urban Anthropology, 2005). **Carolin Emcke** Born in 1967, lives in Berlin. Since 1998 contributing author to “Der Spiegel.” 2003/2004 Visiting Lecturer for Political Theory at Yale University; numerous publications. In May 2005 her work “Von den Kriegen” (From the Wars) was awarded the prize for “best political book” by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. **Nicoleta Esinencu** Born in 1978 in Chişinău. Since 2002 dramaturge at the Theater Eugène Ionesco there. Her drama “FUOK YOU, Eu.ro.Pal!” (Edition Solitude, 2005) won the Romanian theater award Dramacum2. The publication of the work in the reader accompanying the Romanian Pavilion at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005) triggered hefty political controversy in the Republic of Moldova and Romania. **Javor Gardev** Born in 1972 in Sofia. Has directed numerous dramas, radio plays, and experimental films, and written diverse articles and essays on contemporary aesthetics. Most recently he developed the “Visual Police” project for the Visual Seminar within the framework of “relations.” **Mathias Greffrath** Born in 1945 in Bad Harzburg. From 1991 to 1994 editor-in-chief of the “Wochenpost.” Since 1995 freelance journalist and author, contributing to “Die Zeit,” “Süddeutsche Zeitung,” and “die tageszeitung,” focusing on the future of work and the impact of globalization on culture and society. The author of numerous books, including “attac. Was wollen die Globalisierungskritiker?” (attac: What Do the Critics of Globalization Want?, 2002). **Irm Hermann** Born in 1942 in Munich, lives in Berlin. Film, television, and theater actor. Played roles in almost all of Fassbinder’s productions until 1975. Engagements at the Freie Volksbühne Berlin and the Berliner Ensemble. Winner of numerous awards (1972 and 1983 German Film Prize; Silver Bear for an outstanding artistic contribution for the ensemble of actors of “Paradiso – Seven Days with Seven Women” at the Berlinale in 2000); most recently winner of the 2006 Deutscher Hörbuchpreis. **Migjen Kelmendi** Born in 1959. Studied law in Pristina. Founder and editor of the theoretical-literary magazine “MM” as well as the weekly journals “Epoca” and “Java.” Amongst his publications are the multimedia project “Gjurmët LP” (To Change the World: A Short History of The Traces, 2003), essay collections on Albania and America, as well as the novel “Gryka e Kohës” (The Gate of Time, 1994). **Gerald Knaus** Lives in Istanbul. Founding president of the European Stability Initiative (ESI). Knaus was director of the Lessons Learned and Analysis Unit (LLA) in the EU section of UNMIK in Kosovo and active as political advisor in Bosnia-Herzegovina for international conciliator and the office of the Higher Representative. Numerous publications on social and economic development in (southeast) Europe. **Stephan Lohr** Born in 1950. From 1977 to 1988 publishing house editor, since 1988 editor at North German Radio (NDR). Since 1998 head of the culture magazine department at NDR culture. **Oskar Negt** Born in 1934 in Kapkeim, East Prussia. He completed his doctorate in 1962 under Adorno. 1970–2002 chair of sociology at the University of Hanover. 1994 co-founded the Loccum Initiative of Critical Academics. In his most recent works he has tackled issues such as work, dignity, and globalization. His last publication was “Die Faust-Karriere. Vom verzweifelten Intellektuellen zum gescheiterten Unternehmer” (The Faustian Career. From Despairing Intellectual to Failed Entrepreneur, 2006). **Nuevos Ricos** Record label of Carlos Amorales, Julian Ledo, and André Pahl, founded in 2003 in Mexico City. Pursues the principle of combining music on vinyl with visual art. “Nuevos Ricos” took part in diverse exhibitions and events, e.g. at the fine art fair frankfurt in March 2006 with the project “Boomcar” by the underground duo “Aux Raus!” **Planeta Moldova**. Hip-hop band, founded in 2003 by Mitos Micleuşanu and Florin Braghis. Improvised live performances in radio with musical scenes and clips which transport social satire and everyday absurdities with a black humor. Their album “Planeta Moldova” was nominated for best debut by MTV Romania, while the song “Alimentara” was named “hit of the year” by ProFM Chisinau. **Tilman Rammstedt** Born in 1975 in Bielefeld, lives in Berlin. His fiction debut “Erdledigungen vor der Feier” (Matters to Be Dealt with Before the Party, 2003) received a number of awards. In 2005 he published his first novel, “Wir bleiben in der Nähe” (We Will Remain in the Vicinity). Rammstedt also writes lyrics and performs as a musician for the band Fön. **Alexandru Vakulovski** Born in 1978 in Antonesti/Suvorov (now Ştefan Vodă) in present-day Moldova. He has worked as dramaturge and news editor for television. His publications include prose and poetry in Romanian cultural journals, the novels “Pizdet” and “Letopizdet – Cactusi albi pentru iubita mea” (White Cacti for My Lover, 2004), the poetry collections “Oedip regele mamei lui Freud” (Oedipus, King of Freud’s Mother) and “Ecstasy” (2005), as well as the play “Ruperea” (The Rupture, 2002). **Basmila Zbanic** Born in 1974 in Sarajevo. Founder and producer of the artists’ association Deblokada. After numerous short films, her first feature film Grbavica won the Golden Bear for best film at the Berlin Film Festival in 2006. **Zdob și Zdub** Band, founded in 1994 in Moldova. “Zdob și Zdub” became known beyond Moldova when performing as the supporting band to such luminaries as “Rage Against The Machine.” In Germany, they published some of their songs on the sampler “Russendisko.” In 2005 “Zdob și Zdub” took part in the Eurovision Song Contest in Kiev (6th place).

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Which Dictums for Action Emerge out of Disinformation?

The transfer of foreign voices, which the local media tends to ignore or suppress, as well as the intelligent engagement with what is different – this is the basic concern of all cultural exchange. For “relations,” Ines Kappert spoke with Roger Willemsen about current practices in the German media landscape, local perspectives on countries abroad, and attempts to form counter public spheres.

With “Willemsens Woche” and the “Schweizer Literaturclub,” Roger Willemsen became one of the most successful TV hosts of all the German-speaking countries. In the meantime, he has conducted over 2,000 interviews and published an astounding 27 books in the last 20 years. In 2006, two publications from Willemsen provoked heated discussion: *Afghanische Reise*, a travelogue about Afghanistan shortly after the country’s first democratic elections, and a collection of interviews entitled *Hier spricht Guantánamo*, the first interviews with released innocent prisoners to be published in Germany.

Ines Kappert (I.K.): You begin *Afghanische Reise* with a few preliminary considerations: one of the dictums being that each journey necessarily begins with oneself. Is there not a contradiction here between your plea that we should open up and expose ourselves to the unfamiliar, the strange, not the least so as to learn, and this concentration on oneself? How would you describe the relationship between this focus on the self, which perhaps even slips into vanity, and the commitment to provide a forum for voices which are largely ignored in Germany?

Roger Willemsen (R.W.): I could simply say that it’s a stopgap move by someone who, once faced with a country, finds that it is absolutely unthinkable to describe a country in a situation like the one I found myself in. Because I lack the necessary knowledge. I have no idea at all or it’s all too much to handle. Inasmuch, one has to say that I cut back on the objectivity of my report, and I do this from the outset as I did, for example, in my book *Deutschlandreise*, by prefacing my report with a Russian saying: “He lies like an eyewitness.” But I decided to do

things differently in *Afghanische Reise* and said to myself: no, there’s an eye of a needle through which I want to thread this journey, and, that is to say, something objective does actually crystallize in the subjective. There are certain things, even what’s sentimental, which belong to the objective reality of Afghanistan; for example, a kite seen from a refugee camp. Such an image has no claim to furnish an accurate picture, but it can claim to be true. As strange as it may seem, this is actually the greater hope. When couched in these terms, there was no other option but to write in a subjective poly-perspectivism, one which encompasses the Taliban and the General alike – the camel herdsman, the young boy playing football, the young girl playing football, or the woman working as human rights campaigner or constitutional lawyer.

I.K.: I had the impression that you wanted to give your interview partners as much freedom as possible and largely hold back your own interpretations.

R.W.: That’s true. For example, when I’m sitting opposite a village elder in Afghanistan and ask, “When will there be peace?” he makes it clear to me that my question is a little too meddlesome and that he’d rather talk about his cattle and how many calves he has first. And half an hour later I ask: “And peace? What do you think?” He says: “You ask questions a president has to answer, but I’m jobless.” At that point, one realizes: oh, this will take awhile. Then you ask more questions about the cattle, and the orchard, and the almond crop, etc. And after another half an hour has passed, he may then answer the same question, and this is what actually happened: “You have the timepiece, we

have time.” And that’s the sentence we’ve been effectively working towards for an hour. The value of investigative questions in Afghanistan is completely different from those of the West. One has to acquire a feeling on the ground for what is defenseless or exposes your interview partner’s defenselessness.

I.K.: For your interviews with five of the some 200 prisoners released from Guantánamo, a number of critics have accused you of an inflated vanity that overshadows the political content...

R.W.: ... yes, what’s being touted by the media is just a load of rubbish. In the case of the interviews, the only disgrace I’ve brought upon the media is simply the fact that I did the book and was the first person in Germany to talk with released prisoners, and this is noticeable everywhere. It’s embarrassing just how the media was able to ignore me and how they couldn’t look at the book for what it is. Usually I always think, just get on with it and do it, it’s not that important [what others say], so fucking what, but when it concerns something like Guantánamo, I would have thought that...then they all say for once, we don’t need to praise it, just to present it at the beginning. If I wanted to be pretentious though, I could say that a couple of people have risked their lives for this book. Truly. And then you have to sit back and watch on as the *Thüringer Allgemeine* has the gall to ask: “How do you know that they are innocent?” Four years of torture, released by the Americans because they were found to be innocent, and then the *Thüringer Allgemeine* comes along and demands that we explain to them the innocence of these people. What one sees from this example is that a lack of passion is in fact an index of professionalism in journalism.

I.K.: What is striking in both the Guantánamo interviews and the Afghanistan travelogue is how you pose your interview partners very simple questions.

R.W.: Yes. The questions I ask are not brilliant. Anybody could have asked them.

I.K.: Is asking simple questions also a strategy for gaining a place for complex issues in a German media landscape so oriented towards simplicity?

Integrating into an Illusion

A discussion about “East” and “West” with the Estonian filmmaker Mait Laas and the Moldovan artist Pavel Brăila.

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Konstantin Akinsha on demarcations, euphemisms, and a whisk of nostalgia.

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An e-mail exchange about “centers” and “peripheries” between Christiane Mennicke (Dresden), Inke Arns (Dortmund), Joanna Mytkowska (Warsaw), and Goran Sergej Pristaš (Zagreb).

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Who the fuck is Mariana?

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One Question – Eleven Statements

For four years “relations” has supported cultural projects in eastern Europe and their exchange with German partners. Eleven participants take stock.

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The “relations” projects

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R.W.: That's once again twofold. In the case of the Guantánamo book, what was required, besides the basic research that every interview demands, was something else: empathy. This means that I must be able to dissect a life and the path taken into the smallest possible tangible units. In this way, I am told things which the prisoner would otherwise never confide. This means: make it concrete. Translate the fate of a group into this distinctive individual fate. This is possible using the form of the simple question. In Afghanistan things are different. There the questions are determined initially by weighing up the ability of my interview partner to abstract. In some cultural contexts I can't simply ask: what's the point of your work? Because the concept of the point here won't be understood. Or it won't be understood how one could bring these two concepts together. I can't ask a child, "what's your favorite game?" if the child doesn't know the difference between playing and field work or tending the flock. In this respect, I have to first extract myself out of my own nomenclature and the ways of thinking typical of my cultural group and ask myself: how can I liberate my outlook so that it is still cogent in transgressing this one cultural area and capable of communicating? That is the real challenge. But I wouldn't rate either too highly. It is just a little technique; it isn't something that I have appropriated for such a purpose, but it rather conforms to an interest in basic communication and the permanent search for what can be asked and what can be answered. How can I avoid embarrassing my interview partner?

I.K.: You've said that when you want to experience something abroad, then you have to liberate your own outlook from familiar cultural codes. But how does that transfer back function? Do you follow a catalogue of basic rules for the "home tie" when the unfamiliar is to be presented to the local public?

R.W.: As a rule, I have to abandon specific codifications for an answer which we have, for example those of psychology. For then I would interpret the statement of a camel herdsman in the Kunduz steppe, although this interpretation is ultimately opaque. I know nothing about the psychological makeup of a camel herdsman, and I should take care not to translate a flicker of emotion on his face into some form of social kitsch. To find access to the unfamiliar and the return to the familiar – this eventually works when following the principle of the analogical. For everyone understands dying, understands going on a journey, understands a country road. On the other hand, it is also a matter of reduction, reducing what then is imprecating, or archaic, or strange and withdrawn. At the same time though, I have to also cope with the reverse. I also have to be able to say that I have met people who live, if you want to put it this way, in a poem. They live from the ability to draw something from the purest spring water, which inspires them with a metaphoric that is completely strange to us. They can speak about almonds or the bend of a rice grain in such a way that we would say: in a soap opera, let's say the "Lindenstraße," this would be the sign of a hysterical man. But in Afghanistan it is the unfolding of a deeply charitable manliness. However, if we look at the pictorial language generally used in the German media for Afghanistan, then it's comprised of gutted rail compartments, burqas, and Old Testament-like patriarchs who play with a calf in their midst.

I.K.: They're the rules of the game for evoking exoticism.

R.W.: Exactly. Exoticism in these different forms, reserved for Afghanistan. And the aim must be to fracture such forms. For clichés and prejudice are entwined with one another: one always emerges out of the other.

I.K.: When you look back on the last ten, fifteen years of your journalistic work and your television career, what has changed in the German media landscape?

R.W.: In the years covered by my career, or the path I have taken through the media, the parceling of the world has become increasingly pronounced. I could say, the television-shaped surfaces have gotten smaller, while the types of images situated there have become more uniform. Without thinking twice, RTL news – which one shouldn't really call it, for that it is rather a news show – views a cow rescued from a river in America as a newsworthy topic. And even the serious news programs show only a limited interest in what's going on overseas. As the Germans became involved in Somalia, Walter Michler published a study called *Weißbuch Afrika*, which examined how many minutes from the main news programs of ZDF and ARD were devoted to sub-Saharan Africa. The basis was 1,125 program minutes. The result: a whole 1.7 minutes dealt with sub-Saharan Africa, which today encompasses 46 states with 495 million inhabitants.

I.K.: Are there any movements countering this "conservative turn"? Can you discern any places in the media landscape from where a countermovement is beginning to emerge?

R.W.: Leftist and liberal journalism is largely dead. The form corporate concentration has taken has led to a situation in which all kinds of political opinions are fixed for a host of newspapers. The Springer corporation fixed in advance how its media group was to approach the Gulf War. And as long as *Der Spiegel* produces the television program of the *Bild-Zeitung*, and Herr Aust, who is not even allowed to write in his own news magazine, joins forces with Herr Diekmann to rail against the orthographic reform of the German language...one has to say that these kind of alliances clearly reveal that there is no spirit of contradiction, no critical distance, no analysis, nothing. Instead there are fixed agreements about, for example, the outcome of elections.

I.K.: Is that why you have left television?

R.W.: One reason. For 15 years, it was the principle of the program that each critic should present a new publication he or she was passionate about. One day, we were instructed to review a 700-page tome by a sitcom author for Swiss television. I thought, life is really too short and precious. But as far as the assault on journalistic independence is concerned, I couldn't be more disillusioned. And the way people attach such importance to what the media does is quite bizarre.

I.K.: Not only "people" take the media to be massively important. In the field of culture as well, the success of projects or initiatives is measured ultimately by their reception in the media. And practically no attention is paid to how a live audience or a readership, etc., responds.

R.W.: Of course. The all-domineering question is always: can I turn this into a news item? The media is drunk on its own self-importance! There is not one single media-critical magazine

on German television that merits the name. It beggars belief that such a form of self-reflection is not possible. Accordingly, the alternative public sphere has retreated to the Internet. And there the conspiracist's imagination flourishes, and that's enjoyable in its own way. I enjoy reading BILDblog. But I no longer believe that the media can change, I no longer believe that one can achieve change through the media. Let's take a look back: who was on the just side before wars broke out, or who was ever on the just side in times of tense social conflict? The happy few. Not the corporations, not the whole ex cathedra hacks, and not the editorial writers, who in their opinionated obstinacy hold onto their prejudices and, above all, their views.

I.K.: Would you go along with drawing a distinction between the public and the market-dominating media?

R.W.: That's how it is. The Iraq war was supported by the majority of newspapers, but not by the public.

I.K.: Which doesn't ennoble the public per se.

R.W.: No, that's right. It's important that you mention that. At best it makes the public independent of the publicized opinion. Another indication of this would be the massive debacle suffered by just about the whole spectrum of the German media during the last federal election. When practically every journalist in Germany, with only a few exceptions, agrees that Angela Merkel has to become chancellor, and the outcome is a stalemate, and this after dramatic opinion polls and articles which were nothing other than demolition jobs on the Red-Green coalition, and the conservatives manage nothing more than a stalemate – then one has to say, hats off to the German people, who all stayed calm amidst the agitation. But conversely, one may not of course believe that... I could now take a detour more out of the way than I actually need to and say, "Take a look at the German attempts to come to terms with the past, its boundless lack of commitment and obligation, as well as its repeated rearrangement of well-known material." And what does one see? How noncommittal this coming to terms with the past is when we are not even able to identify existing camps for what they are, namely, as acts of transgression. Spaces initially developed in terms of the rule of law are rendered into something that is no longer legal and where the rule of law no longer holds, and about which it is possible to lie. And that this process doesn't end with Guantánamo is clear when we know about Bagram and Kandahar, about the CIA interrogations in Bulgaria and Romania.

I.K.: Does this mean: stop paying attention to the media? Because it makes no sense? Form your own partial counter or alternative public spheres?

R.W.: I wouldn't be as sweeping as that. Of course, there are some good journalists, and, of course, there are good foreign correspondents. Of course, one can read the *taz* in terms of its good correspondent network and in this point it is entirely credible. Nonetheless, the effort needed to decontaminate newspapers, and this begins with the themes they prescribe, is greater than ever before. Let's take a simple example. Somewhere I read a single column piece entitled "The FDP presents Afghanistan reconstruction plan." You read it and browse further through the paper. And then you think: wait a minute, is every splinter party in Burkina Faso going to Afghanistan and presenting a reconstruction plan? And how are we to envis-

age how this plan came about? Something like this: FDP experts convene and say, ok, now it's time to tackle the problems of roads in Afghanistan.... What do they think they're doing?

I.K.: I think it's better if we don't...

R.W.: But that's depraved Dadaism, that's gaga. And we read such a piece, and it is sent to and spread by the news agencies, and the most sensible thing to do with this item would be: to pass over it. I have to ceaselessly empty out the newspaper, and I am forced to say, "That's not important and this as well, and why are they saying this, and why are they saying that. Don't rely on this comment, don't go down the road this comment is taking; it's based on false premises." In the moment when one is informed or competent in even only one area, for me that would perhaps be Afghanistan, then you suddenly ask yourself: what are the Afghans actually doing to convey an image of their country in the newspapers? Where are the local experts and what are their opinions about their country? The really important question is: which dictums for action emerge out of disinformation? And, above all, is information there to produce more than orientation? That's when the issue of relevance comes into play, an issue typical for the generation of 1968, but for me it's becoming ever more decisive. I simply have to ask myself: what do I have to know? What actually serves to substantiate my standpoints or guiding my actions? Or what has value as orientation and what can I pass on? But all this is becoming increasingly selective, increasingly difficult, and I'm increasingly drawn to reading newspapers from abroad. For example, I'm an avid reader of *The Guardian*. There, freedom of opinion is interpreted differently than here in Germany. That's simply how it is.

I.K.: Herr Willemsen, thank you very much for your time.

R.W.: A pleasure.

Roger Willemsen

Born in 1955 in Bonn, lives in Hamburg. Journalist, author, essayist, editor, translator, and TV moderator. Studied German literature, philosophy, and art history in Bonn, Florence, Munich, and Vienna. Moderator of numerous talk shows and cultural events, presenter of portrait series, and director of documentary films. In 1992 he was awarded the "Golden Cable," the "Bavarian Television Prize," and the "Adolf Grimme prize" in gold in 1993. Active in several aid organizations such as Amnesty International and Terre des Femmes. Roger Willemsen is also an ambassador for the Afghanistan campaign "Helfen steckt an," jointly realized by CARE International and the UNRWA. Numerous publications, most recently "Hier spricht Guantánamo" in 2006, in which he interviews former Guantánamo prisoners.



Maria Ziegelböck, 2002

Dear Readers!

“Burn this newspaper to the ground!” Why? Commenting on his contributing statement to “relations,” the artist Edgar Arceneaux asserts that when things – in this case the “relations” project – come to an end, then it is not only a shame, but means that a path has been cleared for continuing, for embarking on something new. Let go and forget – for Arceneaux, the prerequisites for remembering. His artistic contribution is on the last page of the final edition of “read relations”. But before we heed Arceneaux’s suggestion and, sternly anti-nostalgic, move on to new tasks, we would like to invite you to go on tour with us. From October 5 on “relations” will be docking ship at three German theaters. As part of an event series, we will be presenting “Images of the East” in a variety of forms: readings, performances, panel discussions, concerts – and the visual arts. As the “jacket” to our fifth edition, the program can be perused separately and handed around amongst friends. As for the newspaper itself, we take another close look at the fundamental themes which have concerned us over the last four years. Why is it so difficult, we have asked ourselves, to place news from far afield, from foreign countries in the media and public domain – whether it be here in Germany or elsewhere – in a way that is not distorted by clichés, even though exchange with other cultures is demanded and, indeed, sometimes even financially supported? Roger Willemsen’s explanation is that the influence exerted by the left-liberal press is currently being hedged back. The cultural theoretician Boris Buden has another suggestion: it is time to understand that art and cultural exchange are part of the omnipresent value-creation chain of capitalism. And this is not something to get overly upset about, but a reason to dispense with the premises that art isn’t another commodity like sausage, or that those active in cultural exchange are the virtuous. Rastko Močnik also dissects a popular misunderstanding and demands that “the East” be no longer read in terms of a geographical category. “The East is a problem and not a place”, is his thesis. For his part, the cultural theorist Nebojša Jovanović from Sarajevo attacks the view that critique of faith and official religion is akin to violating human rights. The example of the former Yugoslavia shows how nationalism can become perfidiously entwined with religion. That there is “no Croat who is not a Catholic, no Serb who is not Orthodox, and no Bosnian who is not a Muslim,” is what this logic asserts and so conceals a fatal ideology. As always with “relations,” we have once again set store on dialogue. Whether in individual statements or discussion rounds, we document the voices which have made up “relations.” The resulting gamut of themes ranges from the initial, rather sobering contact with the place of longing known as the “West” to taking stock after four years of “relations,” through to whether the coordinates of “center” and “periphery” make any sense today. The center – what does that mean anyway? The photo gallery is taken from the book on “relations” published earlier this year by DuMont, “Leap into the City” – and Maria Ziegelböck has once again here provided some of her work. The time has come for the “relations” team to bid farewell and we hope you enjoy our last edition. We would like to thank everyone for their interest, fantastic commitment, and constructive criticism over the last four years.

The “relations” team

Integrating into an Illusion

“We didn’t know what the West really was, but we knew that it was different, and that was enough”: in the Tegel airport cafeteria, the author and curator Cosmin Costinaş spoke with the Moldovan artist Pavel Brăila and the Estonian filmmaker Mait Laas about their first East-West encounters: what they found promising, the disappointments they faced, and the fruitful processes of adjustment beyond geographical and political categories.



Mait Laas, “Gene+Ratio”, 2005, film still.
Copyright: ICON FILM /Nukufilm



Mait Laas, “Gene+Ratio”, 2005, film still.
Copyright: ICON FILM /Nukufilm

Cosmin Costinaş (C.C.): What images or representations did you have of the West, and what were the first encounters like? Since Pavel Brăila came up with the idea to hold our discussion here at Berlin’s Tegel airport, Mait, perhaps you could start as you told us that this was actually where you first came into contact with the West.

Mait Laas (M.L.): Yes, that’s true. It was immediately after the “fall of the Wall,” to use this symbolically loaded expression, and I was part of probably the first youth cultural exchange between Germany and Estonia. This meant that we, together with our German counterparts, were supposed to clean up a graveyard for German soldiers killed in the Second World War. For me, this was a highly symbolic thing because the Second World War was the event which generated the notions of East and West, separating them into different entities and leading to the Slavic, the Baltic, and the Balkan countries becoming the “Eastern states.” But I have to say that, outwardly at least, this exchange was no different from those of Soviet times: there we also had to “exchange culture” through different activities that were supposed to be representative for each of us. The USSR was also trying to mix extremely different traditions, histories, and identities, from the Far East to the Ukraine and Moldova. But here, in Germany, we felt that something was different. Everybody was for himself; there was freedom, the choice to do what you want, democracy – although I didn’t really know what these terms actually meant in everyday life, how they affected you in their practical implications. Maybe it was like a totalitarianism of freedom, one you have to cope with in your own egoistic way.

C.C.: Was this a pressure for you, this overwhelming freedom?

M.L.: Well, I remember two psychosomatic experiences I went through during my first visits to the West. The first one was during a bus trip to Stuttgart; it must have been in 1989 or 1990. We traveled through a couple of villages in the mountains where everything was so clean and orderly that I was overcome with a strange feel-

ing of being in a technical world where there was no place for humans, so I started looking for a disruption, for a piece of garbage, anything like that. And then I had to go to the toilet to vomit. Too much artificiality.

C.C.: Did you feel alien to this context?

M.L.: Yes, absolutely. If things are too colorful, there should also be some black-and-white components for harmony’s sake. The second experience was in France. I was about to go into a supermarket, and when I saw the endless corridors packed with things, new things without life, I suddenly became very afraid and couldn’t go inside.

Pavel Brăila (P.B.): My first contacts were very different, quite the opposite, in fact. At school, from first grade on, we were told that we live in the most democratic country of all, in the world’s freest society, and that everything in the West is bad, from mass unemployment to their imperialist policies. The only information we had was utterly negative.

C.C.: Did you believe it?

P.B.: Yes, I believed it. I was just a child. But still, I dreamt of the West. At that time, I was collecting small bubble gum etiquettes, Big Babaloo, Donald, etc., and this was actually my first encounter with the West. We didn’t have access to Western products; we couldn’t buy them anywhere, but somehow every kid in school had something. Somebody’s father would travel to the West as a member of a “delegation” and bring something back, and we would then swap amongst ourselves. You only needed to look at the wrapper and you could smell the aroma. And this aroma was so nice that somehow in my mind I knew that the West wasn’t so bad. The material impression of the West was the most important. A few glitzy products made the ranting about unemployment in the West com-

pletely uninteresting. My first trip outside the USSR – it was to Romania in 1990, I think, in any case, it was between Ceauşescu’s fall and Moldova’s independence – was to Galati with my parents. And although Romania was significantly more affected by communism, especially by the last years of Ceauşescu, than Moldova, and although Galati was, and still is, one of the poorest cities in Romania, the fact that one was already able to get Western products there gave it a special aura.

C.C.: These type of innocent preconceptions and then representations of “first encounters” seem to be a quite general phenomenon, one that is now being frequently mirrored in the nostalgic evocations of the “East” in artistic and literary works. What I’m really interested in now is to hear about how these perceptions changed, and how did these changes actually materialize?

M.L.: I think that this period of first encounters was in many respects a romantic one, at least for our generation. That was because we spent our teenage years outside this world of powerful commercial images and lived in the opposite: a gray but somehow natural universe, where people were perhaps more focused on their own personalities. We didn’t know exactly what was in the West, but we knew that it was something different from our world, and since teenagers tend to dismiss the world in which they are brought up in, the worlds of their parents, we spontaneously started dreaming of the West, out of protest. But what has actually changed is the fact that many people have actually started to realize that thinking on an East-West scale is neither productive nor justified and that it is more important to go back to some basic values and principles. Viewed in this way, I think growing up like we did was an advantage. We had far more time for introspection, for books and music, and were not subjected to this madness of materialistic values. At the beginning,

this different perception made us feel naïve, as if we had no idea what life really is about. But now I see it as an advantage, as our own very valuable set of experiences. Instead of always insisting on our alleged need to think about the West, we should reflect on what do we, or rather, about how we think about ourselves. And then this thinking in categories of “East versus West” will just discretely disappear.

P.B.: For me, maybe because Moldova’s economic situation is much worse than Estonia’s, these shifts in perception happened much later. During my first visits to the West, I had a strong impression of inferiority. My first entry into “real” Western Europe happened quite late, after I started being involved in the arts. It was in 1995, in Amsterdam, for an exhibition called “Matria Europa.”

C.C.: In what sense did you feel inferior? And I would actually like to broaden the scope of this question: did you perceive this as a subjective cultural difference or rather as a difference in terms of recent historical experience that put you in a concretely inferior situation? Did you perceive your entire culture, all your values as being somehow inferior? Was this “West” for you simply the countries which had no experience of communism, or are you referring to something more subjective, like western culture, which you weren’t a part of?

P.B.: This was a general feeling of inferiority, of being from a fundamentally different world. It was because of the different living standards, different social customs, and so on, and also because we didn’t have time to really analyze these differences. All we could do was draw comparisons, and the outcome was clear beforehand. But then, slowly, you start to realize other things: your own history, for instance, which initially seemed unworthy, something you tried to forget and deny, began to appear in



Pavel Brăila, "Next Episode," 2005. Photographs: Pavel Brăila, Vadim Hincu, published in: *Leap into the City* (2006)

a more nuanced light. For example, I was part of the generation that was educated in the spirit of complete collectivism, where the question of individuality was ignored. There was only your class, your school, your city, and the communist party. Out of all these elements emerged the "we." "I" simply didn't exist. Everything was common and sharable.

C.C.: Do you still regard this way of thinking as being more comfortable?

M.L.: It was the one truth we knew. The whole world was based on one truth, and there was nothing else to expect. Yes, it was quite comfortable. The funny thing is that you also hope that in the West there is one truth, but you don't know what that truth exactly is. You wanted to experience the one truth of the West. And then you realize that there are only shades of truth, and this really scares you. And this can make you schizophrenic, not knowing what to choose.

P.B.: The possibilities of choice in the West are so great that you can actually lose your bearings. And then you dream about this collective, whom to ask advice, whom to rely upon, and so on. When I was a student at the Jan van Eyck Academy, between 1999 and 2001, I missed this solidarity. Everyone there was asking: who are you, and what are you doing? And not: which is your team? For me, and I think it was the same for many others, this was complicated at the beginning. But then you realize that Moldova is not so bad, that there are things there that deserve to be kept. And it is this experience that might well be our own input, so to speak, to the Western way of life. For older generations however, these things are probably even more complicated.

C.C.: So what would they say, how would your parents answer these questions?

M.L.: I think they would be more critical. For



them, there is no difference between East and West. The important thing is just who you are, and where are your coordinates. They had experiences that we didn't have. We were like virgins waiting for our White Knight. And this was the motivation to leave our native countries, hoping that somewhere else would be better than home.

C.C.: Let's stay with immigration for a moment. Which aspect do you think was more important when deciding to immigrate, actual economic reasons or rather more subjective ones, like leaving history behind, integrating into an illusion, things like Pavel mentioned earlier?

M.L.: I think that the subjective reasons played an important part, the need to escape, to find a

solution to your identity crisis.

P.B.: For the older generations in Moldova, the material aspect is probably the most important. When your entire savings just vanish, and you have to start your life again at the age of 45, and you have a family, questions like freedom of expression become less important. First, it is about survival, and this is the case for the majority of people who have emigrated from eastern Europe. People came here to find a job, to earn money, to send it home, and that was it, no questions of identity or difference, and no real life here, no real attempts to integrate, to try to understand the world around them.

C.C.: To conclude, I would like to ask you about your first contacts with the western art world and also about the changes that subsequently occurred.

M.L.: At the beginning there were problems communicating, which is quite understandable when two groups come into contact which have little or no information about one another. But after a period of "adjustment," of learning how to mutually communicate, some more important questions appeared. What can we export? What kind of images? What sort of lifestyle values? Because we basically realized that this was what it is all about.

C.C.: I don't necessarily agree that this role of images should be so dominant, but anyway, I would like to stress that both of your artistic practices use languages and approaches which aren't necessarily identifiable with "Eastern art," a term that is actually increasingly turning out to be quite a weak and meaningless construction.

P.B.: That is true. But although the language is the same, the content is still different.

C.C.: But isn't that enough for a communication? A shared language that can thus trans-

mit different contents, different perspectives, different nuances?

P.B.: Yes, you may be right. I think we have passed the phase of speaking about two different universes that try to get together somehow. But still, things are not that simple because new problems continually crop up. The content of my works and the expectations about this content are still very much connected to the problems of Moldova. And this might be interesting for an artsy audience, but it certainly doesn't get our films, for example, into economic circuits. And let's face it: the public doesn't want to pay to see the problems of another country when they have their own problems. But I think that this is already a big step: the shift from putting the "East-West" question in vague and subjective terms to much more pragmatic ones.

C.C.: Thank you both for your input. I think it was very interesting to touch on some points revolving around the discussion about the "Easternness" of eastern Europe and the "Westernness" of western Europe, 15 years after dramatic political changes, and to be able to trace the shifting (maybe diminishing) nature of these identifications. I think that this discussion is also particularly interesting in the current political context, in which the West tends to define its "Westernness" in opposition to a different Other, the "Muslim world," and the former East is gradually being identified as part of this new West because of its less frightful Otherness.

Pavel Brăila, born in 1971 in Chişinău, is an artist and currently lives in Berlin. In 2002, his film *Shoes for Europe* was shown at Documenta 11.

Cosmin Costinaş, born in 1982 in Satu Mare, Romania, currently lives in Vienna, where he is working as "coordinator editor" for Documenta 12.

Mait Laas, born in 1970 in Tallinn, is a director of animation films and co-owner of Nukufilm (Tallinn).

He contributed the film "Gene+Ratio" to the Lost and Found (2005) project.

Goodbye, Balkans!

Nobody wants to be identified as being part of the Balkans anymore: similar to the discussion about what constitutes the borders of eastern Europe, the definition of Balkan affiliation after the breakup of Yugoslavia is entwined with a myriad of interpretations, misunderstandings, nostalgia, and insults. Konstantin Akinsha on a verbal affair of the state, conspiracy theories, and the disappearance of a concept in favor of a compass needle.



Luchezar Boyadjiev, "Billboard Heaven," 2005, digital prints, published in: *Leap into the City* (2006)

"Of course, not," answered the professor in an irritated voice. "They never belonged to the Balkans, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is wrong. It is a typical Western attitude – this unbearable ignorance! They want to put Slovenia into the Balkans because it was a part of Yugoslavia, which conveniently was named a Balkan country. Slovenians are more Austrian than real Austrians. Labeling Slovenians in this way is showing a complete lack of sensibility." It was already dark. We were sitting in the yard of a bar situated in the historical center of Split – the ruins of the palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

A month before our conversation with the Croatian professor, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša, had visited Washington. The pleasure of the otherwise successful visit, crowned by the meeting with President George W. Bush, was overclouded by a column published by the *Washington Times* – James Morrison, the columnist of the conservative Republican newspaper, glorified Slovenia in general and Mr. Janša in particular, but made one impermissible blunder. The American journalist called the Prime Minister a representative of "the new generation of Balkan leaders" and defined Slovenia as a "Balkan nation." The outcry provoked by the column then reached a nightmarish scale when the Slovenian newspaper *Delo* proceeded to mistakenly attribute the humiliation of the Slovenian nation to the innocent *Washington Post*. Rightwing websites run by Slovenian immigrants in the USA came forward with a paranoid conspiracy theory. Behind the mistaken report of *Delo*, they suspected the hand of the Serbian secret service, which wanted to mislead poor Slovenians into believing that one of the biggest American newspapers – namely the *Post*, and not the *Times* – regards them as "a Balkan nation." Attempts by Mr. Mor-

rison to refer to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and other respected if somewhat old-fashioned sources stating that Slovenia is a part of the Balkans were disregarded and only served to fuel the controversy. By the end of July, the definition of the Balkan borders became the favorite waste-of-time of participants of numerous Internet chat rooms.

Such a "Balkanization" of the discussion about the borders of the region in southeastern Europe is not surprising. The problem is that the word "Balkans" stopped being a geographical term and became a barb of insult a long time ago. As early as the first half of the 19th century, Count Klemens von Metternich, the Austrian Foreign Minister, permitted himself a joke, stating that the Balkans begin at the Rennweg, a road situated in Vienna's third district that leads eastward. If the Count were to make such a politically incorrect comment today, he would most certainly be demonized in many Internet chat rooms.

I asked my Bulgarian friends if one could count their country as belonging to the Balkans, and they didn't see problem with such a definition. For Slovenians, the word is a curse – they are Central Europeans. That the most popular disco party in Ljubljana is called the Balkan Party is, of course, just a fashion, a part of the Yugo-nostalgia.

When I asked the Croatian professor, who during our meeting in Split so ardently defended the Central European status of his Slovenian neighbors, if his homeland is part of the Balkans, he came out with a diplomatic answer – "partly Balkan." (Such a statement could offend many of his countrymen, who believe that they belong to central Europe.) This defection of nations from the Balkans has led to the ap-

pearance of the new neutral definition used today, one that is designed not to offend anybody – "South Europe" is, of course, bigger than the Balkans, but it has become a euphemism for them.

Oversensitive approaches to history and geographic terms charged with political and cultural connotations are leading to the emergence of a new European political geography defined by the compass needle. (However, even this compass-oriented toponymic could be interpreted as insulting; it is enough to remember the heated discussion about the borders of Eastern Europe.) In a sense, I am sorry that the Balkans seems to be vanishing. Soon the only things reminding us of their existence will be the pipe tobacco called "Balkan Sobranie" sold in London tobacco stores and the kitschy films of Emil Kusturica, who turned the commercial packaging of the Balkans into his profession.

Konstantin Akinsha, born in 1960 in Kiev, is an art historian. In 1999/2000, he was deputy research director of Art and Cultural Property of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States. Since the 1990s, he is the Moscow correspondent of the magazine *ARTnews* in New York.

Bourgeois Angels Are So Forgetful How Faith, the Churches, and the Liberals Support Current Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia

The notion that a Croat is in essence a Catholic, a Serb Orthodox, and a Bosnian a Muslim is a fundamental component of what is ultimately a bourgeois ideology claiming to state simple facts. Furthermore, such thinking is far from being insightful. Nebojša Jovanović, a cultural theoretician from Sarajevo, illuminates these retrospective constructions of a religious-ethnic identity that has played a role in shaping the intellectual and political life of the former Yugoslavia to this day.

It is difficult to underestimate how different religious beliefs have contributed to the emergence of post-Yugoslav nationalisms. As Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian nationalisms basically pay homage to the narcissistic, excessive emphasizing of small differences, no option remains but to declare religion to be the “great difference,” the specific difference that irrefutably proves the authenticity of the ethnic-national identities. Today, for this reason, there is *de facto* no Croat who is not a Catholic, no Serb who is not Orthodox, and no Bosnian who is not a Muslim.

The cultural theoretician Boris Buden has written about Croatia of the 1990s, the Croatia of Franjo Tuđman, describing it not so much as a state with a statesman at its head than a pseudo-religious cult with a high priest. This applies equally to the ideological concubinage of Slobodan Milošević with the Serbian Orthodox Church and Alija Izetbegović’s union with the Islamic community in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is definitely no coincidence that the “head priests” who have founded these states were also once their chief warlords. That the wars are over and the spiritual generals have left the political stage in no way means that religion has withdrawn from politics.

From the host of examples illustrating the total interpenetration of politics and religion, allow me to first mention one of the most bizarre: in 2004, the Catholic Church in Croatia launched a campaign against yoga courses offered to teachers as a means of relaxation; the rationale being that Croatia is a secular state and, as such, yoga, a dubious-mystical practice for body and soul, must be prevented from gaining a foothold in civic institutions, including those of public education. The philosopher Borislav Mikulić gets to the heart of the matter with his commentary: “When the omnipresent Catholic Church demands respect from state institutions for the principles of a secular state, then it merely reveals its pathologically escalating political cynicism. For the Croatian Catholic Church, the secular state would be one in which society is completely clerical, completely ‘spiritually’ permeated with Catholicism. The Church is setting itself up for ideological totalitarianism, or rather as the lunacy of the system.” This conclusion can also be applied to Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church as well as to Bosnia-Herzegovina and its religious communities, Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics alike.

The polemic against atheism and secularism is one of the key mechanisms in the current “forgetfulness of society,” and the emancipatory aspects of Yugoslav socialism are being denied in each of the successor states to the SFRY. But what is more interesting than the predictable abuse directed against the secular heritage of socialism by religious representatives and

nationalists are the positions taken by an intelligentsia – politically correct, enlightened, and fully aware of the significance of identity – currently campaigning vigorously against how religion is being “abused” to realize nationalist objectives. Though largely anti-communist and anti-Yugoslav, their critique is mostly limited to the assertion that Yugoslav socialism is to blame for the current symbiosis between religion and nationalism. After the breakup of the SFRY, the former communists allegedly fled en masse to the churches and mosques – thanks to their susceptibility for a surrogate religion so carefully cultivated during socialist rule – quite comfortably exchanging one dogma for another.

This interpretation is as banal as it is false, and it has been superbly highlighted in the discussion surrounding a recent video work by the young Bosnian artist Damir Nikšić. The work was shown in Sarajevo last year. In “If I Wasn’t Muslim,” Nikšić, dressed in the traditional costume of a “typical” Bosnian-Muslim farmer, sings the famous song from the musical *Anatema*, “If I were a Rich Man,” with a completely new text however:

**“If I wasn’t Muslim
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle
deedle dum.**

**If I wasn’t born Mohammedan
Life for me would have been fun.**

**I could live and prosper
On my land and I could even build a bigger
house
I wouldn’t have to, every now and then,
Run and hide like a mouse.**

**If I wasn’t Muslim
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle
deedle dum.
My neighbors wouldn’t set my home on fire
And surround me with barbed wire**

**I wouldn’t live in terror
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle
deedle dum.
Books wouldn’t teach you that I was an error
In European history.”⁴**

“Congratulations, Damir! Your latest work is a very original slap in the face for all Americans and Europeans, who naturally tend towards fostering prejudices against Muslims, while at the same time warning all Muslims not to forget their roots...” – this praise for Nikšić does not come from, as could be expected, the traditionalist or nationalist corner, but the magazine *Dani*, one of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s most liberal publications, renowned for its committed attacks against the ruling nationalist parties.



Boris Cvjetanović, from the series “Foto Studio City,” 1995–2005, silver gelatin print, published in: *Leap into the City* (2006)

In terms of society as a whole, the problem lies less in the fact how a bourgeois-liberal journalist in current-day ex-Yugoslavia generally swallows the imperative that an ethnic-religious group cannot afford to forget its roots, but rather in the unexpressed basic theorem of socialism as the ever-ready scapegoat for all the evils plaguing post-socialist society.

The reinvention of ethnic-religious identity and history so prevalent today is part of an ideological universe in which the coordinates of identity politics, political correctness, and the culture of complaint have supplanted socialist dogmas. By no means is the effect exerted by the religious imperative limited to where one might expect it, namely, in the pronouncements and activities of religious institutions; rather, it is just as virulent and widespread amongst the liberals and bourgeois critics of clericalism from the anti-communist camp. The latter function *de facto* as hypocritical advocates of the churches, which are unable to reach the public through their own efforts and means. And it is precisely

for this reason that the fight must concentrate on the contribution made by the “bourgeois angels” to society’s forgetfulness, so as to reveal the fatal role being played by religion in the engineering of key post-Yugoslav ideologues.

Note:

- 1) See Boris Buden, “Barikade?” Zagreb: *Arzin*, 1997.
- 2) Borislav Mikulić: “Kroatorij Europe.” Zagreb: Demetra, p. 245f.
- 3) As an example of such positions, see Ivan Lovrenović, “Je li taj vražiji Huntington pogodio” [Was the devil Huntington right?], *Dani*, Nr. 416, June 3, 2005.
- 4) Video work, “If I Wasn’t Muslim.” Song text and details about the artist: www.damirniksic.com.
- 5) Interview with Damir Nikšić under the title “Historija je bazirana na kampanji koju je Zapad vodio protiv islama” [History is based on the West’s campaign against Islam], *Dani* Nr. 416, June 3, 2005.

Nebojša Jovanović, born in 1975 in Zemun, Serbia-Montenegro, is a cultural theorist and translator who lives and works in Sarajevo.

The East Is a Problem

An analysis by Rastko Močnik

Two associations seem to dominate our notion of the “East”: one is the “fall of communism,” while the other grasps it as socially backward and culturally archaic. One constant is, however, how the social and political conflicts which led to what we today call globalization are always annulled.

“The East is a career”: it is with this quote from Benjamin Disraeli that Edward Said opens his work *Orientalism*. It may be time for us to start thinking about the “East,” as it has been imposed as one of the key notions of “transition,” as a problem: as a theoretical problem, the analysis of which may reveal its contemporary practical implications, so naturally explicit in old Disraeli’s imperial dictum. In the present text, I will attempt to offer a proto-theoretical sketch towards such an analysis.

The “East” as a notion that covers a vaguely-defined area spreading from Central Europe towards Central Asia can be understood in two main ways. The first understanding belongs to “the fall of communism” paradigm. It explains the present with the past – while at the same time curiously de-historicizing the past. It ascribes the “fall of communism” to certain immanent features of the existing socialisms – and not to political and social struggles within historical socialisms themselves. It tells us that the Berlin Wall “fell” – and wants us to forget that it was torn down by the people of eastern Germany. While basically using the explanatory inventory of the Cold War, this understanding now turns it against the grassroots movements, efforts, and mobilizations that formerly enjoyed some sympathy amongst the anti-communist ideologues. Rather than having an explanatory value, this notion of the “East” performs a historical amnesia – it erases the political dimension from the eastern past, and achieves, likewise, effects in the present.

The other way to understand the notion of the “East” would be to explain the past with the present. One of the most obvious contemporary processes is the disintegration of the welfare state. Quite revealingly, the destruction of the welfare state is also the most obvious feature that is common both to the “East” and to the standing point from where it appears as the “East,” i.e., to western Europe. Within such an integrated historical account, we would be able to understand the really existing historical socialisms simply as variants of the welfare state, situated on the periphery of the capitalist world system. The “western,” i.e., the world-system’s core welfare state was an achievement of the working classes’ struggles within the framework of the post-revolutionary state, historically produced by the French Revolution and politically constituted upon the “sovereignty of the people.” The peripheral welfare state was also made possible historically by a revolution, the October Revolution. It also had developed within a politicized framework, this time based upon the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” In both variants, the institutional political framework was usurped by the party-state administrative and political “apparatchik” groups which claimed to represent the “people” and the “proletariat,” respectively, and soon developed certain features of a specific social class (the “partitocracy” in the core, the “bureaucracy” upon the periphery). In neither case has the usurping

of institutional political apparatuses managed to prevent precisely those popular struggles from continuing, out of which the specific historical construction we now call the “welfare state” once evolved.

One would then be led to ask: why has the welfare state first been destroyed in the rich core of the capitalist system where, after all, the means to sustain it existed, and why it has persisted almost a decade longer on the periphery, where it has always been economically threatened and where its persistent and, indeed, ever growing rigidity plagued the system much earlier? While the question may be naïve, the quest to answer it is certainly productive. It is striking that the dismantling of the welfare state is not only a political undertaking – bound to the political counter-action against the revolution of 1968, a world revolution that reached beyond both the social-democratic and the communist versions of the industrial welfare state. Neither is this destructive force solely a repressive operation by the state – although repression has played an important part within it: from the massacre of demonstrators in Mexico City and the intervention of the Warsaw Pact against reformist communists in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, through to the violent repression of the miners’ strike in Great Britain in the 1980s. This process has both been political and state-repressive – and it has, as it has unfolded, profoundly altered the nature of the state in particular by demolishing its political dimension. However, both those dimensions are only parts of a deeper world-historical transformation – the crisis of the capitalist world system. Retrospectively, the revolution of 1968 now seems to be the first worldwide attempt to confront a crisis that was only beginning to take on its contours at that time.

While these initial attempts and their descendants were in part crushed and in part recuperated their élan and powers in the final decades of the last century, a new response to the crisis was hatched, one that was now intended to salvage the world capitalist system and not to save humanity from it. And this response managed to affirm itself as having no alternative. The result is what we now call “globalization.”

Within the framework of globalization, the East now stands as a socially backward and culturally archaic region in urgent need of integration into the normal world and its inevitable course. The East is now constructed in terms of cultural inadequacies: the absence of democratic culture, the persistence of traditional cultural forms, belated or unsuccessful modernization, religions, ethnicities, tribes, fundamentalisms.... Like a reflex response, the East now perceives itself through these imposed frames: it endeavors to integrate itself with the help of a liberal civil society, with the NGOs of a “Euro-Atlantic” cut – and so it organizes its anti-systemic resistance along tribal, ethnic, and religious lines.

The cultural foundation of the new Orientalism is an ideological condensation of at least two generally global but in no way specific processes. Both have been amply discussed and analyzed, perhaps most relevantly to our problem in the texts by the cultural theorist Boris Buden. Firstly, “culturalization” de-politicizes social tensions, conflicts, and contradictions – and re-articulates them in terms of a culture that has been historically produced and re-produced since early modern Europe: as an autonomous sphere that has nothing to do with politics, nor with economy. Specifically, in the Eastern case, “culturalization” accomplishes the work of political amnesia, erasing the past political struggles which carried an alternative potential to confront the crisis of world capitalism, and takes care that any chance of their eventual survival is sterilized by its new cultural envelope. Secondly, however, this type of “culturalization” devastates the historical cultural achievements of the East, such as its theoretical, intellectual, academic, and artistic traditions – precisely at the point where specific Eastern “cultural” endeavors, linked to the radicalism of the 20th century’s socialist revolutions, had carried through an authentic modernist program, which were undermined in the West by the commodification and commercialization of artistic practices and by “mandarinization” of intellectual practices, academic or otherwise.

Consequently, the cultural phantom of the East performs a two-fold historical mission: it assists in the dependent integration of vast regions into the globalized world, and it destroys any potential of possible resistance within these regions. Let this short and schematic essay be a contribution towards part of the archives.

Rastko Močnik is professor of sociology at the University of Ljubljana. His most recent publication is *Theory for Politics* (2005).

On Beginnings and Ends

By Katrin Klingan

For four years, “relations” has supported intensive exchange with and amongst artists, cultural actors, and theoreticians from eastern Europe. Through artistic means, social realities were brought to the public’s attention and made transparent; and local debates were inserted into the broader context of international discussions. The results of this many-voiced engagement are exhibitions, actions, collaborations, and archives in eight different countries – but most of all, what has been achieved is the development of platforms and infrastructures most fitting for the future.

“relations” bids farewell, as a start. As an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, our work has drawn to a close. Four intensive years lie behind us, four years in which artists, curators, theoreticians, and academics from Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Kosovo, Moldova, Poland, and Slovenia joined forces to develop art and cultural projects. The diversity of these projects ranged from an international feature film to a TV culture magazine in Moldova, from an archive project on contemporary art in Poland to establishing an alternative art academy in Kosovo, to name just a few. “relations” provided the necessary framework for these undertakings: we brought persons and institutions from the various countries into discussion with one another, accompanied the conceptual and concrete development of the projects, and put in place the infrastructures for a cultural exchange that can continue to exist after “relations” comes to a close. In the process, it was important for us from the very outset to make our networking transparent to the public. In our bilingual newspaper *read relations* we have reported regularly on the course and actions of the individual collaborations. Over the last four years, a whole array of publications have emerged which give extensive insights into the projects and their themes. And “relations” has also brought out its very own publication: *Leap into the City: Chişinău, Sofia, Pristina, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Zagreb, Ljubljana*, which presents seven cities in Europe with their own specific cultural positions and political conditions from artistic and cultural theoretical standpoints.

But how did it all begin? What were the conditions and our goals we started out with? Four years ago, I was commissioned by the German Federal Cultural Foundation to organize a cultural exchange between countries from eastern Europe and Germany. This involved quite a few problems. Due to the collapse of socialism and the wars in former Yugoslavia, many of the countries in eastern Europe were, and still are, undergoing an extensive and rapid transition. They were, and are, negotiating their forms of government, their pasts, and in part even their borders, and, hence, nothing other than their entire cultural, social, and political identity. In the process, they were overwhelmed by a capitalism operating largely without any restrictions, a factor which further accelerated change. Given this situation, my task initially resided in creating structures for exchange which took into account the different tempos and points of departure. Cultural exchange with the countries of eastern Europe must, by definition, avoid any attempts at a “friendly takeover” by the German financing institution. Concretely, this meant that we, at “relations,” did not want to export ideas from Germany, nor did we want to import cultural assets from eastern Europe. For this reason, all of projects began with discussions with the artists and intellectuals on the ground: which aspects of the respective social realities should be brought to the public’s attention via the means of art? We then initiated

the link between these local debates with international problems and discussions in a second step. Hence, we began our work in the individual countries where artists and theoreticians developed committed and ambitious ideas aimed at introducing socially relevant themes into the public domain. Many of the projects supported by “relations” have therefore established “platforms”: here representatives from different social groups and institutions cooperate with one another and generate artistic projects and actions within this organizational and thematic framework.

The Missing Identity project in Kosovo is one such example of this praxis. The basic impulse of the artists and theoreticians who conceived the project was to develop a sensibility for the non-existent, for what’s missing. They, therefore, founded – with the help of “relations” – the first gallery for contemporary art in Kosovo (EXIT) and an alternative art academy, which offers courses on contemporary art and cultural theory free of charge. Here, art and theory open up a different communication culture, one that queries prevailing social hierarchies and national identity discourses.

We then instigated cooperation between Missing Identity with the renowned Städelschule and the Portikus in Frankfurt am Main. After all, what could be more obvious in a protectorate of the international community than organizing internationality? Because the mobility of Kosovo’s inhabitants has practically come to a standstill, we initiated a broadly conceived student exchange with the Städelschule called ACADEMY REMIX. The self-evident conviction of the Kosovo art students and teachers, namely, as artists to assume social responsibility and instigate change, greatly impressed those in Frankfurt and, furthermore, influenced the discussions at the Städelschule. As a result, in cooperation with “relations,” a symposium was conceived on the role, function, and future of art academies and the debate ignited by the concrete artist exchange has continued on an international level.

The result of the four-year cultural exchange between Germany and the countries of eastern Europe are not only evident in the collaborations, exhibitions, and publications alone, in the film, the TV programs, the archives, and alternative institutions which were developed within the “relations” framework. The result also consisted, and consists, in the process of mutual interaction and negotiating of differences. Here cultural exchange means communication, a communication that deals with the unpredictable and conflicts; and, moreover, a space is created for that which first needed to be developed. Only then will none of the participants egress from the exchange process unchanged and more interchanged than art objects. That is our experience with “relations.” What was exchanged here simply did not take place in the individual countries, nor can it simply be archived in museums. Rather, what has emerged

is a network of relations and thematic focal points that reaches beyond the geographic-political borders, the various languages, and the cultural differences. It is a network that no longer lends itself to national ascriptions and yet builds on local experiences; a network in flux that will continue on after “relations” has come to a close. In this respect, “relations” is a time splitter highlighting a more comprehensive development that takes place day-to-day in the search for dialogue and inter-cultural encounters – a development that may be described as an examination of “Vision Europe.”

“relations” was, and is, an exception within the customary formats of official national cultural exchange with eastern European countries. In the broad field of the “diplomacies of cultural exchange,” we were given the freedom of going our own way. I know of no other exchange project in Europe that could operate so flexibly in the individual countries and realize artistic projects with artists and theoreticians. “So flexibly” – i.e., with relatively little bureaucratic ballast and with the enormous trust of the initiator and supporter, the German Federal Cultural Foundation, in the years of collaborative processes that “relations” stimulated and shaped with cultural actors from the countries of eastern Europe.

For me personally, the last four years, the work for “relations,” were a challenge and enrichment in one. “relations” stands for itself, as relationships, and in the first instance no more than that – the character of the connections remains indefinite. “They can be based on both love as well as hate, on the lust to get to know the others involved, or the desire to take advantage of them,” is how the sociologist Marek Krajewski, one of the advisory board members of “relations,” once formulated it. Amidst these relationships is a moment of negotiation, of conversing and discoursing, which preoccupies me. For out of this emerges every now and then a story which one takes away. One takes something back and that is the gift of negotiating. What this gift looks like is something one does not know beforehand.

With enormous respect I would like to thank everyone who made the “relations” project possible, who helped set it up, who carried it forward, and who further elaborated its basic ideas!

As a German Federal Cultural Foundation initiative, “relations” now bids farewell, but I have great confidence in the platforms which “relations” linked into or initiated. In which form the “relations” way will continue is something I cannot say today – but we will definitely be keeping at it!

Katrin Klingan
Artistic Director of “relations”

Beyond Centers – Getting a Lift into the Future

A lot may have changed since 1989, but the notions of “center” and “periphery,” together with their defining power over what is essential – be it geographical, political or cultural – have persisted. But what is the significance of these notions for cultural work oriented towards the collective? Christiane Mennicke, director of the Kunsthau Dresden and curator of WILD CAPITAL/WILDES KAPITAL, exchanged e-mails with the “relations” partners Inke Arns (Peripherie 3000, Dortmund), Joanna Mytkowska (Re:form, Poland), and Goran Sergej Pristaš (Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000).



Jerzy Gumowski, “Rondo Marszałkowska Jerozolimskie”, April 5, 2005, photograph, published in: *Leap into the City* (2006)

Christiane Mennicke (C.M.): Many of the former junctures and centers of power in the “East” as well as in the “West” have seen their importance diminish. Nevertheless, despite this restructuring of relationships in Europe and large-scale movements of people and power beyond the matrix of the nation state, notions of the “center” and the “periphery” persist, along with their loaded meaning of political and cultural power or powerlessness. Indeed, they are increasingly being used as simple answers to complex issues thrown up by power structures. Are the concepts of “periphery” and “center” still relevant for the Foksal Gallery Foundation or the Re:form project? What experiences have you had in Poland in this regard over the last 15 years?

Joanna Mytkowska (J.M.): In the 1990s, a separation emerged between the center and the periphery, and then later, mainly due to the political changes, but also to our own activities, we managed to become part of the “international network” structure. This network enabled us to exchange our experience with different people in different places, independent of national borders and local confinement.

C.M.: Can you relate the aims of the Re:form project, namely, to reformulate the firmly established canon of art history in Poland, incorporating the notions of “center” and “periphery”?

J.M.: In my opinion, the flat or decentralized structure of the international art world is open to very diverse perspectives and proposals. While this does not neutralize the division between center and periphery, the structures are far too complex to facilitate a simple ascription to one of the two poles. For example, the recognition of and access to eastern European art as well as the understanding of cultural and political contexts has improved significantly. At the same time though, institutional structures, social prestige, and economic support in eastern Europe remain marginal when compared to the so-called centers. Nevertheless, the periphery and even the regional have undergone a positive revaluation in recent years. To be from the

periphery is now often associated with being authentic, fresh, and interesting. Meanwhile, to a certain extent, the centers themselves have become mobile; they move around. And we sense more and more that fixed points of reference are vanishing and that the levels of meaning need to be continually renegotiated and defined.

C.M.: The Croatian network project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 seems to mock both the socialist central structures as well as the administrative fantasies on the European level. At the same time, the project’s own activist practice is characterized by a strong commitment to a decentral-

ized understanding of culture. Are the configurations of “periphery” and “center” still part of the power structures in Zagreb and, if so, how would you describe them?

Goran Sergej Pristaš (G.S.P.): Of course they are. Political “representationalism” and populism are still producing centralization as well as opening up space for patronage and “clientelism.” The whole struggle for reconsolidating the independent scene takes place in the political sector and, in fact, through public policy making, lobbying, and conducting necessary negotiations. I think that neither the former centers nor centralism as such have disappeared yet. But a change is perhaps discernible in terms of their status; a change one could perhaps characterize as a process of emptying out. It’s more interesting today to think about what is going on outside these empty shells instead of thinking in the binary modes of center/periphery. What are the contours of centrality, what are the thresholds and passages, and what configurations of exteriority are possible – for instance, how eastern Europe is configured in relation to the West? This may provide us with a better passage into thinking of more generic structures: instead of evoking the notion of a vanishing of centers – thus, conveying a sense that there are less centers – we should think that are, in fact, more centers, which are not points of identification but points of non-identity differences.

C.M.: Does your background in dance or the trans- and cross-disciplinary structure developed by Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 offer alternative cooperative practices beyond the usual hierarchies? Was there a common theoretical background?

G.S.P.: For me personally, it’s both. My actual background is in dramaturgy and theory. I entered into dance as an illiterate, and my main interest in it was, in fact, how it undermines the dramaturgical insistence on a hierarchy of meaning and identification. BADco., the collective I work with, consists of three dancers/choreographers, three dramaturges, and one philosopher. This structure would never function with one author-leader. Somehow we became radical empiricists, believers in the reality of relationships. Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 is based on a similar structure. Collaboration was the starting point, and it forms the infrastructure of our project – and we long for infrastructures that permit collective collaboration.

C.M.: The notion of the “center” could also refer to high density, high frequency, and a battle for increasingly scarce financial resources and one’s very own visibility. In contrast, we have the “periphery,” where density and frequency are scarce, but there is an abundance of space and time; albeit they seem to be worthless there. How can these resources be made productive for the Ruhr Region, where a certain tedium and emptiness are the telltale signs of economic decline?

Inke Arns (I.A.): This describes the difference between Berlin and the Ruhr Region quite well. When we started working in Dortmund with the new team at the beginning of 2005, people asked us: “How come you moved HERE from BERLIN?” Our answer was: “Well, 3.5 million inhabitants proved too few for an audience.” And though the Ruhr region has 5.5 million inhabitants, there is an incredible inferiority complex among the young people in the contemporary culture scene here. And yet here you find a lot of vast, empty space, mainly disused former steel factories, closed coal mines, shut-down coke plants. In our situation, this is a great plus. The fact that the city authorities allow us to use



Boris Cvjetanović, from the series “Foto Studio City,” 1995–2005, silver gelatin print, published in: *Leap into the City* (2006)

a space like the PHOENIX Halle for free and that we receive basic funding for an independent media and culture initiative is quite unthinkable in places like Berlin.

C.M.: Within the framework of Peripherie 3000, you have confronted the current situation in the Ruhr Region with the history of the industrial age, re-reading a narrative of decay into a narrative of future potential. As a former West German, how do you perceive the different legacies of post-socialist and post-social democratic conditions?

I.A.: Of course, you can’t see me at the moment, but I’m smiling, for I just referred to some important aspects of this in what I said above. Having worked and spent a lot of time in the former GDR and in post-socialist eastern Europe, I find being in western Germany a somewhat exotic experience. This is where I spent my childhood, but it has changed a lot since then. When I sometimes drive through these post-industrial urban landscapes I cannot help being reminded of the former GDR – at least how it looked in the first half of the 1990s (only recently a friend from eastern Germany dryly pointed out to me that no revolution ever took place here). Since then, radical changes have been taking place in almost all of the post-socialist countries in eastern Europe. But I think it’s fair to claim that the West has been largely unaffected by this. The economic and social effects of the withering away of old industries have been absorbed by massive shock absorbers, in the form of social and economic programs. This is, of course, good, but it has failed to provoke the development of responses appropriate for actively countering (or at least for dealing with) these changes. Little or no awareness was developed for the radical changes that took place and are still going on under that surface. People simply did not feel the need for a change. What I really liked about the direct confrontation, i.e., having people from Zagreb come to the Ruhr Region, was the fact that this encounter fundamentally shook up the local participants’ notions of East and

West. To put it with a touch of pathos, the questions became a matter of who’s being taken into the future and who’s going to be left behind in the 21st century?

C.M.: Our Dresden symposium WILD CAPITAL/WILDES KAPITAL aimed at integrating a maximum of subjectivity from the participants. My experience is that collective working structures can be tremendous and extremely satisfying, but also entail an enormous amount input in terms of communication. How important are flat or decentralized structures for your work? Do you attempt to avoid centralizing mechanisms, to avoid what the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have characterized as the tree structure?

J.M.: The dynamic of the Foksal Gallery Foundation is linked to our history, ideas, friendships, and the mobility of our group (artists, critics, and curators). Our identification with one another is forged via specific topics: the local traditions of the avant-garde, the reception of modernity, discussions about the Holocaust and its implications for Polish history. But we remain curious and inquisitive of other perspectives, other localities, and working strategies. With our structure we try to keep a stable organization, so as to be able to respond to issues we consider important, for our personal obsessions as well.

I.A.: When referring to Deleuze and Guattari in this context, I would prefer to concentrate on their configuration of the concept of “becoming” rather than the “rhizome.” In my understanding, a structure in itself is devoid of meaning unless you take into account what it produces. What counts is how well it enables people to develop their ideas and put them into practice. The Hartware MedienKunstVerein is not a flat or decentralized structure: not only do Susanne Ackers and myself, the two directors, decide on the program together, but we also take responsibility for the content, the hard administrative

toil; we have to ensure that people get paid, that the PR work gets done, and that the necessary talks with politicians go smoothly, etc. What is interesting about the notion of “becoming” is that it does not refer to a ready-made structure, but rather describes the possibility of constant change in a conscious reflection and in response to the respective situation.

G.S.P.: Oh, of course, there is always a big expenditure of ideas, concepts, discourses, and strategies. But hovering on the surface of relationships often produces anonymous freedom. Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 started as, and still is, a flat structure, and this sometimes creates obstacles in administrative terms. But the project is well networked with other local NGOs, and they support us with their partnership. All the same: it’s right to say that communicating such flat structures entails a lot more work than working within them.

Inke Arns, born in 1968, art historian and curator, has been the director since 2005 of the Hartware MedienKunstVerein in Dortmund, where in collaboration with “relations” and Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, the project Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers was developed.

Christiane Mennicke, born in 1969 in Hamburg, is a curator. Since 2005 director of the Kunsthau Dresden, Städtische Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, she headed the project team for WILD CAPITAL/WILDES KAPITAL. **Joanna Mytkowska**, born in 1970, is an art historian, curator, critic, dealer, and co-founder of the Foksal Gallery Foundation in Warsaw. Together with Andrzej Przywara, she developed the Re:form project run within the framework of “relations.”

Goran Sergej Pristaš, is a dramaturge, choreographer, and program director at the Center for Drama Art (CDU) in Zagreb, is co-founder of the Croatian network project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000.

For further information on the projects, see pages 20/21.

Note: this exchange of e-mails was organized centrally. The partners are not responding to one another but directly to the questions posed by Christiane Mennicke.

Diana and her European diet

Diana is my next door neighbor!

Diana is well aware that since 1989 it is her right!

The right to think freely and to express her opinion freely!

- “Yeah... You aren’t allowed to! You’ve got to come in person....What special circumstances? Well arrange for a proxy then.... That’s right! Go to a notary.... obviously—a notary! Otherwise, there’s nothing we can do.... No, there are no exceptions! I told you, get yourself a proxy! An appropriate person! Your wife or children! If you haven’t got one, what I am I supposed to do about it! Proxy! Open ‘til 5! Saturdays ‘til 12! Goodbye!”
- “What do you want?” asks my neighbor Diana when I call her up.
- “Hello! I want to pick up my passport!” I tell her.
- “Listen, this guy who’s calling every five damn minutes has got no legs, but he’s applied for a passport! Hmm! So where’s he off to then? Well? Tell me then, where? Wait here,” says Diana on her way out. “They’ve brought some Oriflame cosmetics to the office, shall I get some for you?”

After making it to the passport office and handing over the money for the visa, Diana left for Italy. Every month Diana sent me a video of herself telling me about what’s in her bathroom cupboard.

- “These are really neat little sticks for cleaning your ears,” Diana said. “Do you guys still think matchsticks and cotton wool will do the trick?”

What she’s got in her bedroom cupboard and the kitchen:

- “This is sour cream, but it’s not like ours. It doesn’t have as many calories. Good, says our president, we have to think in terms of calories, if we really had the recommended minimum calorie intake, we members of government would need four doors. We have to calculate how much physical effort we exert. But what about when we’re sitting around and holding meetings? Not that we want people to go around with their stomachs bloated by hunger, but we don’t want them to be all flab and fat either! If you want us to start building Europe here in Moldova, then slim down!” concludes Diana with pride, quoting the president.

So here we are eight years later and my next door neighbor Diana comes back home from Italy.

- “Those bloody Italians!” she starts. “What a lousy bunch! They’re all slobs and ignorant peasants! Just as well that we Moldovans came along and shook them all up! Them and their fucking spaghetti! By the way, I wanted to tell you I’ve got myself an absolutely sexy Italian bedroom – you should come and see it! I can even offer you some coffee...”

On shit and ass

- “You write a load of crap, you really do, don’t you?” Diana asks me suspiciously. “Oh well, sorry, forget it,” she says cutting me off immediately before I can get a word in.

As I was saying, on some TV program (I don’t know why it was cut either, maybe the picture wasn’t clear or my face wasn’t lit right) recently, practically every discussion on literature and art in Romania and even more so in Moldova can be summed up in one word: “shit” I said it no longer matters who the writer is or what they write. The only thing that counts is the shit factor.

Turning out shit is a bit like saying you’re up the boss’s ass!¹ No big deal, right?

So I’m out on the balcony, undecided whether or not to watch the match and someone shouts out my name. It’s... Diana!

- “Who are you rooting for?”
- “Ivory Coast!” I tell her.
- “What? Those fucking niggers? Those monkeys should stay locked up in their cages! They’re fucking useless on the pitch! Or maybe you like black guys? Well? Well, why don’t you go and marry one then! Well? You’ll never bleach Africa you know!” Diana says—it must be her idea of a joke.

Two weeks later or thereabouts...

- “Mais pourquoi, mais pourquoi, mais pourquoi?” cries the French commentator after Zidane head butts Materazzi in the chest.

- “If it was pourquoi—then kill the fucker!” says Diana grinning from the next table.

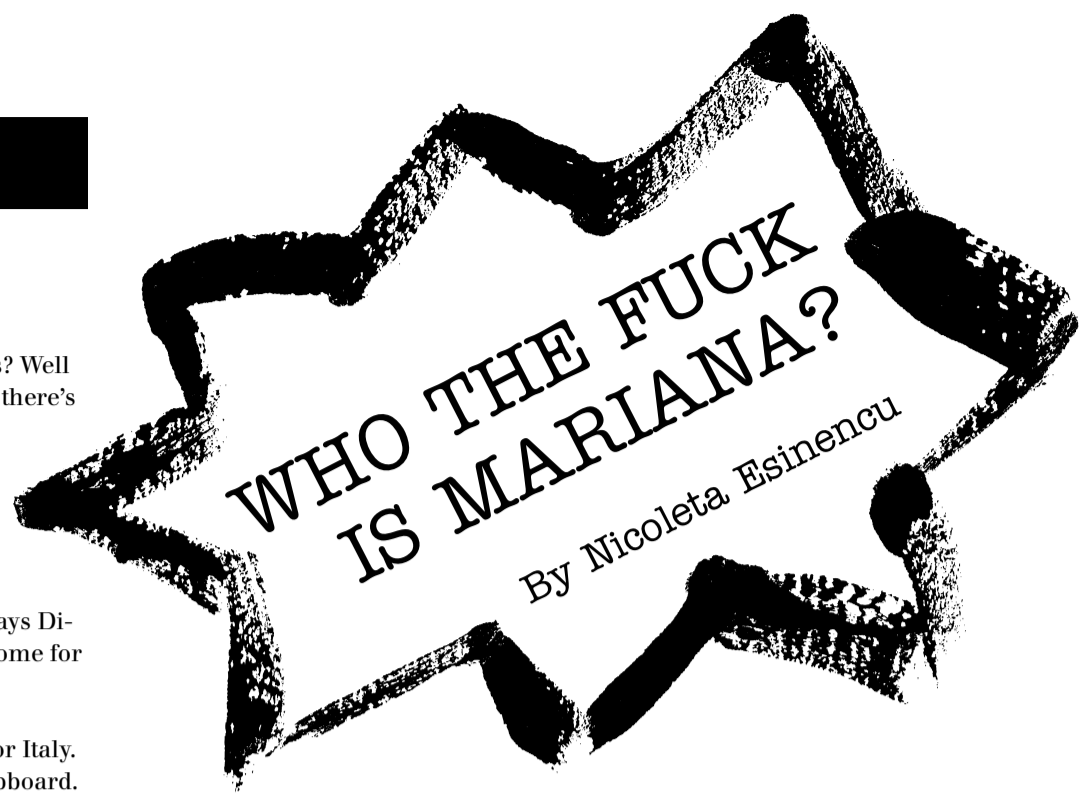
And Diana continues:

- “Right, ‘cos Zidane is a nigger like all the others! By what right can he possibly call himself French? Fucking Muslim terrorists, the lot of them! It’s gotten to the point where I’m scared to go out on the street! Anyway, good for you that you fucked Europe, your mother², no, that should be their mother, I meant to say...” Diana looks at me while she tries to explain to a nearby German what the difference is.³

Here’s some useful advice for tourists thinking about visiting Moldova:

It’s really important to recognize and bear in mind the difference between fucking your mother and fucking someone else’s.

You should never tell the person to whom you are speaking to go and fuck their mother, since the person is a direct descendent of the mother in question and the reaction you risk provoking could endanger your life!



You should tell them to go fuck someone else’s mother, thereby making it clear that you are in no way referring to the person’s own mother and, at the same time, you are presenting a prospect which the other person will quite possibly find acceptable.

A few days later, I see Diana waving a newspaper and explaining things to her 10-year-old son who says there’s no way he’s ever going to put on a soccer jersey with Zidane’s name again.

- “Mom... is... Zidane’s mom a cannibal?”
- “Where on earth did you get that idea from?”
- “I saw on TV that he wanted to eat Materazzi’s balls!”
- “Well, really! You eat meatballs don’t you? Rather than sit in front of the TV, you’d do better to read the papers! Look what it says here: Zidane’s action should be seen as setting an example to all those who respect their parents and their origins! Who’s going to protect me if you won’t even wear a soccer jersey? Tell me. Who then? We must understand Zidane as a human being,” she continues. “He’s human, isn’t he, and at the end of the day it was only a head butt – it’s not as if he kicked him in the face! And you know what? I paid 30 euros for this shirt! Go on, put it on just this once!”

What’s soccer got to do with literature?

And what’s fucking got to do with fucking shit?

No more than being up the boss’s ass.

Who the fuck is Mariana?

Now Diana’s working at the museum where the entrance fee is just 2 lei, if you were born in Moldova, but if you’re a foreigner, it’s 30 lei.

On Tuesday you can get in free! But for Diana, there is no Tuesday.

- “Anyhow, I don’t understand what it says here! How are they supposed to know it’s free today? And anyway, why shouldn’t they pay?” Diana asks me. “Do you think they can’t afford it? Do you know how much cash they’ve got? They’re all loaded with money, fucking capitalist scum! By the way, when are you going back?”
- “Tomorrow,” I tell her.
- “Oh well, if you have to go, you have to go! Send me an invitation, ‘cause I sure don’t want to spend the rest of my life in this museum like an exhibit!”

One evening on my way home, I came up with a play on words: the right to think freely, the right to think, free right or free to think?

Diana was on the balcony. She was smoking and was surrounded by some guys.

- “Hey, do you fuck?” one of them asks Diana.
- “Shhh, the neighbors will hear!” she whispers.
- “Hey, are you deaf or something? I asked you if you fuck.”
- “If Mariana fucks then so do I!” Diana responds.

Who the fuck is Mariana?

Nicoleta Esinencu was born in 1978 in Chişinău in the Republic of Moldova. Since 2002, she has been working as playwright for the Eugène Ionesco Theater in Chişinău and is also a freelance writer for the theater.

Notes from the Translator:

1) “Despre sulă și prefectură sau ce are pizda cu pizdeala?” – Is a strongly sexualized slang phrase in Moldovan Romanian, figuratively meaning “they have nothing to do with one another.” Derived from “pizda” (cunt), “pizdeala” means colloquially “clouts, brawl, smash someone in the face.”

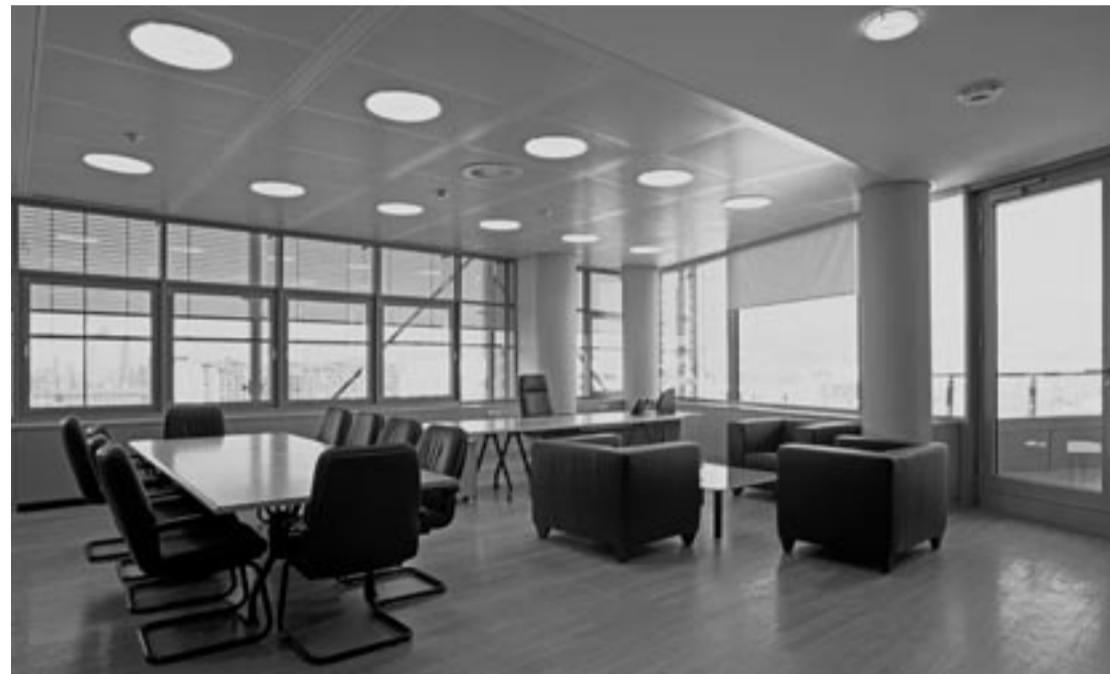
2) The author’s play “Fuck you, Eu.ro.Pa!” triggered a hefty political controversy in Romania and Moldova after it was published in the reader for the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005. In Moldova performances of the play were suspended for a time. Renamed “Stop Europe” by the author, it was classified for audiences over 16. In Romania, the play was the subject of several parliamentary questions.

3) Obscene expressions like “în pizda mă-tii” (get back into the cunt of your mother – personal insult) or “în pizda mă-sii” (get back into the cunt of the mother) are common phrases in Romanian.

Art: It's All the Same Sausage*

From Exchange Rate to Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange is labor and, thus, part of a capitalist value-creation chain. In the field of culture, too, the dissimilar is transformed into a commodity and, as such, is turned into something exchangeable. The cultural theoretician Boris Buden discerns two different forms in which dialogue with artists and intellectuals from other countries can currently take place and so demands: stop talking about the purely positive utility value of cultural encounters. It's the ultimate kitsch.



Platforma 9,81, "Invisible Zagreb Rebuilt," 2005. From: Invisible Zagreb Archive, www.platforma981.hr, published in: *Leap into the City* (2006)

Art is all the same sausage. Whoever says this is not necessarily an enemy of art, negating all artistic creation of any value. The equation can be understood very differently, namely as an expression of an abstract value relation. Of course, here we are talking about exchange value, in which the value of one thing is determined in relation to another – in terms of its positive utility, and the market is the place where such equations are possible. Only in the marketplace is the value of a shirt translated into the value of bread. But this quantitative exchange relationship depends on the respective "exchange rate," which fluctuates haphazardly according to circumstances, if times are prosperous or hard.

But things are not so hard at the moment, and this applies especially to art and culture. Should we therefore hear that "Mozart is salami," we need not immediately fear an impending famine. To the contrary, this equation is a sign of prosperity, of an age of feasting and feasts. Today, 250 years after the birth of the genius composer, the Austrian government has invested the tidy sum of 100 million euros in Mozart-related festivities. And why? Because they love music? Because they are so enthusiastic about the "utility value" of Mozart's musical legacy? Let's not be naïve. Mozart equates tourism and therefore tourists... and not just tourists. According to the director of the Austrian tourist bureau, Mozart is Austria's most successful global brand. The brand spans the broadest range of products in the world today: the notorious Mozart chocolate balls, Mozart mineral water, Mozart perfume, or even Mozart letter openers, to name just a few.... Most recently the Vienna Wiesbauer Austrian Sausage Specialties, Inc., has proffered salami, ham, and pasties under the Mozart name. Music or salami, art or kitsch, it doesn't matter, for consumers buy the brand and not the product anyway. Mozart's true utility value – his

music – is irrelevant in the end. In contrast, his exchange value, sublimated in brand names, is everything.

Art and culture production is no longer imaginable without sponsorship generated by private capital. One of the sponsors of the Mozart Year is Kraft Foods, Inc. – worldwide, one of the largest corporations operating in the chocolate market. The producer of Mozart chocolates is also one of the main supporters – along with the Credit Suisse Group, Nestle, and Siemens – of the Salzburg Festival, where the complete oeuvre of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 22 operas will be performed this year. So – you cultural pessimists – let's not panic: out of the residuals of chocolate and salami, we get Mozart's music once again.

Since the end of the 1960s, we have witnessed an inexorable growth of the culture industry. Art and cultural activities have become mass phenomena. Diverse kinds of public have also proliferated. In France, for instance, it has been said that the number of persons working in the culture industry (museums, film production, theater or show business) is today the same as that of the automobile industry. For the philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato, this situation means that we can no longer speak in terms of the old distinctions between art and labor. The old notion of culture as an autonomous realm separated from the other spheres of social life has likewise fallen by the wayside. Already, some thirty years ago, Michel de Certeau indicated that culture had become a domain of neo-colonialism. Culture, he proposed, is the colonized world of the twentieth century. The multinationals – the Kraft Foods Inc., Credit Suisses, and Siemens of this world – have established their new empires in culture, similar to how European nations once occupied foreign continents through military force. Thus, culture is

the new world, no longer expanding outwardly but inwardly in our very midst through all manifestations of life. In this world, all interpersonal contact – and, hence, along with it everything that is inward, meaning introspective, reflective contact with the self that is translated into our experience and knowledge – is an act of cultural exchange in both the most banal and radical sense of the word. Today, cupid no longer stands alone as the God of cultural exchange, for genders are ultimately nothing other than cultural constructs; instead, he has been joined by his rival in love, the God of war, Mars: all social conflicts are perceived today as being cultural conflicts in principle, as this or that manifestation of a universal clash of civilizations.

In view of this, it is irresponsible to speak purely of a positive utility value of international cultural exchange, something along the line of "isn't it wonderful that people from different cultures meet up, exchange their experiences, enrich one another's views, and in doing so may even possibly create something new and valuable." This is the ultimate kitsch and far worse than an exquisitely smoked, finely sliced, and neatly served Mozart.

Today, cultural exchange takes place essentially in two conceivable forms. One is multicultural: different cultures, understood as unique and original, meet one another under the normative ideal of mutual recognition and amicable co-existence. But this model of cultural exchange, dominant to the present day and in which the liberal and democratic world placed its hope in the 1980s, has slid into a profound crisis in the meantime. And it is the current neo-racist politics which profits the most from multiculturalism – as both its alleged victim and its parasite as well. The second model, articulating itself through its criticism of the multicultural ideology, sees cultural exchange as a process of

ceaseless cultural translation. The outcome of such translation, according to this conception, is a universal hybridization of cultures, which, in this way, eventually lose their potential for conflict. The problem with this model is, however, that it cannot be translated into any of the existing forms of democratic politics. There are no hybrid states mapped out on this globe.

From de Certeau, we have learned that the dynamic of social contradictions is no longer based on the old division between social classes, but on the relationship between culture and power. For him, links between the political and economic spheres are also only explicable by those of the cultural. This is something we cannot afford to forget when we ask about the exchange value of cultural contact. On 9/11, a cultural contact was established. Its exchange value has emerged out of the claims to global hegemony which today rock our world. The same holds true for those realizing these claims: art is all the same sausage.

* Note from the ed.: the German expression "Es ist wurst," meaning "It's not so important," or "It's all the same to me," literally translated would be, "It is sausage."

Boris Buden, born in 1958 in Croatia, is a freelance author who lives in Berlin. He has also translated works from German into Croatian, including Freud, Mitscherlich, Adorno, and Habermas. His most recent is *Der Schacht von Babel. Ist Kultur übersetzbar?* (2004).

One Question – Eleven Statements

For almost four years, from its base in Berlin, “relations” has collaborated closely with artists, curators, and theoreticians in different cities throughout eastern Europe and linked them with cultural actors in Germany. Projects were set up, partner projects created, a transnational network is initiated. In the process, we have discussed, argued, and, above all, responded creatively to the respective challenges. But what has actually changed in the minds of those involved? Has the confrontation with cultural actors outside of one’s own context changed individual working practices, theoretical approaches, or the idea of East and West? Eleven answers from the “relations” network, the variety of which once more underlines the diversity of the associative spaces and the “relations” project.



Maria Ziegelböck, 2002

Generating Dynamics

By Nikola Dietrich and Dirk Fleischmann

ACADEMY REMIX is the German partner project to Missing Identity, Kosovo. With the support of the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Missing Identity, and “relations,” an exchange program for young artists from both academies was organized. One of the key elements in the cooperation was the question to what extent artistic production can reflect the mechanisms forming and shaping identity.

Far more important than defining a concrete result for ACADEMY REMIX was the question: how can we generate a dynamic between the students from both locations that would prove fruitful for an entire year? Looking back, it turned out to be productive that the evolution of the exchange was left open for input from the participants themselves. This enabled a wide spectrum of activities to emerge which were inconceivable at the beginning. What evolved from this potential over the course of the year was a unique rhythm, made up of four alternate trips, lectures, seminars, workshops, excursions, radio broadcasts, cooking meals, exhibition visits, project reviews, exhibitions in Pristina and Frankfurt am Main, and an international symposium.

As early as the first meeting in Pristina we were all overwhelmed by how ideas were taken up directly and new impulses given, which were in turn concretely implemented. That it only took two days to find a suitable location for the student project called Contemporary Library (in the National Library in Pristina), is only one example for how surprisingly quickly ACADEMY REMIX received direct support from a number of parties.

Viewed in their entirety, the activities possessed a number of features distinctive to art academies; for instance, the collaboration between all involved can almost be understood as an autonomous unit, a newly created space that functioned beyond the existing structures of Missing Identity and the Städelschule. ACADEMY REMIX was, thus, overall an experimental field that allowed us to work with the qualities of an art academy.

Nikola Dietrich is curator at the Portikus in Frankfurt am Main; Dirk Fleischmann is an artist and was artistic coordinator at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main until the end of 2005.

Art as Corrective

By Dunja Blažević

After the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, new nationalist elites are rewriting the history of their countries. In particular the erection and dismantling of monuments is becoming a means of displaying this newly achieved empowerment of history. Launched by the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art, the project De/construction of Monument counters this manipulation with artistic interventions within public spaces, discussion forums, workshops, and publications.

While art and culture may serve as indicators of human consciousness, they are also generators of its manipulation and instrumentalization. Or they can also have a corrective function – as active participants in the process of individualizing thought and forming a critical and polemical position towards new dominant political and ideological patterns of thought which, in our case, are based on reawakened national and ethnic ideas. For us, such individual artistic actions, which deal with public space, are a social corrective, and they formed the starting point of our project De/construction of Monument.

De/construction of Monument aims to make visible individual artistic practices in contemporary art, practices which employ different representations of the past and present as their referential material, and so seek to demystify, reinterpret, or reaffirm these representations.

By addressing the issue of monuments in our society, through their works artists emerge as critics of the selective perception imposed by the state and an interpretation of history that constitutes today’s *Weltanschauung*.

In this respect, German artistic practice shows how art that faces up to the problems of the (negative) past and historical traumas can contribute to healing a society’s wounds. This example inspires and encourages artists and intellectuals in countries which have similar lessons to learn today. For us, collaboration in joint projects, entailing as it does exchange that fosters understanding of one another’s concerns, is extremely important for “internationalizing” the project. We envisage our project as a “work-in-progress,” as a learning process, and as interaction between protagonists from different countries and disciplines that work with different media and target different audiences. And the project goes on, even if it has been officially terminated. De/construction of Monument is still alive. The Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) is still receiving new initiatives and proposals from local sources and abroad which are based on the project’s original idea. We will be most definitely continuing our work in the coming years.

Dunja Blažević is director of the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA).

Slipping Out of the Pigeonhole of Exoticism

By Iara Boubnova

Visual Seminar is a project of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia, in cooperation with the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia. It focuses its attention on the culture of the visual in “transformation societies.” The changes made to the surfaces in urban space since the introduction of a capitalist economic system, the dominance of new visual codes, and the associated alteration of perceptual patterns, are analyzed using Sofia as an example, and they are shown to be a political issue.

Even before the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) or our project Visual Seminar existed, in Sofia we had already realized that teamwork represents not only our best chance of “making our point” known in public, but also that it is simply hip... inasmuch it was a blessing for us to have found an understanding and stimulating cooperation partner like “relations.” Recognizing the potentially wider value of our project, “relations” gave us the leeway to continue our investigations – on our own, without interference and interruption. This afforded us the chance to slip out of the pigeonhole of exoticism, which up until this point was an almost mandatory aspect of all East-West partnerships we had been part of.

But that’s not all. “relations” has not only supported us in regards to content and finances, but also confirmed that our concern – namely, the urgent need to discuss the aesthetic realities and changes occurring in an urban space now organized by the market – is one shared

by a broad public extending far beyond the specific locality. Its context is international. Through our German partners (“relations,” the Kunsthaus Dresden, and to a certain extent also the Bauhaus Kolleg Dessau) the Visual Seminar project was able to enter this broader context. After our partners had done the necessary groundwork, the significance of our project outside of its “home soil” became visible as well. We witnessed this in Dresden, filled with joy, pride, and satisfaction....

The multidisciplinary approach of our work also came about with the support, encouragement, and appreciation shown by our partners. This enabled us to elaborate at precisely which juncture contemporary art in Bulgaria becomes political, or at least politically relevant. This is crucial in dismantling a taboo that had set in after 1989, when it was generally considered unnecessary to deal with the political aspects of art, in part due to the hangover left behind by socialism and in part due to the unwillingness to adopt the Western leftist model, which many saw as being riddled with wishful thinking.

More often than we could ever feel comfortable with, our partners perceived our debates as too judgmental. And it took some time before we could really get our point across: we do not want to be on the receiving end of a process raping public space initiated and relentlessly carried forward by private interests.

Iara Boubnova is Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Sofia.

Moving Closer to Reality

By Veronika Darian and Günther Heeg

Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given is a project of the Institute of Theater Studies of the University of Leipzig, initiated by the East Art Map (IRWIN) and “relations.” It takes as its starting point the East Art Map project run by the Slovenian artist collective IRWIN and acts as theoretical workshop, discussion forum, and research platform.

The adventure we got involved in began last summer. Called “Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given,” it took on concrete form in the shape of a symposium and a publication (published by Revolver in 2006) bearing the same name, as well as a temporary network. One of the main challenges linked into an issue which, even after the intervening years since the collapse of socialism in eastern Europe, has lost none of its timeliness: the relationships and entwinements – both historical and current – between artistic and theoretic positions in eastern and western Europe. Hence, the first goal was to instigate a lively exchange between artists and theoreticians from East and West – with the focus placed on the voices of young academics.

A number of key problems of such work emerged in the course of preparing and executing the project Mind the Map! – History Is Not

Given. Both sides still begin their deliberations from very different positions, and it is extremely difficult to mediate between them. Mediation of this kind needs to be improved urgently. Furthermore, while striving to further anchor and network the actors into an institutional setting, it soon became apparent that the starting conditions varied considerably: in the East we have the isolated lone fighter, free of any attachment to an institution, while in the West we were faced with the largely inflexible organizational apparatus typical of academic institutions.

We can only wish that both academic institutions as well as their representatives in East and West tackle the challenges which such a – for both sides necessary – productive exchange entails. In addition, we would like to express our hope that social and cultural initiatives committed to an interdisciplinary approach to and the intermeshing of the arts and theoretical studies recognize the needs of the present – and the lack of existing programs – and strike out on new paths. “relations” has shown the way. It’s an adventure worth embarking on.

Veronika Darian and **Günther Heeg** work at the Institute for Theater Studies at the University of Leipzig.

Revising One’s Own Actions

By Christiane Mennicke

WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL is the German partner project of Visual Seminar in Sofia. Inspired by meetings and discussions on the development of urban space between the Kunsthaus Dresden, the Visual Seminar, and “relations,” an international group exhibition and a symposium focusing on the processes of privatization and their visual presence in urban space were held.

In my opinion, reorienting and reviewing one’s own actions and thinking is a necessary and positive concomitant phenomenon of all cooperation that overlaps several different cultural contexts. The parameters of the work undertaken, beforehand regarded as self-evident by the participants, need to be reviewed, no matter if this entails scrutinizing methods, concepts, mindsets, cultural practices, formats, or references. Which concrete, if not brutally hard experiences are actually linked through the allegedly clarified jargon of privatization in Bulgaria, eastern and western Germany, the Netherlands, or Serbia-Montenegro? Can one’s own standpoint, for instance, on issues like marketing cities, monument culture, and the yearning to impose order on urban space, also claim validity in a cultural context where the uncontrolled growth of capitalism prevents such things as monument conservation or regulated urban planning?

In this way, the differentiation of the various transformation processes taking place in the 1990s and the question as to how great the differences between the varieties of capitalism actually are today, not only demands discussion, but also self-interrogation. Both were decisive for the development of the WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL project.

Given the widespread assumption that cultural exchange proceeds in harmony and unity (as the word “exchange” itself suggests a certain absence of friction), I would like to emphasize the importance of difference and, indeed, friction. In their varied nuances, these seem to me

to be crucial, precisely because they necessitate a revision or focusing of one’s own standpoint and general set-up. A specific framework is always needed to understand why these strategies of cultural intervention are developed in a specific context. And would their relevance fundamentally change when transposed into another place?

A host of questions on the developments of the 1990s was discussed in a jointly organized symposium and an exhibition at the Kunsthaus Dresden; these disputes find expression in the recently published book bearing the eponymous title of the project.

One key experience (and perhaps even the most important one) could only be captured in fragmentary form in the publication, namely, in the brief but revealing biographies: the personal encounters shaping the tableau of the respective cultural and political situation, through which this same tableau first comes to life. What was so exhilarating in the scope of “relations” was that both aspects were made possible: the intensive reviewing and reorienting as well as the personal contact. The most important “effect” of “cultural exchange,” if one may use this makeshift term for “relations,” is first revealed at a second glance and, thus, located outside of what an art project is capable of representing directly: namely, the further course of individual biographies, of how their standpoints and “household” of experiences are directly and indirectly touched on and changed, evident in quotations, readings of other texts, and the emergence of one artist’s narrative in the work of another, for example, in the work of Antje Schiffrers (www.wildcapital.net), or in the reflection of this and other projects in Christoph Schäfer’s “The Gothic Style Lives in the Legs of Cowboys” (<http://transform.eiepcp.net/correspondence>).

Christiane Mennicke is the Artistic Director of the Kunsthaus Dresden.

Maria Ziegelböck, 2002



ALTER(el)ations or Artistic Currency Converter

By Lilia Dragneva

The artist Pavel Brăila, working together with the artist and curator Lilia Dragneva, a homegrown team, and international experts, has developed the television art and culture magazine ALTE ARTE. Since January 2005, ALTE ARTE has been on air for thirty minutes every fortnight on the state-run station TV Moldova. It reports on contemporary art and shows artistic contributions specially produced for the program.

One of the most important strategic tasks for organizations like the Center for Contemporary Art [ksa:k] or our ALTE ARTE project resides in acquiring funding from outside sources. However, the question is: is this need for aid purely financial in nature, or is it logistic? And how can this outside support be fitted into a local context?

The idea of our German partner “relations” was not simply limited to achieving a specific goal in exchange for money, but was guided by a far-reaching concern: to assist and train the persons involved in the project. And furthermore, “relations” established the necessary contacts to the open-minded and highly-qualified international contributors.

An Absolute Dream Project

By Nikolaj Nikitin

The film *Lost and Found* is a co-production by “relations” and ICON FILM. Six filmmakers from six countries tell six stories about new forms of self-understanding.

What made the film project *Lost and Found*, which I oversaw as artistic director, so unique was the fact that genuine relationships were forged and nurtured – in many respects. Firstly, an extremely close personal relationship to all of the directors has grown out of our collaboration. Prior to the project I was either merely acquainted or had loose contact with Nadja Koseva (Bulgaria), Cristian Mungiu (Romania), Jasmila Žbanić (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Kornél Mundruczó (Hungary), Stefan Arsenijević (Serbia), and Mait Laas (Estonia). In the meantime, we have all become very close friends and regularly keep in touch with one another. “relations” enabled a project to be realized that would have otherwise never seen the light of day, because it is simply impossible to gain the financial support necessary for such a pan-European venture (whose courage across all levels was rewarded). To guarantee six young, talented directors from central and eastern Europe complete artistic freedom and provide them with the opportunity to shoot a short film about the problematic relationships between the generations in their native country, is exactly what it seems to be: an absolute dream project. This is further underlined by the fact that funding for films in the directors’ respective countries

It represents a significant risk and means accepting great responsibility to believe in the aspirations of other people and their ability to implement an ambitious idea. This is not only a matter of exchanging ideas and knowledge, but also in altering them to fit the respective context. In this sense, we may speak of a currency converter of knowledge.

And the story goes on. In the beginning we had to struggle to make our voice heard, while now we are formulating and issuing precise statements and commentaries in the field of contemporary art. In our case, we could well succeed, or indeed, success has already been achieved, in making ALTE ARTE into a perfect platform that not only enables us to communicate with society, but become part of it.

To be continued ...

Lilia Dragneva is an artist, curator, and Director of the Center for Contemporary Art [ksa:k] in Chişinău.

is still very limited, especially for projects by up-and-coming filmmakers. As a result, young directors can only realize their projects with help from outside sources.

Given the extremely tight schedule, the fact that the film was completed within 19 months and premiered as the opening film to the International Forum for New Cinema at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival is nothing short of a miracle and testimony to how everyone involved was aware that we needed to act in concert. The reactions to the film across the globe rewarded our efforts (I had the pleasure of not only presenting the film at the seven premieres in the respective countries but also, amongst others, in South Korea and Argentina). And, of course, we are delighted about the subsequent success achieved by the young directors. Jasmila Žbanić, for instance, took part in the 2006 Berlin Film Festival with her first feature film – and promptly won the Golden Bear. Stefan Arsenijević has begun work on his first feature film, *Love and Other Crimes*.

I am looking forward eagerly to the continuation of relations between these directors, but alas also very sad that, with the end of “relations,” no other project partners will profit from this kind of experience.

Nikolaj Nikitin is editor-in-chief of the film journal *Schnitt* (www.schnitt.de) and lives in Cologne.

Clarity in Setting Goals Allows Freedom in the Collaboration

By Borut Vogelnik

East Art Map: (Re-)Construction of the History of Contemporary Art in eastern Europe is a project by the artist group IRWIN (Miran Mohar, Andrej Savski, Borut Vogelnik) from Ljubljana. The project systematically plots and opens up the art of eastern Europe since 1945. The goal is to create an “orientation aid” that traces connections extending beyond national borders and enables comparative analysis.

From the very beginning, the content and goal of our project East Art Map were very clearly defined. Our aim was to organize the fundamental relationships between eastern European artists where these relations are not organized, to draft the map, to draw up a table. East Art Map is meant to serve as an orientation tool in the still-unchartered field of art in the East. Today a chart intended to categorize art – the legacy of a classicism that has long been transcended – is rightly seen as something restrictive and, above all, inadequate. And yet, paradoxically, this kind of tabulation, founded in classicism, remains a key tool for orientation, even in the field of art.

It was precisely because of the clearly delineated goal of the project – one could even say its conceptual simplicity or more exactly the true necessity inherent in its basic parameters – that it was possible to bring together different proposals and approaches within the framework thus outlined. Moreover, we were not interfering in any way with the selections made by individual selectors but have accepted them in full and unconditionally. When we thanked all the participants in the introduction to the *East Art Map* book (MIT Press, 2006), saying that the book would not have been possible without their contributions, this was meant literally because, once the basic parameters had been delineated, the function of IRWIN was primarily that of a mediator. The same

could be said of partnership collaborations. The “East Art Map” exhibition, staged in the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum in Hagen (9.10. – 11.15.2005), had been proposed by Michael Fehr, and we then developed it together through extremely productive and inspiring debates – at least for us. In the case of *Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given*, where the partner was the Institute of Theater Studies of the University of Leipzig, we participated in talks during the course of the symposium and a publication based on the texts was presented at the symposium, while our academic partners further developed our points of departure, upgrading them significantly. A brilliantly conceived symposium was organized and carried out, well attended by the interested public. Now the book, edited by Marina Gržinić, Günther Heeg, and Veronika Darian, is published in September, and it is not merely a summary of what went on at the symposium but, furnished with additional new texts, forms a new whole, one that has already moved quite some distance away from the East Art Map’s basic points of departure.

All the participants of East Art Map influenced the project with their initiatives, knowledge, academic standards, enthusiasm, support, and their readiness to join in the partnership. It is they who have breathed life into the project, which would remain only an intention without their contribution.

“relations” is another – in fact, key – partner in the project, which not only enabled its realization through its support, but also influenced, with its initiatives and advice, local (in our case Slovenian) relations within the art scene and the project’s perception in both the East and the West. Or, in view of the above-said, the project was not just influenced but made by “relations.”

Borut Vogelnik is an artist active in the IRWIN group and lives in Ljubljana.

Maria Ziegelböck, 2002



An Ungainly Hypothesis on the Shared Experience of the East and the West... Metastases of Art

By Tomislav Medak

With the Center for Drama Art (CDU), the Multimedia Institute [mi2], Platforma 9,81, and What, How and for Whom (WHW), four independent cultural organizations from the areas of dance/performance, multimedia, architecture, and the visual arts joined forces to set up a platform for cultural work. Its name: Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000. The groups BLOK, Kontejner, Community Art, and Bacači Sjenki subsequently joined the platform. On the initiatives of “relations,” together with the Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, the Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 project developed the partner project Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers.

How do we re-conceive structural transformations once the social has lost its plasticity? Once the projects of re-founding societies from scratch, premised on a demand for more equality, more justice, more freedom, have lost their primacy, giving way to efforts to adapt economically not so unequal, not so unjust, not so unfree social conditions? And how do we re-conceive the social agency of culture once it has lost its privileged position of ideological investiture to economic legitimation?

These are the questions haunting equally our post-socialist and our post-welfare societies. If we look past all the division lines between the East and the West of Europe, on both sides we have a shared experience of being forced to accept that transformation comes from the economy and not the social – true experimenters are venturing nowadays into the economy, while reactionaries are doggedly clinging to their idle talk of social projects. Structural transformations have become a nice way of saying that the

social has become subordinate to the economic, and that the political has to assume the task of securing smooth space for a functioning economy. In fact, the European Union is in many respects just another way of repeating that social experimentation has lost its effectiveness.

This is particularly observable in the cultural field, where the dominant representational model of culture that the European Union subscribes to is yet another iteration of the old nation-state model of culture produced within and exchanged across borders, this time around scaled to fit the large consumer demand of the Single Market.

Therefore, arguably the only way for culture to regain its critical agency and break from the hegemonic stranglehold of economic capital might be to engage the economic rationale with a counter-rationale, to start to think in terms of social transformations, to embrace its anachronism, and go back to social experimentation – propose new social models, think past products and productions, experiment beyond its contextual condition of possibilities predefined by national cultural policies and their supranational reiterations. If there is no longer an ideology safeguarding the privileged position of the social agency of culture, then there is certainly room to contest the determinism of the economy. Cultural actors, thus, find themselves on the leveled playing field of contestation over public vectors, together with economic actors. And this is an experience shared, yet in every context always singular – unrelated, yet relatable.

Tomislav Medak is a philosopher, activist, and member of the Multimedia Institute [mi2] in Zagreb.

By Sokol Beqiri

The focal point of the Missing Identity project is an alternative art academy, located within the Contemporary Art Institute EXIT in Pristina. Here seminars and workshops are held on a variety of topics concerning contemporary culture and the visual arts; student fees are not charged. In Peja, a town near the border with Albania and Montenegro, Missing Identity has opened a gallery for contemporary art, the only of its kind in Kosovo.

As a pupil, my problems with writing began with set exercises, such as a little essay about “Spring in Your City.” I wasn’t very good. I was always good at math though, or at least until math started to be mixed up with letters: $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$. But there was still some hope for me. I saw an opportunity to do neither one nor the other, or rather a little bit of both: I would become a visual artist. Since then I have usually been asked to hand in visual material. But now that I am faced with the request to formulate this “statement,” I realize that one can never really count on anything on life.

My career is somehow linked with Frankfurt. I had lots of artist friends there, and being the conscientious if not ambitious student I once was, I visited Frankfurt often. My first exhibition was shown in the Frankfurt East-West Forum, at the “Palais Jalta.” Then one day my friend Wolfgang Klotz told me about the Städelschule. And from that moment on, it was my dream to study there. But at that time in Kosovo there was neither a scholarship program nor even the most rudimentary information about opportunities to study abroad.

A lot has changed since then. After the 1999 war in our country, we began launching a variety of

projects, aiming to vitalize the visual arts with new hope, or conversely, to vitalize the newly gained hope with visual art. For this purpose, we invited artists and curators from abroad to visit Kosovo. As the prevailing circumstances dictated, everything we did was on a voluntary basis, without any financial support.

But then one day Katrin Klingan “appeared” out of nowhere. She asked us what we would like to do if we were to receive financial support. Our answer was that we would like to focus on what was presently missing in our society. It was in this context that I used a saying popular in Kosovo: “what is missing doesn’t hurt.” Our plan was, however, to make sure that it did hurt.

After we received support from “relations,” work on our project Missing Identity evolved very professionally. Many well-established names from the world of contemporary art visited us. In this way, my “Frankfurt dream” was realized, at least in part. And then, the follow-up project was initiated, ACADEMY REMIX, a student exchange program with the Städelschule and Portikus.

In my view, the phrase best illustrating the current situation of the burgeoning art scene in Kosovo stems from a conservative critic: “Conceptual art is spreading like metastases through Kosovo.” The pain has started! And I’m sure it will continue, no matter what the future holds for our project Missing Identity.

It is really amazing what one can achieve – when the right kind of support is given!

Sokol Beqiri is an artist and co-founder of the EXIT initiative in Pristina.

The Incongruity

By Kathrin Becker

In Germany, the De/construction of Monument team worked with the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (NBK). In cooperation with “relations,” they developed the Displaced project for Berlin. This led to an exhibition featuring artistic actions in public space as well as a discussion forum which was held in October 2005.

The question about the relative influences of “German” and “Eastern” partners suggests a binary opposition which is thoroughly incongruous. When the question is couched in these terms, “German” seems to exclude the “East.” But how can a project like Displaced, which was concerned with the culture of remembrance from the viewpoint of visual art and realized as an exhibition in the fall of 2005 in Berlin-Mitte, exclude the “East” as a characteristic of itself? Especially since the concept for Displaced originated out of an examination of the De/construction of Monument project in Bosnia-Herzegovina? That is, from the observation of a creeping amnesia on both sides

(and its determinate conditioning through the media). While on the Bosnian side this may be occurring under the sign of reawakened national-ethnic influences, in Berlin this is more a matter of ideological debates and positions. What is undoubtedly part of this process of collective amnesia in both Germany and Bosnia-Herzegovina is a damnatio memoriae – a gradual effacement of monuments and symbols recalling the socialist past. The mechanisms for steering public remembrance with monuments that are unambiguously ideological and partisan were countered by the works shown in Berlin: Maria Thereza Alves, Edgar Arce-neaux, Danica Dakić, Šejla Kamerić, and Stih & Schnock all eschewed monumentality in their contributions, preferring to address this problematic trend with works characterized by fleetingness and processes.

Kathrin Becker is director of the Neuer Berlin Kunstverein (NBK) and curator of its video forum.

Maria Ziegelböck, 2002



relations

a project initiated by the German Federal Cultural Foundation

Visual Seminar

A project of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia, in cooperation with the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia.

Visual Seminar focuses its attention on the culture of the visual in “transformation societies.” The changes made to the surfaces in urban space – since the introduction of a capitalist economic system, the dominance of new visual codes, and the associated alteration of perceptual patterns – are analyzed, using Sofia as an example, and they are shown to be a political issue. Public art happenings and the holding of discussion forums offered the public strategies for dealing and decoding these visual elements.

Formats discussion events, Forum of Visual Culture, Resident Fellows Program, international guest program Visual Statement, exhibitions, art in public space, publications

Project leadership Iara Boubnova, <http://ica.cult.bg>

Leader of the fellowship program Alexander Kiossev, www.cas.bg

Team Maria Vassileva, Iskra Zaharieva

Advisory board Luchezar Boyadjiev (artist, Sofia), Ivaylo Ditchev (cultural anthropologist, Sofia), Irina Genova (art historian, Sofia), Boyan Manchev (literary theorist, Sofia), Miglena Nikolchina (philosopher, Sofia), Diana Popova (art critic, Sofia), Kiril Prashkov (artist, Sofia), Nedko Solakov (artist, Sofia), Orlin Spassov (expert in print and visual media, Sofia)

Fellows Luchezar Boyadjiev, Milla Mineva, X-TENDO, Krassimir Terziev, Boris Missirkov/Georgi Bogdanov, Georgi Gospodinov, Svetla Kazalarska, Ivan Moudov, Javor Gardev
Guests/Artists Gelatin, Olaf Nikolai, Sean Snyder, Birgit Brenner, Christine de la Garenne, Ulrike Kuschel, Via Lewandowsky

WILD CAPITAL / WILDES KAPITAL

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

The WILD CAPITAL/WILDES KAPITAL project emerged from encounters and discussions on the development of urban space between Dresden and members of the Visual Seminar from Sofia – two cities whose visual aspect have undergone grave changes since the end of socialism. Whereas in the West a “civilized capitalism” regulated by municipal byelaws has moved in, in the East an apparently “wild capitalism” dominates. A joint symposium in August 2005 investigated privatization processes and their visualization in post-socialist urban space as well as the interests behind this urban rearrangement. An international group exhibition held in the Kunsthau Dresden from May to July 2006 continued this discussion. The book *WILD CAPITAL/WILDES KAPITAL* was published in August 2006.

Formats international symposium, international group exhibition

Artistic direction Christiane Mennicke, curator and Director of the Kunsthau Dresden, www.kunsthauddresden.de

Co-curators Torsten Birne, Sophie Goltz

Project coordination Kathrin Krahl, Marlene Laube
Website www.wildcapital.net

Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, Croatia

A project of the Center for Drama Art, the Multimedia Institute, Platforma 9,81, and What, How & for Whom, Zagreb.

Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 strengthens collaboration between initiatives that understand cultural engagement as social action and social activities as critical culture. In the face of increasing privatization, centralization, and the logic of official representation in the area of culture, the joint platform presents new working forms and collective strategies of cultural production with the aim of enhancing the presence of independent Croatian culture.

Formats political platform, lectures, debates, symposia, interdisciplinary cooperation, performances, international curatorial collaboration, website, publications

Project leadership Goran Sergej Pristaš (CDU), Tomislav Medak (mi2), Damir Blažević (Platforma 9,81), Sabina Sabolović (WHW), Boris Bakal (Bacači sjenki), Vesna Vuković (BLOK), Aleksandar Batista Ilić (Community Art), Olga Majcen (Kontejner)

Team Ivana Ivković (project coordinator); CDU: Una Bauer, Ivana Ivković; mi2: Željko Blaće, Teodor Celakoski, Ružica Gajić-Guljašević, Petar Milat, Nenad Romić, Emina Višnić; Platforma 9,81: Dinko Peračić, Marko Sančanin, Ana Šilović, Miranda Veljačić, Josipa Križanović; WHW: Ivet Čurlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić; Bacači sjenki: Katarina Pejović, Sonja Leboš, Mirko Bogosavac; BLOK: Dea Vidović, Sonja Borić, Miroslav Jerković; Community Art: Ivana Keser, Karmen Ratković, Tanja Vrvilo; Kontejner: Sunčica Ostoić

Partner Kontakt – The Arts and Civil Society Program of Erste Bank Group in Central Europe

With the friendly support of City Office for Culture, Zagreb, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia

Website www.culturalkapital.org

Peripherie 3000 – Strategic Platform for Networked Centers

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

The city of Essen was seeking to become the European capital of culture in 2010 as part of a bid by the Ruhr Region. Against this backdrop, Peripherie 3000 purposefully contrasts the idea of a capital as a “center” with the concept of the periphery: as place at the outskirts, or at the edge, which facilitates a different perspective on changing social and cultural foundations. In collaboration with the Croatian project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, different partners from the areas of theater, dance, performance, media art, music, and urban research developed a variety of projects in the Ruhr Region. The work of these projects revolved primarily around investigations into structural change in the Ruhr Region and the changed framework conditions of cultural production. The results of the interdisciplinary platform were presented to the public in April 2006.

Formats website, art and cultural projects, colloquium

Project leadership Susanne Ackers, Inke Arns

(Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund), Tomislav Medak (Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000)

Team Francis Hunger, Christoph Pingel (programming), Darija Šimunović

Participating initiatives in Zagreb Center for Drama Art (CDU), Multimedia Institute (mi2), Platforma 9,81, What, How & for Whom (WHW), BLOK, Bacači Sjenki, Community Art, Kontejner

Participating initiatives in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund; MeX, intermedial and experimental music projects, Dortmund; orange.edge, Urban research + Marketing, Dortmund; stadtraum.org, Düsseldorf; and others.

Website www.peripherie3000.de

East Art Map: (Re-)Construction of the History of Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe

A project by IRWIN (for IRWIN: Miran Mohar, Andrej Savski, Borut Vogelnik), Ljubljana.

The East Art Map project systematically plots and opens up the art of eastern Europe since 1945 and makes it accessible in a broader context. The goal is to create an “orientation aid” that traces connections extending beyond national borders and enables comparative analysis. After curators, critics, and artists were invited in a first project phase to present important art projects of their countries, the resulting East Art Map is accessible on the Internet since January 2005, where the public can change the map topography.

Formats interactive website, research, cooperation with universities, exhibition, publications

Project leadership IRWIN: Miran Mohar, Andrej Savski, Borut Vogelnik

Team Livia Páldi (co-editor and copyeditor of the East Art Map publication), Inke Arns (head of website), Marina Gržinić (head of the university network), Michael Fehr (co-curator of the exhibition), Darko Pokorn

Kindly supported by European Union’s Culture 2000 program, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. The exhibition was a co-production with the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum, Hagen. The website is supported by Renderspace Pristop Interactive. The book *East Art Map* was published in cooperation with Afterall Publishing. East Art Map I was produced by the New Moment Ideas Company.

Website www.eastartmap.org

Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given

A project of the Institute of Theater Studies of the University of Leipzig, initiated by East Art Map (IRWIN), and “relations.”

Mind the Map! – History Is Not Given is a platform for art and culture production that takes up the impetus generated by the East Art Map. The project is seeking to create a space of exchange between different art practices, initiate concrete research projects and reflection, provide young researchers with the chance to present their ideas and work, and generate a broader, critical public. Work focuses on the cultural, political, and social backgrounds of artistic praxis as well as art and theory – viewed as “characters” of intervention. In October 2005, the first results were put up for discussion at an international symposium in Leipzig. These discussions as well as other texts and artistic works are published in September 2006.

Formats seminars, exchange between the participating university partners, international symposium, publication of research results

Project leadership and coordination Marina Gržinić, Günther Heeg, Veronika Darian

Participating academics and institutions Beatrice von Bismarck (Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig), Veronika Darian (Institute of Theater Studies, University of Leipzig), Ekaterina Degot (Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow), Grzegorz Dziamski (Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań), Michael Fehr, Karin Schad (Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum, Hagen), Werner Fenz (Karl-Franzens University, Graz), Marina Gržinić (Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, and Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana), Günther Heeg (Institute of Theater Studies, University of Leipzig), Miško Šuvaković (University of the Arts, Belgrade)

Team Antje Dietze, Carsten Göring, Hilke Werner, Sophie Witt, Christiane Richter (University of Leipzig)

With the friendly support of Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, City Municipality of Ljubljana – Department of Culture and Research, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

Media partners ARTCHRONIKA, ARTeOn, TkH, Umélec, springerin

Website www.mindthemap.net

Re:form, Poland

A project of the Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw.

Re:form is undertaking the attempt to re-read Polish (art) history from the perspective of the present. This process of re-signification and recontextualization also involves the development of new models for publicly presenting art. These models, which have already found international recognition, seek to stay abreast of the changing economic and social conditions in Poland. The project digitalizes artist archives and private art archives from the 1950s onwards, curates exhibitions, supports art projects in public space, and publishes monographs on artists.

Formats digitalized artist and art archives, the Local Modernism research project, international art exhibitions, art in public space, cooperation with the Raster gallery, fellowship program, publications

Project leadership Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara, www.fgf.com.pl

Archive project leadership Piotr Rypson, www.baza.art.pl

Team Joanna Diem

Fellows Cezary Bodzianowski, Michał Budny, Sebastian Cichocki, Agata Jakubowska, Wojtek Kucharczyk, Robert Kuśmirowski, Dorota Monkiewicz, Artur Źmijewski, Magdalena Ziółkowska, Jakub Ziółkowski

Partners Era Nowe Horyzonty (Era New Horizons) film festival (Cieszyn), Gallery Raster (Warsaw)

Website www.fgf.com.pl

Missing Identity, Kosovo

A project of the Contemporary Art Institute EXIT in cooperation with the Laboratory for Visual Arts and the Centre for Humanistic Studies Gani Bobi, Pristina/Peja

Missing Identity queries the efforts to establish a uniform national identity and propagates the protection of difference. The project aims to enhance the presence of what is gravely missing in society and to create an artistic reality of what is experienced as missing in Kosovo: cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. In the face of a precarious future, Missing Identity locates prospects for the future. Through art projects, educational work, and the production of the art supplement *ARTA* for the weekly *JAVA*, the project realizes an alternative public realm and actively engages an open society.

Formats seminars (without fees) for students, workshops, international artist program, exhibitions, publications

Project leadership Sokol Beqiri

Leadership of the art projects Erzen Shkololli

Leadership of the education projects Mehmet Behluli

Team Shkëlzen Maliqi, Valbona Shujaku, Dren Maliqi

Advisory board Ilir Bajri (composer, Pristina), Wolfgang Klotz (director of the Central and Eastern European Online Library, Frankfurt am Main), Astrit Salihu (philosopher, Pristina), Jeta Xhara (dramaturge, Pristina), Linda Gusia (sociologist, Pristina)

Website www.projekt-relations.de

ACADEMY REMIX Städelschule, Frankfurt meets Missing Identity, Pristina

A project of the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, in cooperation with Missing Identity, Kosovo, and “relations.”

Starting off from the themes addressed by the Missing Identity project, ACADEMY REMIX investigates to what extent artistic production can reflect the mechanisms of identity formation. Students of the alternative art academy EXIT in Pristina and the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main met and developed art projects in both cities during a year of intensive collaboration, accompanied by joint theory workshops. In September 2005, the first results were presented in the Museum of Kosovo, Pristina. The final presentation was put on show at the Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, in November 2005, and accompanied by an international symposium and a podium discussion held in cooperation with the European Stability Initiative (ESI).

Formats artist projects, theory workshops, excursions, exhibitions, symposium, panel discussions, website

Project leadership Nikola Dietrich, www.portikus.de; Dirk Fleischmann, www.staedelschule.de; Mehmet Behluli

Team Stefan Unterburger, Valbona Shujaku, Dren Maliqi

With the friendly support of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Heinz and Gisela Friederichs Foundation

Website www.academy-remix.de

De/construction of Monument, Bosnia- Herzegovina

A project of the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art.

After the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, new nationalist elites are rewriting the history of their countries. Memory is being erased, places renamed, books corrected, and at the same time new anthems, icons, and symbols are propagated. In particular, the erection and dismantling of monuments is becoming a means of displaying this newly achieved empowerment of history. De/construction of Monument counters this manipulation with strategies of deconstruction. Artistic actions in public space, discussion forums, workshops, and publications are undertaking an attempt to de-ideologize history and change existing models of culture. In November 2005, a monument dedicated to Bruce Lee was unveiled by the associated group Urban Movement in Mostar which stands for the universal kung fu fighter’s unconditional will to assert justice.

Formats artistic interventions within public spaces in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar, discussion forums, artist presentations, exhibitions, art and media productions, publications

Project leadership Dunja Blažević, www.scca.ba

Team Amra Bakšić-Čamo, Larisa Hasanbegović, Sanela Bojadžić, Enes Huseinčehajić

Advisory board Marina Gržinić (artist, curator, and art historian, Ljubljana), Jakob Finci (president of the Interrelations Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo), Želimir Koščević (director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb), Shkëlzen Maliqi (philosopher and director of the Centre for Humanistic Studies Gani Bobi, Pristina), Borka Pavičević (director of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade)

Partners Urban Movement, Mostar, Center for Informative Decontamination, Banja Luka, The Children’s Movement for Creative Education, New York

With the friendly support of Open Society Fund Bosnia-Herzegovina

Website www.scca.ba

Leap into the City

Chişinău, Sofia, Pristina, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Zagreb, Ljubljana

Cultural Positions, Political Conditions. Seven Scenes from Europe

A book by “relations.”

For three years the editors were involved in close exchange with cultural actors in eastern Europe in the course of their work for “relations.” Sparked off by the conviction that art and culture form the vital center of a society, their book offers artists, theoreticians, journalists, and cultural actors a platform. In essays and reportages, in literary texts and artistic contributions, around 50 authors articulate their positions on current issues, communicate local priorities, and paint a subjective picture of their cities, cultural scenes, and public realms.

Editors Katrin Klingan and Ines Kappert

Advisors Marius Babias, Mathias Greffrath, Georg Schöllhammer

Publication partners Federal Agency for Civic Education, Kontakt – The Arts and Civil Society Program of Erste Bank Group in Central Europe

600 pages with 190 color reproductions. Format 17 × 24 cm, hardback, ISBN 10:3-8521-7712-4 (English edition) Published by DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, Cologne.

ALTE ARTE, Moldova

A project developed and realized by the Center for Contemporary Art (ksa:k), Chişinău, in cooperation with “relations.”

The television arts and culture magazine ALTE ARTE was developed by the artist Pavel Brăila together with a team of artists and journalists and “relations.” Since January 2005, the program has been broadcast once a fortnight on the state-run station TV Moldova. Besides reports on artists and current cultural events (regional and international), the program also shows artistic work specially created for ALTE ARTE. The goal is to encourage a broad interest in contemporary forms. ALTE ARTE is produced in close cooperation with editorial offices in Romania, Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Germany and collaborates with international film and media festivals.

Format television art and culture magazine (thirty minutes per show)

Project idea Pavel Brăila

Team Lilia Dragneva, Ştefan Rusu, Ludmila Vasilache, Adel Idris

Contributors, editorial staff, reporters Ruben Agadjanean, Denis Bartenev, Cornel Chiperi, Elena Ciumac, Victor Diaconu, Vadim Hincu, Ştefan Rusu, Marin Turea

Advisors Thorsten Essig (picture editor, Berlin), Martin Fritz (director of the Festival of the Regions, Ottenheim/Vienna), Razvan Georgescu (freelance television journalist), Martin Pieper (chief editor for culture at ZDF/arte, Mainz), Hans Zimmermann (cameraman, Frankfurt am Main)

With the friendly support of Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), Soros Foundation Moldova

Website www.altearte.md

Displaced, Berlin

A project of the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in cooperation with De/construction of Monument, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and “relations.”

Displaced reflects the thematic of the Bosnia-Herzegovina project De/construction of Monument in the German context. Examining (re-)definitions of national history and their own stays in Sarajevo, six artists developed public art works in Berlin, which were shown in October 2005. The works traced a diverse array of relationships between the condition of society in post-war Sarajevo and the German capital and the western media principles of an “economy of attention.”

Formats artist interventions/interactions in public space in Berlin, discussion forum

Project leadership/Curator Kathrin Becker, www.nbk.org

Team Maryam Mameghanian-Prenzlow

Artists Maria Thereza Alves, Edgar Arceneaux, Danica Dakić, Šejla Kamerić, Stih & Schnock



Contrary to popular belief, to memorialize is not a means for remembering, but is really permission to forget. For only that which has been ascribed with meaning can be forgotten, erased or destroyed. The old model of monuments is a lie.

Edgar Arceneaux works and lives as an artist in Los Angeles. With his intervention “Old Man Hill,” in the fall of 2005, Arceneaux took part in “Displaced,” an exhibition staged in Berlin on the initiative of “relations” and realized in collaboration with De/construction of Monument (Sarajevo) and the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (NBK).

BUAN THIS
NEWS PAPER
TO THE
GROWING!

Theme Nights, Matinees, Film Series

For the “relations” tour “Images of the East” we have curated theme nights which, by combining insider and outsider perspectives, shall convey impressions of everyday life in countries of eastern Europe. Many of the artists and theoreticians we invited to participate live and work in the countries they will speak about, and many of our guests have emigrated abroad, while others commute between two or more countries. But every one of them has their own unique connection to the societies of eastern Europe under discussion. The participation of writers, journalists, and academics from Germany shall enable comparisons and contrasts to be drawn with life here.

For all their diversity, each of the theme nights revolves around a single question: what actually shapes our perception of the countries of eastern Europe? Who or what determines the criteria, the focus, and ultimately estimation? And which visions of Europe are actually in circulation at present?

Planet Moldova?

Hanover, October 6
Hamburg, October 20

Our neighboring planets are unknown and inhabitable – or perhaps not? Even if the Republic of Moldova lies on the edge of Europe, here questions about social conditions are raised with a vividness and radicalness, which also make international problems transparent. With “Planet Moldova,” the artist Pavel Brăila and friends invite us to learn about a society that has undergone rapid and extensive change since 1989 and, consequently, tell us a great deal about Europe’s current state.

We will launch the “Planet Moldova” theme (and our tour) in Hanover with Pavel Brăila’s video work “Baron’s Hill.” In 2005, the artist filmed bizarre pompous mansions in the south of Moldova. Purely representative buildings, they remain uninhabited: the Romany families who own them live mostly in nearby small houses, although they have saved the money for these lavish mansions for decades.

In his work “Eurolines-Catering or Homesick Cuisine,” Brăila takes a look at another aspect of the Republic of Moldova: the title of the work is inspired by the bus company “Eurolines Moldova,” which connects Chişinău with cities in and outside Europe and is the guarantee for a functioning worker migration across the whole continent. The theme night will end with a mixture of computer-generated music and VJ-ing by the artist collective “Planet Moldova.”

A “Planet Moldova” night will also be staged in Hamburg. Here we will begin with a reading of texts from the “relations” book “Leap into the City.” Two of these texts are by the young Moldovan authors Nicoleta Esinencu and Alexandru Vakulovski. Their snarling texts attack the habits and prejudices of their compatriots and tell of social disturbance and destruction. These readings of literary texts will then be complemented by a more sober reading. Irm Hermann tackles the facts of the country’s past and present. Finally, Pavel Brăila’s performance “Reflections in White” will join into the reading, providing what appears to be a response. A dancer nosily tears lengths of paper into tatters: tabula rasa instead of data. After a break, music will take the stage. The performance “Musicbox” provides the backdrop and concept: in front of a cardboard model of a pop band and synced

to pop samples, Pavel Brăila boxes his way through a universe of copies, until the band “Zdob și Zdub” sweeps him from the stage. The Moldovan superstars are adept at entrancing both the fans of wild, genre-mixed music as well as the lovers of Prix d’Eurovision (most recently with their hit “Grandma Beats the Drum”). A side that undoes any superficial categorization is revealed in Moldova once again.

Remembering, Forgetting, Adjusting:

Strategies of Recollection

Hanover, October 7

How does one deal with a near and painful past? This question is massively important in those countries which, in the wake of the Yugoslav wars, have formed themselves anew and, indeed, are still in the process of doing so. It is, however, also generally significant for societies which, through the collapse of state-socialism, have become caught up in fast-paced transformation processes. We ask: how and what can be remembered, what is not remembered, and which questions are not even broached?

The Sofia theater director Javor Gardev will open the Hanover night with a presentation of his work “Visual Police,” with which he recently stirred up the public in Bulgaria. As the “major of good taste,” Gardev was a guest of talk shows and serious news programs and performed his role so convincingly that his authenticity was never questioned. His uniform (put together by Gardev himself), rank insignia (self-awarded), and his authoritarian gestures achieved the desired impact. A military guardian of good taste who, commissioned by the city authorities, takes care of aesthetic order. Though the major may have irritated the Bulgarian public, all the same it seemed a perfectly realistic proposition to the public.

A different form of “mis-” dominating everyday life is the focus of the new film “Grbavica” (Esma’s Secret) by the Bosnian director Jasmila Žbanić for which she won the Golden Bear at this year’s Berlin Film Festival. The film recalls the mass rape of Bosnian women during the war in the former Yugoslavia and reveals, with distressing clarity, how these traumatic experiences have no place in the new routine of life in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The

author and journalist Carolin Emcke will speak with Jasmila Žbanić. As a foreign correspondent for “Der Spiegel,” Emcke has reported from numerous crisis and war regions. Time and again, most recently in her publication “Von den Kriegen: Briefe an Freunde,” she asks what constitutes a convincing act of bearing witness. Parallel to this dialogue, the film “Grbavica” will be shown in the Kommunales Kino (KoKi). We will also present the omnibus film “Lost and Found,” to which Jasmila Žbanić contributed an episode.

Fetish Europe

or What Holds Us Together
at Heart

Hamburg, October 21

Despite the euphoric or deprecating discussions about Europe, despite the organizations and institutions responsible for shaping official politics, Europe appears to remain a notion difficult to grasp, or a surrogate. But what holds Europe together, beyond the bureaucracy?

The theme night in the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg will begin with Luchezar Boyadjiev and his narrated visual presentation “Billboard Heaven – Sofia and the Images of the West.” The artist will present images from his archive on Sofia, which not only document the changes made to the city’s visual surfaces, but also exaggerate them through manipulative interventions. Boyadjiev’s artistic works reveal a city in which – under the partly self-imposed diktat to rapidly assimilate into the capitalist West – anything is possible. A discussion round under the motto: “and then at once you’re the West!” will pick up what Luchezar Boyadjiev presents with artistic means: the entwinement between radical social change and the inflationary staging of surrogates. The author and journalist Mathias Greffrath, who will moderate proceedings, will be joined by Javor Gardev, who will present excerpts from his work “Visual Police,” along with the Bulgarian cultural theorist Ivaylo Ditchev, and the Ukrainian art historian Konstantin Akinsha. Both Ditchev, who commutes between Sofia and Paris, and Akinsha, who today lives in Budapest, have accompanied the transformation processes in eastern European countries over a number of years in their essayistic texts.

The final word on the theme of Europe belongs to the young editors of "Titanic" and their reading performance "titanic goes east europe – east europe goes titanic." Even "Titanic" magazine, an institution amongst satirists in Germany, has an opinion on Europe – well, at least that's what they claim.

Building Project Europe –

Tigers Have to Stay Outside
Frankfurt, November 2–3

The first "Europe night" in the schauspiel Frankfurt stands behind the motto "No one will be able to stop them!" Pavel Brăila and Mathias Greffrath have been put in charge of proceedings, of putting a stop to the tigers and lions. Springing out of Pavel Brăila's video work "PLUSH WONDER," the animals take aim at the European Central Bank, situated opposite the theater. The artist has collected soft toys from a tiny place on the rail line between Chişinău and Moscow: once the home to the large Soviet plush toy factories, today the mass production of the cuddly animals is a cottage industry. The toys are sold to passengers passing through on the train, and this regularly transforms the trains into crammed plush toy transports. Mathias Greffrath will respond to this change in working conditions with a reading on the theme of labor migration. But in this case, too, the artist and Moldovan Pavel Brăila will have the final word: for the finale and longest part of our theme night, "M & M" (Moldova and Mexico), he will bring along 10 musicians from Chişinău, specialists in wedding music. Their folkloristic music will face up to the artists and musicians of "Nuevos Ricos" from Mexico City. Two countries on the edge of Europe – or simply mere "third world" countries? Well, not exactly, rather an ironic proposal for inclusion and exclusion procedures, formulated – sorry, played – from the margins.

The second theme night in Frankfurt will focus on plans and facts. Under the title "Building Project Europe – Tigers Have to Stay Outside," a discussion will be held, featuring Gerald Knaus, a proven expert for the south-eastern region of Europe and the political scientist Elmar Altvater, who, as president of the German branch of Attac, has sharply criticized the planned European constitution.

Representations of the "Foreign"

in the German Public Domain

Hanover, October 8

The countries of eastern Europe rarely play a role in the public domain in Germany, and our knowledge about them is accordingly limited. Which misjudgments shape the image we have of countries in eastern Europe? What are the general premises determining how the "foreign" is represented and imagined in the public domain?

The matinee in the schauspielhanover will begin with a reading by Tilman Rammstedt. In 2005, the author was in Kosovo and has described, his unique laconic style, how it feels to move around as a "professional tourist" in a country about which one knows hardly anything – except that a war was fought there. What emerges here are observations about Kosovo and, furthermore, an observation of these observations – a narrative about the practices of empathy, detachment, and re-translation. After the reading, Stephan Lohr from NDR will discuss these and other issues with Tilman Rammstedt. This will be followed by a discussion between the Croatian cultural theorist Boris Buden and the philosopher and sociologist Oskar Negt. Expressed in an immensely powerful language that conveys his acumen, wit, and commitment, for years Boris Buden has described and analyzed the collapse of the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent development of the individual countries. One captivating feature of his texts is how they are not simply content with cultural explanations but seek out the political conditions triggering conflicts and developments. This long-time, watchful observer of the situation in the former Yugoslavia, who today lives in Berlin, will be joined by Oskar Negt, one of most respected thinkers of the relationship between society and the public sphere in Germany.

Strategies of Survival

Hamburg, October 22
Frankfurt, November 4

In the Abaton cinema in Hamburg and the German Film Museum in Frankfurt we shall present outstanding and award-winning films from the Sarajevo Film Festival in the presence of the directors as well as the producer Amra Bakšić-Čamo. Feature films by the Hungarian director Kornél Mundruczó and the Romanian Cristi Puiu will be screened in Hamburg. Mundruczó's "Johanna" (2005, 85 min) is a curious mixed genre work, fusing a Joan of Arc drama with horror, in which all dialogues are sung. After an accident Johanna, a drug-addict, has her life saved in a hospital. Using her own body, she herself turns into a miracle worker. Puiu's "Moartea domnului Lazarescu" (Death of Mr Lazarescu 2005, 150 min) uses a documentary style to tell the story of the 65-year old Mr. Lazarescu's search for a hospital, during which his condition continually worsens. In this odyssey through the Romanian health system, Puiu delivers intimate insights into disintegrating family structures and other social networks, describing the resultant isolation of the individual. The focus in Frankfurt is on contemporary film in Kosovo, where last year the first feature films since the war were produced.

Publisher
relations e.V.
Blücherstrasse 37 A
D-10961 Berlin
Deutschland
Telephone: +49-(0)30-61 65 72-40
Fax: +49-(0)30-61 65 72-50
relations@projekt-relations.de
www.projekt-relations.de

Team: Samo Darian (Managing Director); Ines Kappert (Publication co-editor, scientific assistant); Katrin Klingan (Artistic Director); Patricia Maurer (Program contributor and coordinator); Franziska Sauerbrey (Project coordinator); Sandra Schwarzer (Communications and PR); Peter Wellach (Communications and PR); Katrin Wendel (Assistant to the Managing Director)

Idea/editors: Katrin Klingan, Ines Kappert, Peter Wellach, Patricia Maurer

Associate editor: Christiane Kühn

Graphic concept: Boris Ondreicka

Graphic design/layout: Julika Matthes, Oliver Sperl

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Concept: Katrin Klingan, Ines Kappert, Peter Wellach

Coordination: Samo Darian, Patricia Maurer, Franziska Sauerbrey, Katrin Wendel

Project assistance: Franziska Franze, Vera Opitz, Birte Schramm

Event production: Finn Jensen, Alf Thum

Technical director: Karsten Fischer

Design and production of the container, media wall, lounge id3d-berlin themengestaltung, www.id3d-berlin.de

Media wall artists: Pavel Brăila, Dren Maliqi, Tomislav Medak, Artur Żmijewski, Kalin Serapionov, pro.ba, Igor Zupe

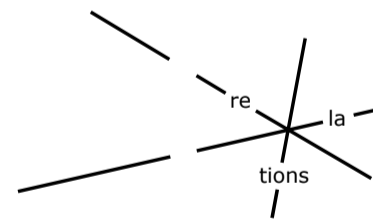
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