

# WeAreTheArtists



A lot of books. Photo by Beat Cadruvi

## Art and the City

By artandthecity@hotmail.co.uk

### Cheap London

The PA had invited me out to an opening of a new gallery called Scream in London's Mayfair. We tend to inhabit different worlds now, as he's earning quite the sum. This wasn't the usual east end, pay-a-pound-fifty-for-your-beer kind of opening that is pretty standard fair every Thursday night in London – this was a new gallery that Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood was opening for his son Tyrone to run. I convinced the PA to let me bring The Rockstar as I couldn't let a scene like this go untouched without the company of my dear friend.

Wardrobe difficulties aside (...dress up or dress down...??), we arrived a bit late, but not before shooting back a couple of very expensive Sambuca's at a club around the corner, to get ourselves in the mood. I realized I was no longer in South East London anymore when the bartender slammed down the shots and asked for forty pounds. With instructions by the PA to say specifically who we were with at the door, we entered the storefront gallery space into a jam packed party, finding him on the sidelines chatting up two Creatures. I quickly got us some drinks from the free bar where I happened to run into some friends doing the catering. When I brought the drinks back and had a chance to scan the room, I realized there was no art on the wall, except for two blank canvases near the back that had felt markers dangling beside them. I guessed that this is where you were supposed to sign your name.

Everybody looked very glamorous in an unpretentious way, but I didn't really recognize anyone until Tracey Emin arrived, weaving her way through the crowd straight to the bar. She stopped in front of me and I nudged The Rockstar, unsure whether it was her at first. Aside from a deep orange tan, she seemed a lot prettier in real life – more petite and less aggressive. She looked at me in a kind of mutual exasperation at how crowded and hot it was and how long it was going to take her to get a drink. I smiled, still unsure whether it was her or not. After she moved on and I realized it was indeed Tracey Emin and kicked myself for not striking up a conversation. This happens to me a lot in London – I run into these people, don't recognize them until they leave, and then get mad at myself for not talking to them. I'm beginning to think the not recognizing thing is a defence mechanism to conceal the fact that I'm actually star-struck.

We were moved from a small alcove in the middle of the gallery by security. I thought maybe because it was too crowded and we were posing a fire hazard or blocking the bar or something like that. But then Ronnie Wood arrived and I realized that that was where he was going to hang out – at a table that was set up there. Later as I went back for more drinks, I passed by this alcove, which was virtually sealed by two huge bouncers in black suits, glimpsing Ronnie and Tracey and some other people hanging out around a circular table. After a few more drinks, I tried to infiltrate the alcove in the hopes of starting up my lost conversation with Tracey but the body guards would have none of it.

The PA, The Rockstar and myself proceeded to get sloshed as tends to happen when there's free booze around. On his way downstairs, the Rockstar bumped into Tracey and Ronnie's wife bursting out of the toilet together, yelling at some girl to fuck off. The party was happening, and surprisingly, aside from the bodyguards, and the minor fuck off in the toilet, very friendly. Just a lot of drunk media people, models and actors. I saw Ronnie snaking towards us and alerted the PA, who quickly stepped

up and caught his attention, apologizing that his boss couldn't make it to the party. Ronnie graciously smiled and nodded, looked at the three of us, shook the PA's hand and continued on his way out the door, leaving a trail of gorgeous models in his wake. He still had on that hair do – that sort of English mullet rocker do from the 70's that seems to be making a comeback. Its amazing to see a short and wrinkly guy still Iggying it up.

After dancing to a few Stones' songs and signing our name on the now not-so-blank-canvases, the Rockstar and I bid a drunken farewell and thankyou to The PA and hopped in a cab with some other partiers trying to make it back down to South East. I passed out in the back seat, waking up to The Rockstar embroiled in an argument with our fellow passengers, yelling at the cabby to stop the car. Shaking me awake, he pulled me out onto the street. It had started to piss down rain but miraculously we seemed to be only a few blocks from his place. I had no idea what was going on until he said, "good it worked – we got home for free."



Legende????

## Update: Buenos Aires

By auk@gmx.ch

Hello there! For one month now I'm at the El Basilisco residency in Aveland da Buenos Aires. That's about the time needed to get fairly familiar with the city, to find the way around and stuff you need for your work. Time goes so quick...in two weeks will be the opening of our exhibition already. Two other artists are here at the same time – Caro Senmartin from Cordoba and Gabo Camnitzer who's usually living in Gothenburg. And Ale, who lives here permanently; he's taking care of the place ("The man with the keys"). It's nice to share the house and hang out



The Basiliscans: Esteban, Juan, Ale, Caro, Gabo y Tamara. Photo by Aurelio Kopainig

together till late, or early mornings. The city is huge; I would feel totally lost without them. It's an exhausting place somehow. Maybe I'm just on a constant jet lag... probably it's just the rhythm of siesta, salir (= go out), and then get up late again. Work is going slow, but it's very good to be in Avellaneda. I love to walk around in the neighbourhood. To come here without a fixed plan or project was good. The place itself has much more effect like this. In the small shops, at the Kiosco or the cafes the people start to know you after a few days. Due to world cup (and time shifted transmission) the first few weeks became very compressed. Almost every day started with football&breakfast at Irupe, the café around the corner. After the Argentina–Germany game the good mood went badly to the cellar, of course, and it took quite some days to get back. Now, after the headbutt and final penalties on TV, table soccer at El Basilisco still proofs to be a great time killer at evenings or late nights.

Openings top on Fridays. They are quite boring though. Often the crowd appears in such a glamorous fashion – I get annoyed with all the show-off and pretension.. (besides I rather go for beer than Champagne). Way more interesting was a studio visit for instance, at Gomez Canlé, a painter of great enthusiasm. He showed his work and came by to see our work, too. He talked about what resources and historical background an Argentinian artist has. The fact that history of painting is mainly known as reproductions in books (often with a strong specific colour touch to it, due to printing methods and -limitations) gives a different point of departure. The same goes for the limited access of technical equipment. Of course there are many influences different to the European/Northamerican scene, but simply seeing things in the streets, the way signs are painted, the mix of architecture, the patina/feeling of time buildings have, the visual chaos and the saturated, but darkened colors, make things more clear. I understand better now what I've seen of the art so far. Besides I still enjoy the bars a lot. Fin del Mundo! Beso!



At Gomez' studio. Photo by Aurelio Kopainig

## Update: Bulgaria

By sevo@code-flow.net

Arriving in Sofia I found I had forgotten my toothbrush in Zurich. Since all shops had closed by that time, I had to take a taxi and find one of the 24h pharmacies. I found out that all 24h pharmacies are now equipped with armored counters through which you communicate with the pharmacist via a microphone. So that the entire square hears the next client explain: something against a headache! a pack of sanitary towels! condoms, please, please! In fact, this is surely in line with European standards.

I went to my studio, which before being mine used to be my parents'. It's on the 16th floor of a tower-block dating back to the late socialist period, and is located on the outskirts of Sofia. During the night, I suddenly woke up in cold sweat. Outside I could hear embittered gun shooting. I heard high-pitch male voices shouting, and then the sirens of the police cars. Dogs were barking, and the alarms of the cars parked around the blocks were squealing savagely. I had heard of a new war being waged between several mafia business groups, but reality tends to be harder than the news.

I had no intention of seeing colleagues and visiting exhibitions. I had come for a short time and had other work to take care of. Despite my good intentions my time plan turned out to be filled with daily meetings with the local art scene. The Red House, which really deserves its name, being painted a saturated, aggressive red all over, not only on the outside, but even inside, seems to be the only public space officially representing contemporary art in the capital city. There were two exhibitions on traffic and migration. One group show with video installations and video art, and the other with photographs by the Vienna-based Borjana Ventzislavova. Both exhibitions were on a very good level, completely competitive on the international art scene. Both worked out very well in that red surrounding. I was trying to imagine how a different exhibition would fit in on this background, one that did not explore trafficking in East European women onto Western red-light streets.

I traveled from Sofia to Plovdiv. The temperature reached something like 40 centigrade in the shade, and had done so for some days in a row. The asphalt was melting. Good thing there was at least air conditioning on the bus. In Plovdiv the heat was even more intense than in Sofia. There were hardly any people on the streets. I had come to attend a meeting between the Center for Contemporary Art I work with, and the Austrian curators of a corporate collection of contemporary art. Their collection focuses on a short historical period: from the end of the 90s till now. This sounded really intriguing: to buy truly contemporary art as an intellectual and material investment for your company. Their collection features from Maurizio Cattelan to quite a number of East European authors, not only like Nedko Solakov and Milica Tomic, but also the Moscow radicalist Anatoly Osmolovsky, Attila Csörgö, Boris Ondreyicka. We had





Sofia, pictures found on the Internet

received a sudden e-mail announcing their visit to Bulgaria for a few days of exploring the market. They were interested in the local Plovdiv scene, local artists working in contemporary art, and the work of the Center as a place actively contributing to this context.

The meeting, as a true business meeting, was fixed in advance in terms of from and to time, and the e-mail hinted that the appointment was formal and strict. The corporate curators were late. More than half an hour into the one hour fixed for the appointment, one of my colleagues asked: “What’s up? The Westerners are never late for a meeting, are they?” And then they called. Traffic had slowed them down on the highway from Sofia to Plovdiv, and they were to arrive any moment now. There was many of them. In any event, they outnumbered us. Something like 7 or 8 of them. They dominated. Not only in numbers, but also with a colonial self-confidence. Emanating that type of professional distance as if we had been on our knees begging for this meeting. But that may just have been them keeping back their curiosity. When they arrived, they already knew everything. About the local scene, the local market, about this or that center for contemporary art... They did not so much ask questions, but rather explained where, how and what THERE WAS NOT, what WAS MISSING in the local art scene. They demonstrated an enviable level of competence. As if they had spent long months researching the ins and outs of the local scene. Apparently they had not wasted their time in the capital and had met those who really have a say on the local level – the monopoly of the Sofia experts. That’s what always happens. For years. Regardless of whether it is curators on research trips, a collector who has appeared out of nowhere, or some other important figure of the international art scene or NGO circles: They stop in Sofia first, and after that they are saturated and do not want to know anything more, because they know everything.

They asked how come so much media art is represented and promoted not only by the Center, but more generally in the local Bulgarian art scene, given as it is so hard to preserve, restore, collect and correspondingly sell. They found some sort of almost mythic link between the politics of the Center and the Berlin scene, which personally surprised me. I asked them how they had found out about the Center, since this meeting had been unexpected for us. They told me they had found the site googling, on the occasion of their new Plovdiv office. They left courteously, but enigmatically, without a mention of any follow-up. In any event, I think it’s nice that besides Sofia experts there is also the INTERNET.

After the meeting with the corporate curators we dragged ourselves to a restaurant for a light dinner with the current Austrian residents of the laboratory of the Center. They thought the meeting with the corporate curators had gone extremely well. And that we had been great. They are a couple of very young, very nice and very promising artists from Graz, working under the common name UNZ. (with the full stop!). I asked them about their expectations towards their stay in Plovdiv. And why they are here. I got the standard answer. New place, new experience, interesting and quite different environment from the one they’re used to. They complained only about the lack of English speakers, both among the local artists and other people they’d come across in their everyday life in Plovdiv. This made things difficult. It was almost impossible for them to get in touch with the local scene. Besides that, they did not understand why everybody was afraid of their puppy dog. Which was such a cutie and so good. I gave them my interpretation of things. Their dog was tigered, and for most people on the streets of BG that is a signal to watch out. Because the bad dogs in BG more often than not feature precisely that pattern. A substantial number of people in Bulgaria send their darling pets to dog school so they become vicious and perfect combat dogs, rather than learn good manners. Despite being outlawed, dog fights have been something of a national sport over the past 10 years, and the bets are such strong bait for their owners with their golden chains around the neck and their rustling nylon sweat suit pants. The news broadcasts in the media are full of information about innocent victims of pit bulls, Rottweilers and countless other pure-breed and non-breed curs around the city’s streets and parks. To top it all, whole packs of homeless dogs linger all over the place despite regular attempts to take appropriate measures and to mass-castrate them. Nonetheless I think that dogs are cool, but please, colleagues, understand the people! At that moment the waiter had decided to prove what it means in all practicality not only to have no clue of English, but even to be unable to understand: Two Shopska salads! spoken in Bulgarian with an Austrian

accent. So that I had to translate from Bulgarian with an Austrian accent to Bulgarian with a Plovdiv accent: Two Shopska salads!

On the way back, when I found out that the tickets for the last bus from Plovdiv to Sofia were sold out, I almost got used to the thought that I’d stay overnight in Plovdiv, as much work as I had in Sofia. It turned out that another bus, transiting from Istanbul to Sofia, would pick up the last travelers stuck like me from the central bus station. On the bus I did not receive a ticket or seat; I only had to give the money to the driver. I was happy about my luck, as were apparently the other travelers about theirs. On the bus I got thinking about the meeting with the corporate curators. The only public space for contemporary art in a city of 350’000 with several universities, clearly profiled art high-schools, and all sorts of other official institutions – should one expect of this space to professionally mediate or sell on the art market? The Center has a nice documentation, but predominantly about its own events. There is no collected and accessible professional documentation and information personally about the artists. And anyway, is there such compiled documentation available anywhere in Bulgaria at the moment? Portfolios, catalogs and other information?

Inspired by the meeting with the corporate curators I decided to undertake a dangerous adventure and despite everything to take a stroll around the local art market and understand what’s going on with the Bulgarian art market. I whirled through the private galleries for fine art of the capital. Because there are no commercial galleries for contemporary art. The Bulgarian art market is just not comparable to any other art market. Simply because it does not exist. This is not to say that there are no artists whose works speak an international language, put global questions and are at an international level. But they are still a great riddle, both to a local audience with purchasing power or collectors, and to an international audience. If it’s not some Western institution, usually no mediating authorities are accepted. All the more serious artists are selling their works directly out of their studios, or they do not sell at all because they do not produce to that end. What about the local collectors, whether they be private persons, financial groups or corporate representatives? What dominates massively is traditional art, completely outside any context, not only international, but also local.

On the last evening of my stay I paid a visit to friends, a Bulgaro-Scottish couple living between Edinburgh and Sofia. Now over the summer they are based outside the capital city in their family house. They had prepared a great dinner, salmon on some outrageously tasty Scottish sauce. I was wondering whether they had bought it deep-frozen, or whether the pieces had been fresh. As far as I’m aware, they are yet to start selling fresh salmon in Bulgaria.

I find out that my friends, who come from the media art practices and digital discourse, are planning to launch their new project in the new season, i.e., in autumn: To open the only commercial gallery for truly contemporary art in Sofia, and in BG. They will have at their disposal two spaces, one in Edinburgh, the other in Sofia. I understand that her family, who has a solid business in Sofia, has built an office building on the most expensive street of Sofia, on Vitoshka just next to Armani, and now with her husband they’ll have the ground floor for their Sofia gallery. They’ll be working predominantly with about ten authors, artists from both East and West, and offer them in both East and West. Like the highly successful Peres Projects in Los Angeles and Berlin or Ibid Projects spanning London and Vilnius. Also with spaces both in the East and the West. They figure that in Sofia there is a great niche, and their success is guaranteed, and in Edinburgh as well. Besides this, they are among the very few super experts who can afford to circle between the local market and the international art scene.

They had just come back from the Romanian Biennale of Contemporary Art. Rumor of it had already spread all the way to Zurich. The scene in Bucharest is split largely in two – the people around the Biennale and Dan Perjovschi on the one hand, the Others around the Museum of Contemporary Art in the former Ceau escu Palace, and its director Ruxandra Balaci. As far as I understand, at this moment they mutually boycott each other, think in theirs and ours, communists and democrats, rich and poor. We were commenting on this, thinking that this was exactly like at home. I received from my friends a catalog of the Biennale, of which they had picked up several copies. It looked very professional, very nice. Indeed done on a tight budget with lots of human energy and personal effort, with that East-European radical appeal that can defuse any criticism.

After dinner they proposed to drive me to my studio by car. It was around midnight. On one of the main boulevards leading from the neighborhood of Svoboda (Liberty) to that of Nadezhda (Hope) Part 4 it turned out that we had the incredible chance to be in the midst of real live action. Although only as witnesses. Several police cars had cordoned off the street. Sirens, police, arrested youths prostrated on the hood of the police cars, handcuffed behind their backs. I asked to be dropped off just in the entrance of my block.

My studio is quite a beauty. Besides the fact that it’s filled with loads of books, photographs and other objects sentimental to me, it has a security system linked up to the offices of a private security company, which according to the contract arrives on the spot within 3 to 5 minutes should there be any problem. There’s even a panic button you can carry around with you. And a great panoramic view. It’s really beautiful, especially in the evenings. You can see all of Sofia as if in the palm of your hand, on the background of the Vitosha mountain. I opened the windows, from which flowed, instead of a fresh nightly breeze, more hot air, enriched with turbofolk melodies and the faraway voices of some hardcore football fans who were drinking out their brandy before going each in their direction. I decided to run myself a bath. Heavens, there was even hot water! Sofia has a system for community heating, so that hot water is sold centrally. Throughout the week in this unimaginable heat, I don’t know why, maybe the pressure was insufficient or there was some other problem, but up on the 16th floor there was no hot water during the day. It’s cool in the end to be able, at the end of the day, to take a bath and then fall asleep.

## ArtsCharts Zurich

- 01** *Kunsthaus Zurich*  
**(NEW)** The Expanded Eye – Another great show by Bice Curiger
- 02** *Paradeplatz & Gallery Eva Presenhuber*  
**(NEW)** Franz West – Especially the Paradeplatz part
- 03** *Kunsthalle Zurich*  
**(09)** Laura Owens – Inspiring young painter
- 04** *Ausstellungsraum25*  
**(05)** Raffael Waldner – Smashing!
- 05** *Migros Museum*  
**(100)** We like Heike Munder
- 06** *White Space*  
**(NEW)** Valentio Magaro – Different from the rest
- 07** *K3 Project Space*  
**(07)** Fresh and surprising shows; there could be more though
- 08** *StaubKohler*  
**(06)** Mark Divo – Great artist, show could have been better
- 09** *Message Salon*  
**(NEW)** TV Shop Unplugged by Clare Goodwin – UN-PLUG to avoid
- 100** *Haunch and Venison*  
**(NEW)** Keith Tyson – He sold his soul to the money money money devil

## ArtsCharts Los Angeles

- 01** *Getty Villa*  
**(NEW)** Molten Color: Glassmaking in Antiquity – Old Transparency
- 02** *Norton Simon*  
**(NEW)** Translucence – Better transparency through chemistry
- 03** *Luckman Gallery*  
**(NEW)** David Reed – Frozen transparency in paint
- 04** *Rosamund Felsen Gallery*  
**(NEW)** Steve Hurd – Frozen drips
- 05** *Armand Hammer Museum of Art*  
**(04)** Soci  t   Anonyme: Modernism for America – Collage on the frame
- 06** *Richard Telles Fine Art*  
**(NEW)** „Sonic Scenery: Music for Collections“– Audio Taxidermy
- 07** *1301PE Gallery*  
**(09)** John Baldessari: Maquettes 1987-94 – Collaged ideas
- 08** *Cherry and Martin*  
**(NEW)** Augusta Wood. Leaning on the Margin – Reading photography
- 09** *Angles Gallery*  
**(NEW)** Too Much Love – Reading feminine
- 10** *MOCA Focus*  
**(NEW)** Lecia Dole-Recio – Reading feminine collage





*Why not me?* Text by Oliver Kielmayer, photos by Sandi Paucic, starring Andrea Thal (Susanne), Giovanni Carmine (George), René Fahrni (Oliver) and Paul Harper (Christian). Photo shooting at the opening of the Zurich art awards at Helmhaus on July 21 2006.





Oh, hello gorgeous, how are you? Didn't expect to see you here!

You can stick your 'gorgeous' where the sun doesn't shine.

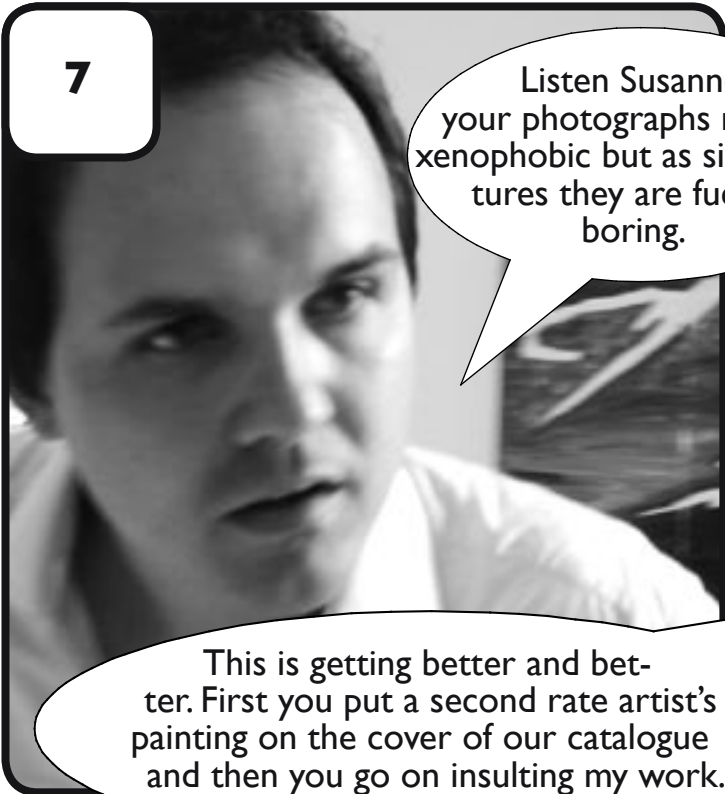
2



What the hell's the matter with you today?

How dare you put work by that idiot Christian on the cover of the catalogue? What is this shit?

3



Listen Susanne, your photographs may be xenophobic but as single pictures they are fucking boring.

This is getting better and better. First you put a second rate artist's painting on the cover of our catalogue and then you go on insulting my work...

7



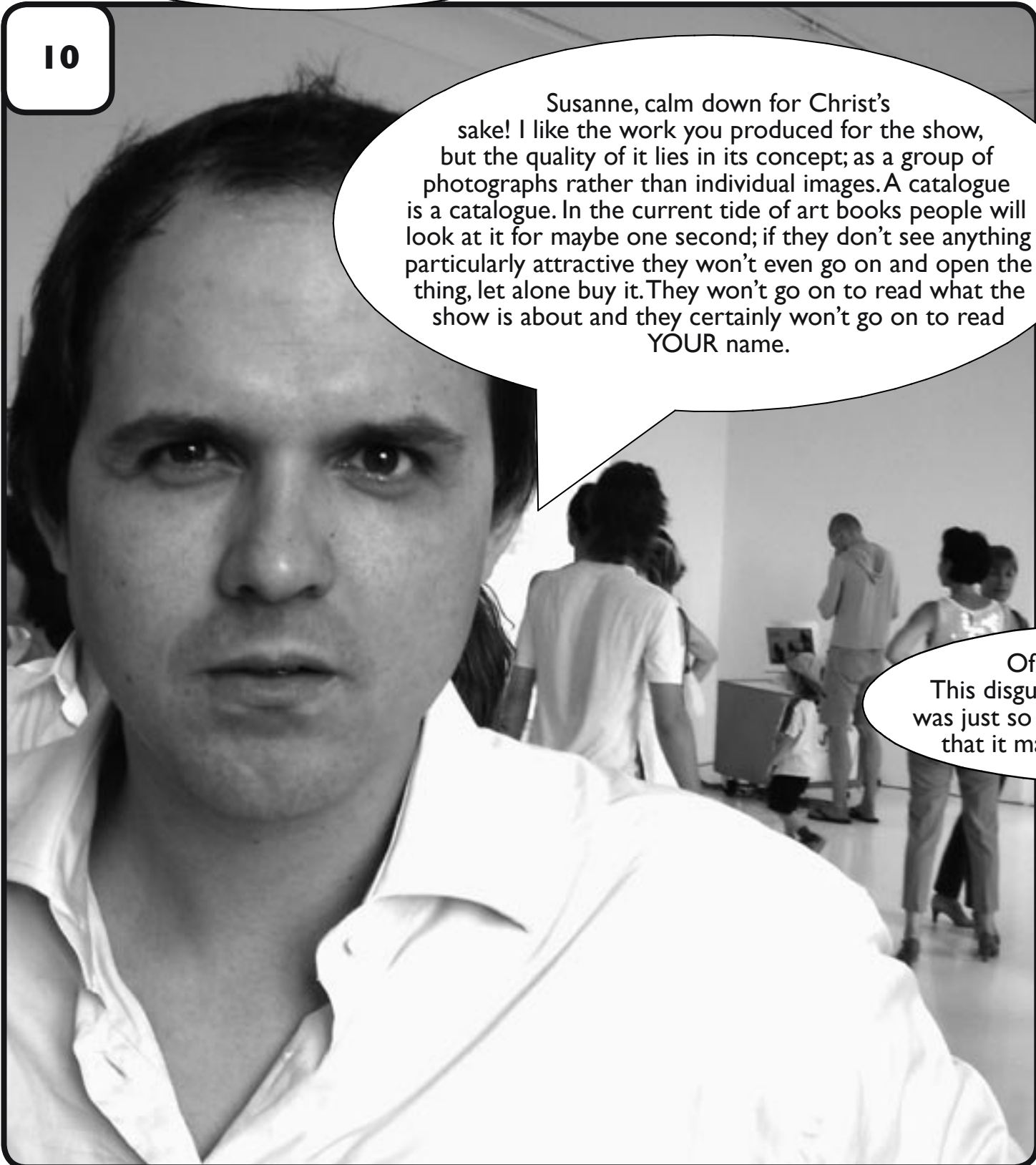
8



Christian is not a second rate artist.

...and this, after all I have done for you. I worked so hard for this exhibition, I produced a new piece and now I don't even get the fucking cover!

9



Susanne, calm down for Christ's sake! I like the work you produced for the show, but the quality of it lies in its concept; as a group of photographs rather than individual images. A catalogue is a catalogue. In the current tide of art books people will look at it for maybe one second; if they don't see anything particularly attractive they won't even go on and open the thing, let alone buy it. They won't go on to read what the show is about and they certainly won't go on to read YOUR name.

10



so cheap wants this what they concept of

No it's not. It's my concept of a cover.

11

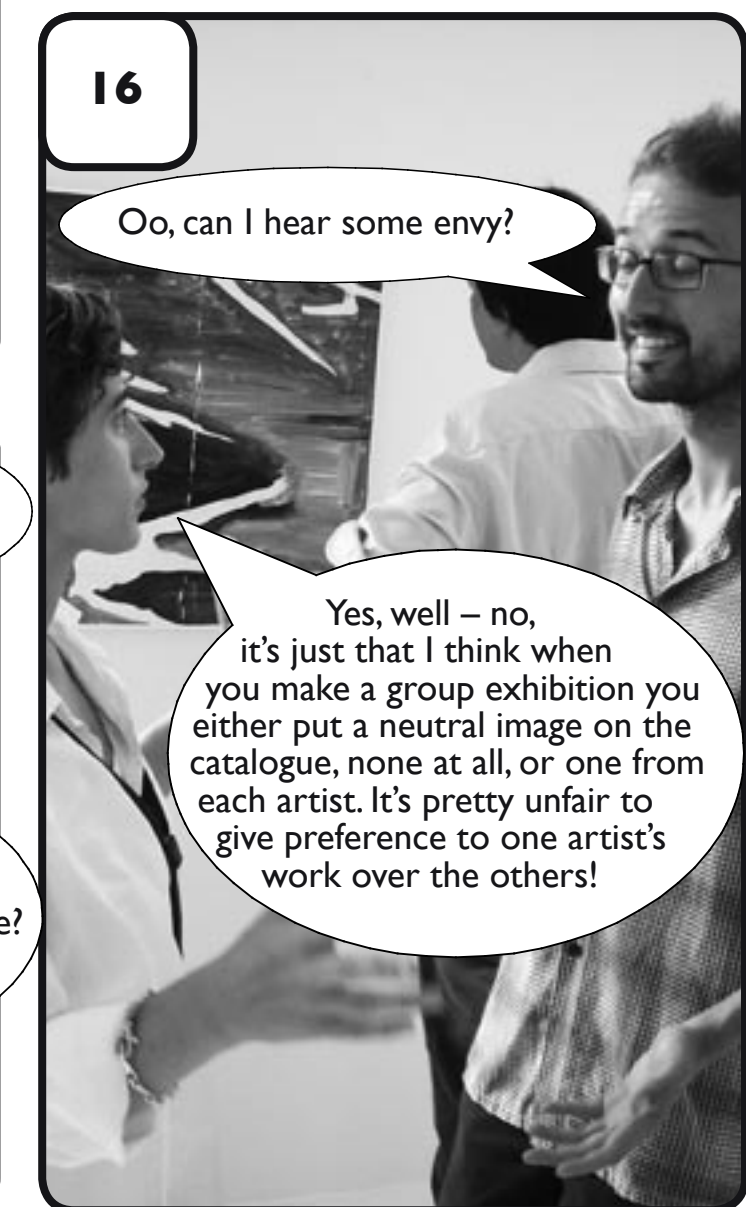


Of course I haven't. This disgusting salmon sandwich was just so loaded with onion rings that it made my eyes water...

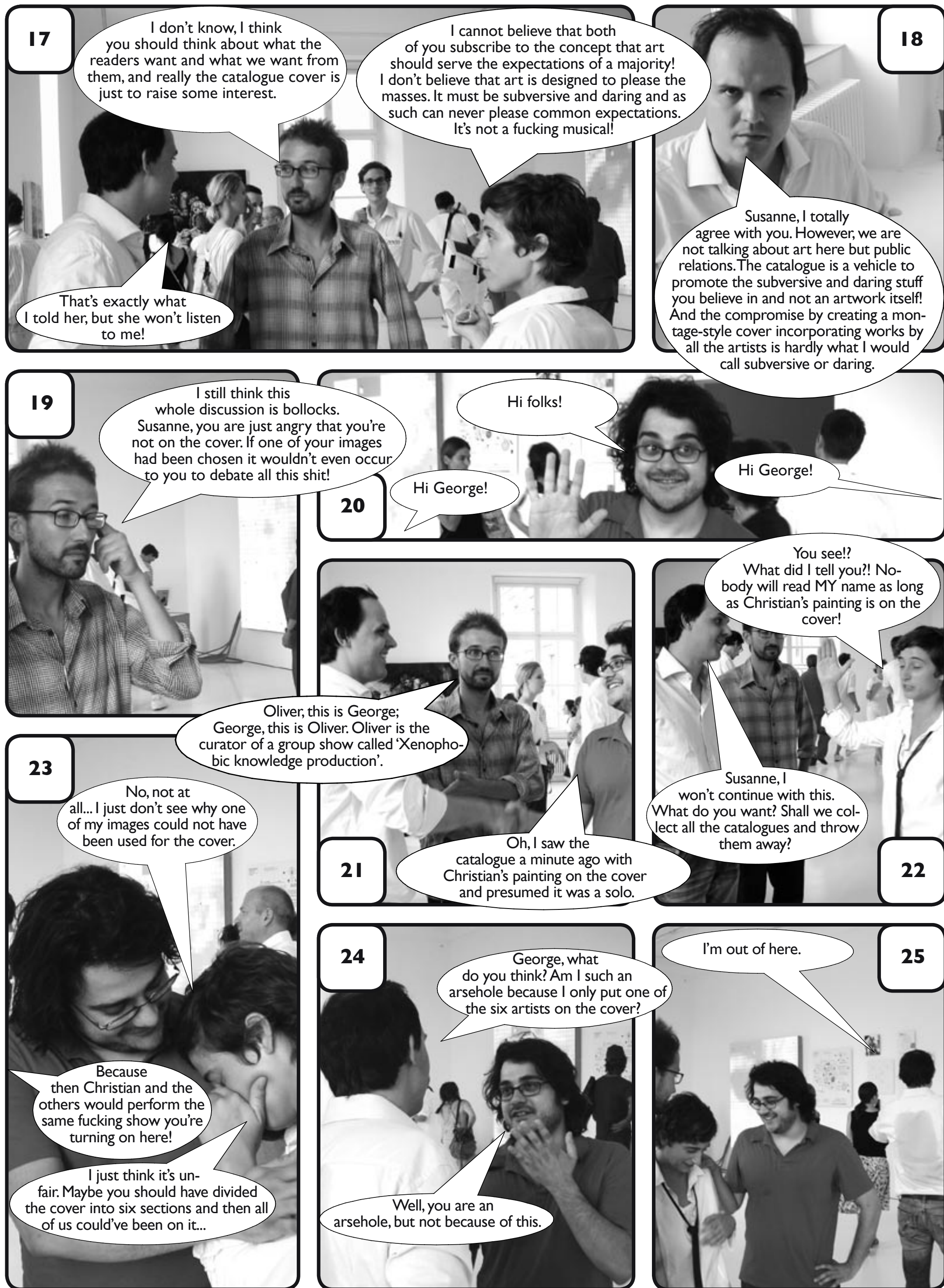
Why didn't you take the onion rings out then?

14











## Update: Edinburgh

By aeneaswilder@hotmail.com

Dear Jim,

Once again we miss each other, and I must instead correspond with you by letter. It is somewhat ironic that I am in Edinburgh while you are in India. I hope the lecturing tour goes well and that you are adjusting to the cultural differences there.

My guests from Bangalore arrived the day you left and I was half expecting to see you at Edinburgh airport as I waited for them. It had been three years since I last saw Nandesh and I was delighted that the project budget allowed for him to travel to Edinburgh with the two billboard painters. As it happens the project could not have been realised without his constant attention. As you are aware the project should have been straight forward. Get a budget awarded and bring over two bollywood billboard painters to paint two faces as part of a conceptual work being presented in the centre of Edinburgh for one month. Indeed so far so good, the guys painted Flora McDonald and Bonnie Prince Charlie\* with great skill and I even had delusions of the National Portrait Gallery purchasing the work for the nation. No, the problems arose because myself and the other artists at the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, where the work was executed, treated the two artisans (as anyone would) as amongst equals. Unfortunately I did not heed the words of Nadesh upon their arrival, “First we do the work, then we treat them to beer”. Our collective actions undermined Nadesh’s authority to dramatic effect.

Culture shock runs both ways, and the deeply moving impressions gained from a trip to India are nothing compared to those of a low cast manual labourer, who can neither read nor write, with no school record, tax number, or knowledge of what a passport was (Nandesh organised their visas and passports). I remember well, watching them cook a carrot and onion curry with some twigs for fire wood, in a dent in their earth floor studio, during the painting process of the Bangalore billboard in 2003. This was their first time outside of southern India and they must have thought that it was the land of milk and honey, arriving in the second most expensive city in the UK. Certainly the generosity and kindness bestowed upon them was unimaginable outside of their basic family units back in India. Their perception of Edinburgh was understandable and I could not even get too upset when they managed, by day three, to expect us all to wait on them hand and foot. I suspect the independent film crew and the BBC radio interview didn’t help in this matter. Unfortunately they saw Nandesh as their meal ticket and basically attempted to blackmail us into paying them double the money. Of course this was not possible. A land of milk and honey to some it may be, but the supply is always finite. Not that the two painters understood this. If it costs the equivalent of 87 rupees just to step onto a bus in Edinburgh then everyone must be loaded with money. 87 rupees, as you are now finding out Jim, will buy you three square meals a day with money left over in many parts of India. The bus I took into Trivandrum from Kovalum was a forty minute ride and cost 5 rupees. For people who neither read nor write, who have been squeezed by their system all their lives there is only one thing to do when opportunity knocks–squeeze those who you can, harder that you were ever squeezed yourself. I fear that Nadesh will be harassed for more money now they are all back in Bangalore.

A few days after they left, with no hard feelings, I was in Rotterdam. I had the good fortune to attend a talk by the young artist Eric van Hove. He works with text and has exhibited in a number of countries. One audience member asked whether it was appropriate for a European artist to impose his values on the good people of Ghana or Egypt etc. where he had been working. The white man’s burden of the art world, as it were. This made me ponder the thought. Had I not imposed my European values on the two billboard painters and instead treated them with the contempt they are more familiar with, while Nadesh worked them like Husky dogs, showing no mercy, would the project have gone smoothly. The answer to that question is a rather distasteful yes.

This opens up a number of issues that I will not go into here, we can take the discussion further once you have returned. However, as it turns out the billboard has been spray painted twice so far. In both cases a moustache has been sprayed onto the face of Flora McDonald. As the text above the portraits heads reads “To see ourselves as others see us” indeed. It is fairly predictable behaviour from the culture loving masses of my homeland. However I would have hoped that the Scottish art world might have taken an active interest in my work. On the one hand I have the conservatives – Prof Duncan McMillan – managing to completely ignore a 5m x 5m billboard in his review of the exhibition in the national press and on the other, Dundee Contemporary Arts who replied recently with a letter stating: Unfortunately there are no opportunities for your work to be presented here at Dundee Contemporary Arts at present. I enclose a copy of our current guide, which will give you some sense of our activities. I am returning the information you sent. Thanking you for your interest in DCA and wishing you every success with your future projects. The rather tastefully produced DVD was still in its wrapper. As usual I am not going to make much of an inroad in my homeland without an influential backer. If you do not have an influential backer then you will always be a singular door-to-door salesman. Housewives covet their neighbour’s goods only when they have been convinced through manipulation. I think that sort of thing goes on at art fairs, but I could be wrong.

Take care out there, India may still have one of the lowest crime rates in the world, but Delhi Belly can strike at any time. Bring back some fresh black pepper if you can, with best wishes, aeneas

\*Your Scottish history was never your strong point Jim: Charles Edward Stewart had laid claim to the Scottish thrown and arrived in Scotland from France in 1744. Having failed to defeat the English army he fled his last

battle field, Culloden, in 1746 and became a hunted man. While hiding in South Uist he was taken by rowing boat to the Isle of Skye where a ship was waiting to carry him to safety. The woman who took Charles across the sea to Skye was Flora McDonald.



## Update: London

By kunstfly@bluemail.ch

**Park and ride**

A humid, sun-drenched July sears the eyelids and renders normally monochrome Northern European folk candy striped and lethargic. A slightly dishevelled Jim Kerr look-alike ambles sadly along the edge of the Serpentine before the punishing sun appears over the yardarm. Perhaps he is sick of being a doppelganger; perhaps he is five pence shy of the total price of a catalogue he has been eyeing up for months in the gallery bookshop? Children squeal with synthetic pleasure as they OD on Coke Floats; hardcore, aged swimmers drip onto the jetty like wrinkly human candles and scowl at the swathes of part-time tourist clutter destroying the peace. Suddenly the new pavilion appears above the trees, hovering threateningly like an oversized bubble about to pop and cloak the surrounding area with its filmy mass. From a distance, Rem Koolhaas’s and Cecil Balmond’s balloon-esque structure is at its best. Working the monumental scale device in reverse (the structure seems further away than it actually is), this architectural feat feels all too temporary as you circumnavigate its semi-opaque bulk. Before entering this café-cum-art-discussion venue, boxes of consumable stock are visible through the skin-like walls, while inside, Thomas Demand’s wallpaper frieze lends an air of corporate Portakabin officiousness. Despite its impressive shell, you get the feeling this building needs the famous and beautiful folk, who frequent the annual summer party, draped over its box seats to become more than a pedestrian municipal structure. Inside the gallery, however, Demand’s wallpapering works a treat. Using the same leaf motif in different tonal guises, he plays with the spatial dynamics of the site like an interior design pro. The photographs hung throughout the space are not the interior shots they might initially appear to be, but glossy documentation of sets Demand has built from cardboard. Gothic plum foliage behind an impressive image of a grotto highlights the skill of his sculptural craft, while pared down details of an empty office floor become all the more bland against a sober beige print. Scratching away at the real, with these reconstructed media images, Demand pipes us in and out of his simultaneously sharp yet charmingly clunky conceptual veneers with Pied Piper ease.



Thomas Demand, Copyshop, 1999, C-print

### Chinese whispers

I’m ashamed to say that the idea of heading to east London right now on sweat-drenched public transport from my west end home (even for art or a free massage) fills me with dread. No matter, Mitz comes to the rescue on her shiny two-wheeled steed Ridgeback Velocity, and signs us up for

an ICA party that she tells me is to celebrate the launch of a new magazine. Here is where the confusion begins – we meet on the steps at Waterloo Place and I quiz her on the mag in question. She says it’s called what sounds like ‘Trappers Rise’, which I figure is a slightly odd concept for a publication, especially one being launched in the urban sprawl. I wonder how many articles and news tidbits can be generated from the subjugation of (some might say, barbarian) small animal hunters. This is not what I would call a summer project, what with those fur hats and obligatory bundle of skins over one shoulder – I prepare myself for unsavoury smells, but it turns out what she actually said was ‘Metropolitan Rise’, which happens to be the name of a 41-storey high-rise building project in Hong Kong and not, as Mitz was unreliably informed, a magazine at all. We were shepherded up some back stairs and left to find our own way through the labyrinthine mass of unmarked doors, arriving slightly bewildered, but reassured by the sight of wine in a bucket of ice. Lots of well-dressed people are milling and swilling, there are pink neon lights, an eclectic DJ and clusters of smokers teetering perilously on the two balconies in the hope of catching a whiff of fresh air, but no evidence of art or publications. A party for party,s sake perhaps? But David (our man in China who had met the curators of the last show ‘Around the World in 80 Days’, in Shanghai) says, no, it is a wrap party, of a very good but now very over exhibition. Apart from breaking health and safety regs by balancing both buttocks simultaneously on the edge of the balcony (can,t say I would want to clear up the bits of art people that had fallen through the mesh below either), having to beg our way back into the main bar and being man-handled by a slimy curator, our sleuthing process was only hindered by expensive spritzers (in terms of both shame at ordering such a retro drink and alcoholic effect), but we never did find out the real purpose of the evening – artists, artists everywhere but not a drop of art to drink.

## Update: Palo Alto

By francisraven@gmail.com

### In the Context of the Sale Bin

The great writers have all had their books, at one inopportune time or another, on sale. The Sale Bin of the bookstore is the great equalizer. New-age cookbooks are placed, or more correctly, jumbled, on top of ragged Henry Miller novels which are jumbled beside purposefully convoluted academic works. Today the bookstore is no different. I strolled to Borders on a relatively hot California morning and began to peruse the Sale Bin.

The Sale Bin urges the reader to find connections between books, and if he cannot find them, to create those connections. Three books struck my eye from the oversized milk-crate: Pascal; An Introduction, John Ashbery’s Girls on the Run, and Contextual Media. The poetry of the Sale Bin is boundless. Every book is 50 percent off and yet the same amount of information is relayed as when it was fully priced, perhaps more. But what is this more? It holds hands with the authors of those sale books and attempts to feel compassion for them. And, of course, there is a need for compassion for the embarrassing feeling that the authors of those books must have felt for having been put out on the sale curb. This embarrassment is part of the more which is contained in the Sale Bin. The Sale Bin holds this embarrassment of the author and urges the reader to hold it within his sweaty palms. The embarrassment of artistic authorship is the anxious feeling of putting yourself on the line when no one has asked you to. But what else is the more of the Sale Bin? This more is added only when monetary value is subtracted. Perhaps the adding and subtracting cancel each other out and thus, would be left with more or less the same book, more and less. The subtraction of cost invites impulse buying. This invitation is again part of the more. I once bought a half dozen New Directions titles just because they were on sale. Ha, in that case my impulse led to new directions which otherwise would not have been possible.

The more still continues on and adds more. Remember that this same more is the more which urges us to make connections between disparate books. At Borders that morning, one of the book titles provided the metaphor: Contextual Media. But the Sale Bin makes us contextualize that media differently; this context first appears fuzzy, beyond the clean aisles of Fiction, Philosophy, Poetry, etc.. My mind is, of course, urged to wander from these categories. I recognize that the Sale Bin is a fairly good metaphor for the motion of poetry – the books in the Sale Bin being the words of the poem. Of course, there is a question – are the words of a poem attained in the same way that the books of a Sale Bin are? Perhaps not. The answer hinges on whether poetic lexicons are found or discovered. But the poem makes that distinction, as well as many other linguistic boundaries, fuzzy.

But there is more. There is Pascal and there is Ashbery. What can we do with them? I open Ashbery’s long poem at random: “No one had witnessed it but herself.” What this passage is saying is that the reader connects the likes of poetry without a trace. I also collect my life without a trace. But the artist traces the witness of connecting/collecting. This trace fingers its way into the artist’s works.

Girls still run to program computers in Silicon Valley for financial security. You do realize that the Pascal in question is not the philosopher but the computer language. Is there still room for God in the dotcom era? I’m just wondering, trying to connect. I go to Pascal’s Pensees (not on sale) and flip at random to: “the feeling of the inauthenticity of present pleasures and our ignorance of the absent pleasures causes inconsistency”. The Sale Bin computer book that I can’t understand has led me back to a kind of source in the Pensees. This is, of course, more, gratuitous almost, gratis, at least almost, at least I attempt gratitude for the Sale Bin at the Borders in Palo Alto.



# Email: Toronto - Zurich

By [kcarpent@yorku.ca](mailto:kcarpent@yorku.ca) and [weartheartists@gmx.net](mailto:weartheartists@gmx.net)

**kcarpent@yorku.ca:** Hello there. I am writing to ask that you stop sending me your publication. I find that it is first-person journalism, with „I“ and „we“ appearing much too often, as well as too many dreary anecdotes of personal experience that have too little to do with art. First-person journalism puts the emphasis on the writer, and I want to read material that puts the emphasis on the art. The sooner you stop sending me your publication the better! Thank you for your courtesy. Ken Carpenter

**weartheartists@gmx.net:** Dear Ken Carpenter, Thank you for your email. Of course I am not glad that you dont like WeAreTheArtists but I can understand your statement. In case you are interested what the background of the project is, you can read the article in the attachment. Sincerely, Oliver Kielmayer, Publisher WeAreTheArtists

**kcarpent@yorku.ca:** Dear Oliver Kielmayer, Thank you for your e-mail and the attachment. I do agree with many of the points you make in your text. The art world has indeed become hyper- and pseudo-professionalized – very much to its disadvantage. The people who rise to the top in the system do indeed often get there for political and social reasons and not just for superior competence. A more straightforward and genuine dialogue is certainly called for. That is why I am surprised and disappointed by you publication, which seems to me to flaunt its lack of professionalism. I do believe that the informal, first-person journalism you are currently publishing is not really able to challenge and change the situation currently in place, but can only serve to marginalize you and your writers, and I regret that. I do wish you success in accomplishing your goals as articulated in your text – they are certainly worth achieving. Perhaps a new strategy will enable you to do so. Sincerely, Ken Carpenter

**weartheartists@gmx.net:** Dear Ken Carpenter. Thank you for your remarks on the text that I have sent you; I appreciate you reading it a lot! I am also thinking about some of the points you mentioned and maybe there will be some changes in the future. However, the main aim of the project will stay the same but I hope I will be able to improve and develop it further. Maybe our emails should be published in WeAreTheArtists, would this be ok for you? Thank you very much again for your input! Best wishes, Oliver Kielmayer

**kcarpent@yorku.ca:** Dear Oliver, Please feel free to go ahead. I respect your openness to criticism, and I continue to wish you all the best. The art world need reform – no question about it. Ken

## Make yourself heard!

Are you not a correspondent of the network, but still have a message to the artworld? Make yourself heard on this page by placing an ad! You are free to use the space for a text, a statement, a picture, information about a show or just your name. No matter if you are an artist, a gallery, a museum, a collection or just a sponsor, you all are welcome.

You can buy space here in different sizes; contact [weartheartists@gmx.net](mailto:weartheartists@gmx.net) for details. Accepted data are qxd, eps, tiff and jpg files in black and white with 300dpi. Number 8 of WeAreTheArtists is published with 4000 copies in December 2006; deadline is November 15.

# Update: Prague

By [markdivo@gmail.com](mailto:markdivo@gmail.com)

My friend invited me to go and have a look at the Prague Contemporary Art Festival named tina.b. at the National Gallery for contemporary art (Veletržní Palace) in Prague. I decided to go, expecting to see some interesting and new contemporary art, as the brochure promised. The show carried name tina.b, so I thought to myself who is behind this show? And why has someone decided to choose a name like that for an exhibition. For me it sounded like a name of a hairdresser's or some newly launched beauty product. I wasn't alone wondering about the back round of this „nothing saying“ title for a large international exhibition taking place in many good locations around the whole capital.

After taking a short glimpse of the website I found out that the name is an abbreviation of the phrase „this is not another biennale“. I must admit I never would have been able to get this insider joke, but after reading on website that „tina b. will bring the creative energy of Prague's contemporary cultural scene and neighbouring Eastern European countries together with emerging talents and trends from around the world“, I knew I had to see this event.

A number of interesting artists were listed on the promotional material including many internationally known names like i.e the Bluenose group from Russia, and other artist which can be seen in almost any art fairs throughout the planet. I was curious to see their newest art pieces exhibited in Prague.

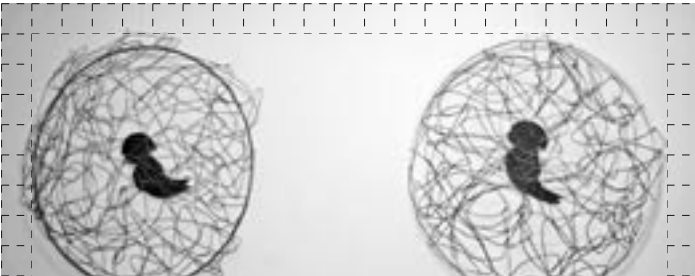
The large exhibition was a big disappointment, I was expecting more contemporary Czech artists to be involved. The space – a large hall in which most of the works were exhibited – seemed empty and deserted and looked that there isn't too much going on. Three small booths housed the art pieces, three TV sets of which only one worked showed the video works and although there were some interesting pieces in the show there wasn't any noticeable connection between the variety of selected works. Worse was to come, in the Finnish section I found things that I would expect to see in the activation center of an old folks home. I stopped in front of an oil painting depicting the head of an Egyptian pharaoh created by Finnish artist Esa Tuomiranta, and series of dust-balls under plexi-glass as homage to Franz Kafka by Maisa Tikkanen. As the title for the

Finnish collection was „deeply personal“ it left me with feeling that shouldn't the particular pieces be also understood by viewers and not only by the artists themselves.

At my opinion the show was poorly presented and I thought, it must be because the exhibition was short of financial resources and that the organizers couldn't afford to produce anything closer to the promising statement of the promotional materials. After making more reaseach I discovered that in fact the show had many sponsors, and the aim of the exhibition was to stage an artfair, which would attract collectors. To archive this, banquets were organized at the Four Seasons hotel and other five star locations, obviously that is were all the cash went.

After taking an in depth look at the web site I came a cross a list of organizers of the event: Monica Burian who is a partner at Vernon Fine Art, Jean Pierre Van Lander who is an art collector, a business development collector Alexander Horky, art administrator and artist Anneke McGuire, Lenka Grádlová from the Cocoon Advertising Company, Jiri Savinec working as a freelance television reporter and Vít Horáček from the law firm Glatzová & Co.

Not surprisingly most of the artists were featured in the tina b. exhibition under courtesy of the Vernon gallery. And the only aim of this event was to generate money for the organizers. All these facts will go unnoticed and tina.b show will be remembered as highly successful and innovative exhibition, though none of it's goals have been achieved as said that it's aim is to „challenge the public's conception of contemporary art events“ what ever this means and „works as a forum for new ideas and trends, as well as a platform for encounters between Eastern European countries and the rest of the world“, is nothing that would challenge the conventional concept of an commercial art fair.



Päivi Skinnari, Medina Devils, 2005. Found on [www.otisivu.dnainternet.net/vinski/medina.htm](http://www.otisivu.dnainternet.net/vinski/medina.htm)

