

WeAreTheArtists



Code flow, Luncheon on the grass – postproduction by code flow, 2006, videostill, www.code-flow.net

Update: Belgrade

By sevo@kein.org

“Unlimited”

After a host of “Biennales of Contemporary Art” have sprung up like mushrooms over the past summer in the field of Balkan art, multiplying the crisis of the vacuum of images and logic in the region, combined with the painful desire of identifying themselves in the sphere of the official, turning their back on anything alternative – the 47th October Salon, Belgrade, 2006 is not concerned by these problems. This year, under the heading of the major international exhibition “Art, Life & Confusion”, Belgraders have overthrown any expectations in the game, and as it distanced itself from the model of the BIENNALE, this event most convincingly recreates the atmosphere of the great and defining events on the international artistic scene. A true gala gathering, fashion world, art critics, key curators, worldly parties, parallel events – such as the curatorial seminar I am participating in. Even the mayor of Belgrade gives a reception in honor of the event in his residence. The event succeeds at reflecting the cultural impulses from all over South-Eastern Europe, and it alone from the region manages to rise on tippy-toes and sustain the comparison to the Istanbul Biennale. The exhibition is curated by René Block, a mythical figure of the international art scene who opened his first gallery in Berlin in 1964 at the age of 22, with exhibitions of Joseph Beuys, Karl Horst Hödicke, Nam June Paik, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter and Wolf Vostell, to name just a few.

“Art, Life & Confusion” takes place in a variety of venues, following the principle of a dialog. But the great opening is at the Museum 25 May – the so-called Tito Museum, specially built to host the presents received by the leader from the working class or from foreign delegations and ambassadors. Rather, the crème de la crème of the Balkan’s art scene is meeting here today. I bump into Dan Perjovschi. His outfit is the embodiment of casual style. A grungy pink T-shirt with frankly shabby light blue jeans and what one would call a real beard. He even looks a bit wild, à la 1980s. As he understands that I have visited the exhibition “Dada East? The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire” in Zurich, Perjovschi starts enthusiastically: “For me the greatest fun with this exhibition was the comment of the scandalized Romanian ambassador to Switzerland when he saw the printed invitation postcard for the opening! See, it poses as a bicycle saddle, but when you turn the picture around, whadda ya think it becomes? It becomes what it becomes, see, that’s what it becomes! – Well, the guy from the embassy was horrified! – Ha, ha,...” he is laughing like a schoolboy.

“Ha, ha,” I laugh out myself. I ask him whether he has heard of Mark Divo, of the art collective Krösus and the debate around Dada and the space of Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. Perjovschi: “You know, that stuff does not interest me. In contrast to this Zurich guy Mark Divo I am not a real revolutionary. I’m just a hooligan of an artist from the art system! I don’t do true revolutions, just make-believe! I like pulling people’s legs!”

The day before, before the Great Opening at the “Tito Museum” we had the pleasure of being entertained by Nedko Solakov’s one-man show “HERITAGE” – his very own cunning little texts paraphrasing the space and loquaciously but cautiously making fun of accepted norms. This time in the space of a typical bourgeois house known as the “Legacy of Milica Zoric and Rodoljub Colakovic.” The history of this truly upper-class house is a typical Balkan story. A constant cycle of rise and fall, of luster and decay. It is located in the most expensive neighborhood of Belgrade. The house is reminiscent of some saga or soap opera, à la “The Rich also Cry” or F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “The Great Gatsby.” After the communists came to power the house was confiscated from its refined first owners, who in their time were famous connoisseurs, collectors and patrons of art, in order to serve as a home to a lewd couple from the new elite, a posh combination of a famous woman artist and a party leader. The Serbian “Peron” organized no less lustrous balls from those of their predecessors. They also turned out to be just as generous patrons of the arts, if only in a different context, and no less admirers of French wines and boutiques than the previous owners. After this the villa falls under the control of the “Museum of Contemporary Art,” until Milosevic’s people laid their hands on the property. Currently the house is in ruins. After having last served as a restaurant, and after a brutal murder was perpetrated inside, now it is being returned to the arts.



Dan Perjovschi (left) and Nedko Solakov (right). All photos by Dimitrina Sevova

A guy is walking around the house feeling quite at home – Branislav Dimitrijevic. Not only because he wrote the text for Solakov’s catalog of the great event, but presumably because he is a young and cool curator – ambitious, well-informed, speaking perfect English, with outstanding communication skills. A bright new star in the sky of the Balkan art scene. I first met this fellow in a rather awkward situation last winter in Zurich. Coincidentally I had the imprudence of arriving there with the scandalously famous Russo-Austrian extremists Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz at his curatorial presentation at the F + F school of art. They had preyed on him with their standard routine “radical performance,” interrupting his lecture as they had done previously at the Istanbul Biennale, going so far as to call him a liar. I am hoping to remain incognito. But just as I am acting innocent, hiding behind a rather too transparent glass

of white wine and pleasantly chatting with Nedko Solakov, he points to me angrily. I try to explain to him that all of us fit their category of liars, including myself. They’re just a real pain in the neck, that’s all! He is looking at me in evident distrust, I wonder why.

He is also the moderator of the panel discussion, which has brought together several important curators from the cream of the crop of the international art scene and the veterans from the “East-West guerilla art war” among their Balkan colleagues. Marta Kuzma makes attractive, rather short, but witty remarks – just what it takes. In the course of the discussion it becomes clear that her success and steep career over the past ten years is no accident. From the Ukrainian scene she first thrust herself on using the spring-board of Soros, curating Manifesta 5 in San Sebastian in 2004 with Massimiliano Gioni and joining the top ranks not only of the New York curators, but of the entire international art scene. She and Maria Lind, who currently acts as the director of the Swedish IASPIS exchange program, demonstrate such high class that the other curators in the discussion have a tough time around them – charming, bright, cool, of refined taste. Real tough women! I catch myself imagining them in the role of worthy partners in one of the versions of James Bond – women who besides their own charms have mastered all sorts of other martial arts, including punches below the belt. In contrast to Marta Kuzma’s distinguished business outfit – black pants, jacket, white shirt, sneakers, blonde short hair and that expression on her face that reminds me of Judith Foster’s in her role as super-cop in “The Silence of the Lambs,” Maria Lind is dressed in super-sexy bright red latex boots with worryingly high heels, a dress with wide black and white stripes hoop-skirt style with indiscreetly broad sleeves, the hit of the season as you know, tightened up at her waist in the manner of the 1960s. In her perfect appearance she is proudly holding on one arm her half-naked a-few-months-old son. Not only does the super-curator take care of the child all by herself throughout the project – together with the baby she also does not miss a single party, cocktail, opening or discussion.

In a demonstration of collective dizziness some of the curators praise the global historical importance of the 1980s Balkan brand of conceptualism. They express their unanimous wish to define “professional standards for curatorial practices” in terms of accepted academic standards, through established, good art institutions. The greatest spectacle of the flashy October show however comes completely unexpected to me. A real breath of fresh air, or rather a hurricane from the West. It comes from an interview with Robert Storr, the director of the Venice Biennale 2007. The last time I have witnessed such eloquence was in a public lecture by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in Sofia immediately after 11 September, on the birth of monsters from our own fears. Storr demonstrates an overwhelmingly high level of thinking. Not only from the distance of his physical stature and intelligence, but like a fiery meteorite at high speed he cuts through the atmosphere, blowing up the fundamental complex of questions, leaving behind a real crater in the field of contemporary Balkan curating, or Scandinavian, or German. To start with, he clarifies the position from which he speaks. And he does have a position! One that does not merely overlap with an institution. A position that comes from the feminist struggles and the gay movements. He emphasizes that for him in curatorial work the most important thing is the MESSAGE coming from an exhibition! Get REAL, the world is much larger, and there is more than one center and one periphery! He calls on radical, critical and political questions, while the audience keeps an icy silence. Storr’s spectacle has something of “Superman visits the primitives,” and so he defies the principle of dialog so dear to the organizers. Far from politically correct, but what a presence! I’m eagerly awaiting the Biennale next year in Venice.



Dragan Papić

As it turns out, only three of the participants in the curatorial seminar will be given a chance to visit the “Inner Museum” of Dragan Papić. The project is part of the great event, but is located, or rather, as I find out, crammed in his own home, so that its visibility is doubtful. The catalog, too, does not do it justice. I hurry up to indicate my interest, even if apparently there is no dispute over who will be allowed to go. Oh dear heavens, what a surprise! I find myself in an apartment in an old building in the center of Belgrade, stuffed with all sorts of objects. Dragan Papić’s works with existing objects of everyday use, objects from the flea market, but also with multimedia and music. In stark contrast to most of this scene he draws his arguments on, and situates his works in a theory of commodity critique – he calls it pop conceptualism, and relates it to Haim Steinbach and Jeff Koons. Desire takes a leading role in his obsession, but is further developed based on the specific morals of the local society. Aggression, irony and pleasure. Dragan points his hand to one of his pairs of objects: “These animals here represent the Serbs,” and that work raises the question of the “political and social freedom in Serbia.” He continues without taking his breath: “I prefer speaking to people who make art rather than producing art myself or consuming what they are producing. In a house I own in a village near the border I set up a commune. This is where I would like to move my museum to.” As much as I am



Dan Perjovschi, invitation card to ‘Dada East? The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire’

having fun and truly enjoy the ‘speculative’ philosophy of the owner of the “Inner Museum” and the museum itself, the other curators appear to be not only annoyed, but somehow personally offended. At one point the pressure bursts after Papic’s confession: “I don’t know why society describes pedophilia in such hysteric ways, turning it into some kind of problem. How many are these cases, on the background of the entire other violence exercised by society on personalities. In this work with the Barbie heads torn off I found inspiration in this social phenomenon, in how the mass media treat these cases, how society uses them to its own ends; and over there – this small porcelain boy with a rabbit dress, that’s me – at the age of three or four years I realized I am in fact the ‘great pedophile,’ not the adult uncles accused of it.”



Work by Dragan Papic

In the evening I happen to come across René Block. He is of the old school, a companion of Beuys and agent of Fluxus. He awfully reminds me of a capricious gastronome, or the older stately gentlemen from Luis Buñuel’s “The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie” or Marco Ferreri’s “The Grande Bouffe.” Of course he never goes out to a bar, restaurant or disco with the mass of the participants. I seize my chance to be so close to him, the super–curator of the event, and ask him about Dragan Papic and his role in “Art, Life & Confusion.” He says he has never liked this type of artist and this type of archive, and that the decision to invite the “Inner Museum” was made under pressure. He himself has ended up agreeing to Papic’s participation only under the condition that he would not participate in the official venues of the exhibition. “He is ‘Unlimited!’ He wanted to fill everything here with his own obsessions. I did not agree, which is why I let him participate only there in his own private space! And whoever wants to can go and see it. But there, not here!” – René Block apparently is a great jokester – he soon becomes annoyed by serious conversations and tries to be ironic about the situation. After all he is in cheerful company, among which it would have been difficult not to notice a young and attractive Scandinavian artist who for the last three days has not stopped giggling. No kidding! She has been giggling all along: “Boss! Ha! Ha! Vodka! Boss! Ha! Ha! Vodka! Boss! Ha! Ha!” Well, Block and the girl are right, I say to myself: there are places in which however much you’d like to show off your wits, it is not very appropriate to ask whatever questions they may be! Certainly, they do not attest good manners and good taste. After all I am too much of a klutz to be able to twist my tongue and say something as cool as: “Boss! Ha! Ha! Vodka! Ha! Ha!” Which is why I only make a feeble attempt at contributing a: “Ha! Ha!”

Update: Rotterdam

By bettina.carl@web.de

More And Less

Saturday, Sept 8, 2006. „Rotterdam September“, the art festival, started for me in a side street of Witte de With Straat. I came from work and I was tired after teaching, that is: talking all day long to six young curators–to–be. The kids seemed rather self-conscious and under pressure. I wondered why – wasn’t to–be considered the most desirable state of all? In that side street, a car was parked. It was adorned with a huge plastic cake and its licence plate said BLISS. BLISS are a local group of young female performance artists who emerged from Willem de Kooning Academy. In a sense, the effects of their shows are similar to those of queer drag performance: their passionate appropriation of specific gender stereotypes reproduces less than it deconstructs. At its best, this may prove that the only link between the real and the cliché is failure itself. An hour later, I left the bar where I had been dining with friends. I had a sore throat. We had been constantly shouting, only because we wanted to talk a little while eating Zadkine’s heavy meat dishes, all served by heavy old men. Anyway, once we were out in the street again, the BLISS girls passed: a huge tart encircled by smaller tarts, all dancing, all in pink and white. Neon pink dots of an apple’s diameter rained down on the cheering crowd, pink dots covered the pavement and the facades. Witte de With Straat was celebrating itself and tastefulness was to be strictly avoided. This was true for most, yet not all the art-like attractions around, especially not for the exhibits in Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art. There, Nicolaus Schaffhausen and Renske Janssen had curated an utterly elegant presentation called „Street: Behind the Clichés“. I did like some of the art displayed – if I decided not to care about the random choice of the title. One can link everything , of course, and the combined terms of ‚street‘ and ‚cliché‘ would fit any group show of contemporary art, I reckon. Thus, on the other hand, the exhibition in Witte de With might have been labelled just as well ‚Pride and Prejudice‘ or ‚Hot Chat on a Thin Proof‘: whatever sounds nice. The first exhibit one came across was a text on the wall, by Gardar Eide

Einarsson: „1) THOSE WHO AGREE WITH YOU ARE INSANE / 2) THOSE WHO DO NOT AGREE WITH YOU ARE IN POWER //// 1) SOME OF THOSE IN POWER ARE INSANE / 2) AND THEY ARE RIGHT“. This was an excellent start. I saw a couple of other good works, too. What stayed in my mind most vividly, however, was something rather strange. On the third floor, entering the hall on the left, a couple of dress forms awaited the visitor. They wore formal men’s jackets, neatly closed with the sort of tin buttons that have recently re–appeared on lapels with the 1980s–retro fashion. The buttons showed fragments of painted scenes and a second edition of them was fixed on a wall in the back. In the space adjoining this hall, some four small-size canvasses were depicting rural scenes that turned out to be the sources of the jackets’ adornments. The paintings looked old, like some poorly dusted bargains from the antiques shop. What a strange idea! I thought – someone had actually felt the urge to produce a weird kind of Luc Tuymans parody! Then I was distracted by the piece of Rondinone installed in the same space. Standing in the corner, one could listen to an American couple arguing about their marriage’s bitter end. Nearby, a pair of big, blue clown’s shoes hung on the wall. I remembered a London based friend telling me that Antwerp’s famous fashion institute is colloquially referred to as „Mode Nazi“. But I still wondered who dared mocking the politically correct Belgian master painter and why? Well, I was a bit shocked when I read the name tag: it was Luc Tuymans himself. Tuymans recycling some canvasses from his own late 1980s output and aiming to be a master installation artist, now, too. One to–be, maybe. He should not have done this.



Performance by BLISS. Photo by Bettina Carl

Update: Tsuchizawa

By aeneaswilder@hotmail.com

Dear Jim, it is quite a contrast coming from sunny Edinburgh out to the back of beyond in northern Japan. Your donation towards my plane ticket was gratefully appreciated. State funding for Scottish artists, who needs it? The exhibition, Art@Tsuchizawa is quite unique and deserves a great deal of attention. The event was initiated by the artist Roku Suganuma, who came to Towa Cho some years back, to escape the grind of Tokyo. Towa Cho (Towa town) is a bit of a backwater. Although unknown by most of Japan it was the birthplace of Yorozu Tetsugoro, Japans first modern artist, who experimented with cubist and expressionist painting not long after the European’s were being influenced by Japan. The town has a small memorial museum and lots of rice farmers. Roku Suganuma’s idea was to create an “art open” whereby anyone could, if they wanted, put on an exhibition. In this respect it is genuinely open. “Hold on a minute there” I hear you cry. “This is an invitation to every Sunday ikebana flower arranger to have their 15 minutes of fame at the expense of serious artists”. Some may think so. Nevertheless, in spite of the occasional “Sunday painter” the whole idea seemed to work quite well. There is a level playing field which makes for a diverse cross cultural experience. Yes there was one “artist” who wished to display, in a shop window, their collection of lovely hand stitched pseudo European dolls in the mode of Little Bo Peep. However they were sharing the same platform, and communicating with the same audience as Masao Okabe, who, I am sure you do not need reminded, is Japans representative at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007. The strength of the Art@Tsuchizawa exhibition is that people participate because they have a unique opportunity to create work well outside the art loop. The whole village is a potential installation space. The fact that the work is made in such an “off the radar” location means that the artists are free (as free as you can be with next to no funding – not even for Mr Okabe)) to create work that is very much site and circumstance specific. About 150 artists from across Japan took part in the month long exhibition. In addition, the programme line up included Yoko Kanda a professional Japanese Koudansha (story teller), traditional Kagura music (associated with Shinto rituals), Ningyou Kabuki (puppet theatre) and Takayuki Matsuda, Japans 3 times national Shamisen player of the year, no less. Japan does have a more established rural art event, the Echigo-Tsumari Triennial, located to the north west of Tokyo and scattered over several locations. The opening event at the first triennale way back in 2000 was by invitation only. Although my wife and I had bought tickets to see the sprawling exhibition, we were not allowed to attend the opening ceremony and sat outside the ceremonial hall eating snack food while the art dignitaries lorded it up behind closed doors. Speeches were made and backs were slapped, but few locals were amongst the chosen. I know this because I was still there sitting outside the hall eating oden (a kind of Japanese pot dish) from a polystyrene container when the chosen started to pour out of the hall. At least that evening, the beer tent event was open to all, but again the locals were very thin on the ground. In contrast to this, the opening event of Art@Tsuchizawa was ticketed, but open to anyone who cared to buy one. The price (¥2000 – 14 Euro) covered all

the food and drink you could manage. Oddly enough I found myself eating oden again, although this time in the company of happy faces many of them toothless and leather skinned from working the fields into old age. I was particularly taken by the dinner ladies in their blue head scarfs, dolloping out ladles of hot food as if they were doing a lunch time gig at the local high school. The master of ceremonies for the evening was the local Pharmacist who’s quick wit made sure that the Mayor of the municipality was not allowed to turn other peoples hard effort into a plea for more votes in his direction. By the time the hot kettle of Sake, flavoured with Matsu Take (Japans most prized mushroom), was doing the rounds, a milestone had been reached as to the worth of art in the lives of rural northern Japan. A key element discussed was the role that rural venues can play in contemporary art in Japan. These locations have an abundance of time and space that the cities cannot provide. The lack of media scrutiny and the lack of accountability offer a degree of freedom and experimentation that the cities with their administrative or sales conscious art systems can rarely offer. It was also pointed out that many government / local administrative art museums in Japan are scheduled to close as there are fewer and fewer people visiting them (The museums would not actually be closed but sold on at a knock down price, as was done with resort towns some years ago – they were sold (offloaded) for about 1\$ per resort. The extra drain on the financial budgets of any particular funding body is then, apparently, solved!). They have become expensive burdens on the tax budgets of many authorities. There is little political enthusiasm for sustained funding of visual art. However, when the US Military decides to move its strategic line of defence (archipelago line 1) further from Japan out into the pacific (Archipelago line 2 – Guam, Ogasawara Islands and Hawaii) it is the Japanese tax payers that will be footing the 30 Billion Yen relocation costs. This will happen, as China asserts its strength in the region. In contrast to this, when the US military began downsizing in Germany the costs were bourn by the US themselves. A recent government audit found that 7 trillion yen was misspent or wasted last financial year by the government! There is a situation now whereby contemporary art in Japan is in a position to expand the creative field in directions that are dictated by necessity rather than finance. Unlike Europe there are few buildings squattable in the urban metropolises that dominate Japan, hence the strength of rural art projects. Strategic and meaningful funding to support contemporary art in Japan remains stagnant. However, the initiative to utilise art for the development of society seems to be growing amongst the rice farmers. With best wishes, aeneas



Japanese rice farmer bringing in the hay, October 2007.



Towa Cho locals discussing the merrits of art at the Art@Tsuchizawa opening party.

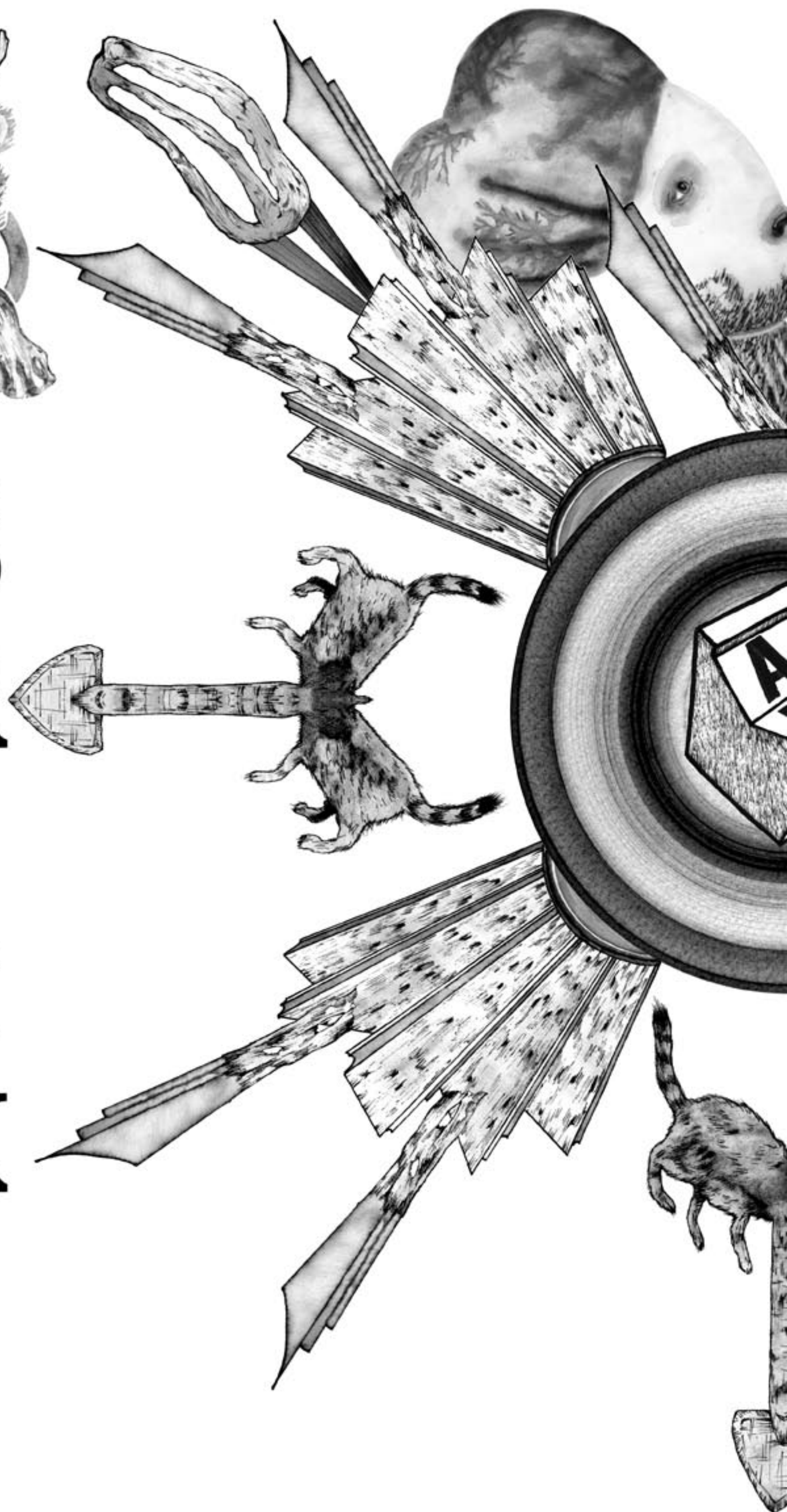


Waiting to serve the hungry masses, Art@Tsuchizawa opening party. All photos by A. Wilder

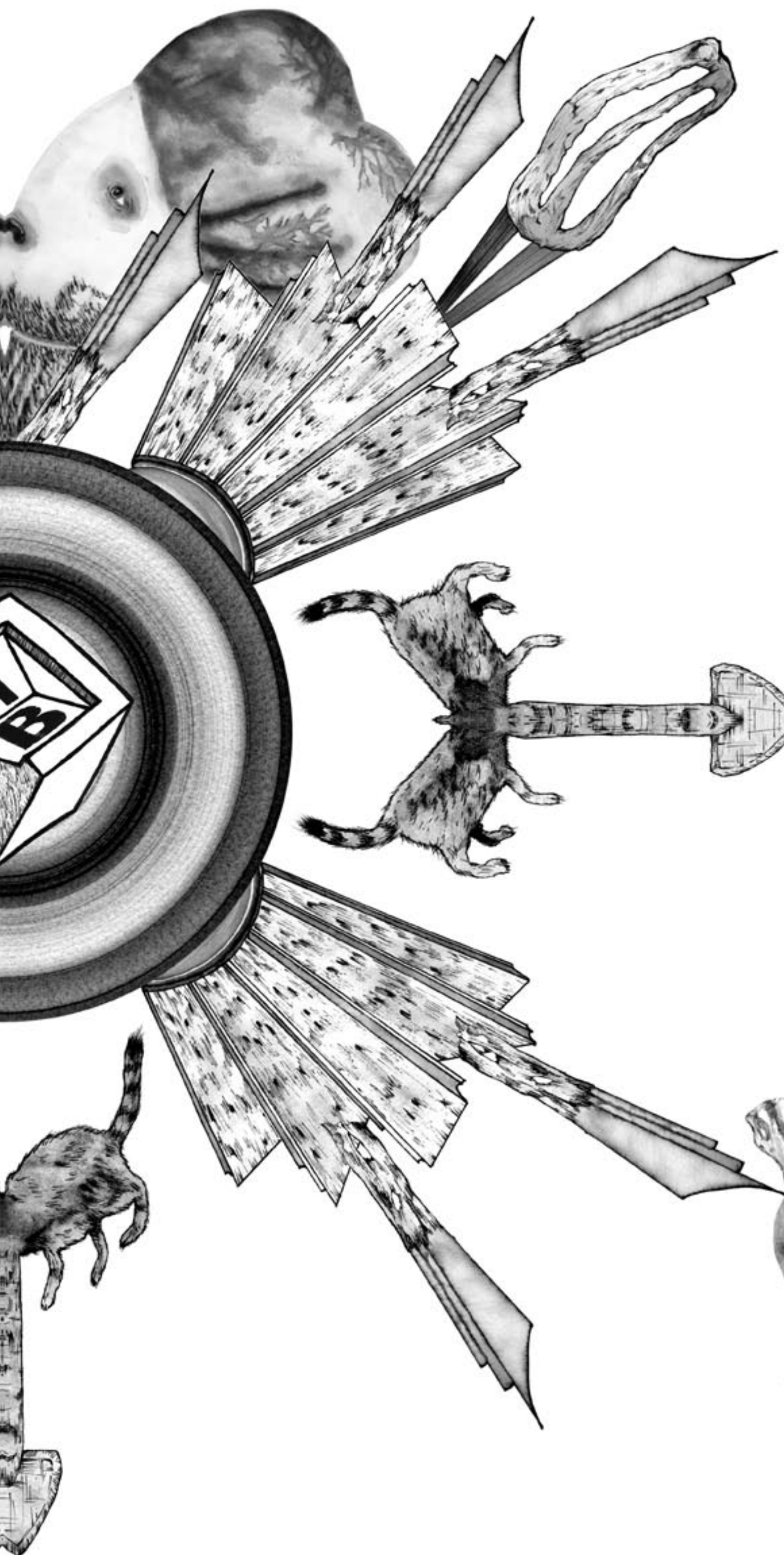
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Update: Prishtina

By annabasbacker@yahoo.com

Three days into my return to Berlin, I'm still recovering from my impressions in Kosova. Completely shocked, I stared with big eyes at the cashier in the supermarket when she read out loud, "23 euros and 50 cents". I felt like I was handing her my months salary, which I would have been, were I in Kosova.

The first to arrive in Prishtina were Aurelio, Betty and me. Sara was supposed to be there too, but had unfortunately missed her connecting flight. She got there the next day. Eline and Kel arrived a week later. Did we know what to expect? I guess not, and during our entire stay our impressions were formed, deformed and transformed time after time.

The airport was small but full of hustle and bustle. It gave one the feeling of being in a marketplace. Merita, gallery owner, host, translator and 'foster parent' for the next month arrived to pick us up in style. From behind her large black sunglasses and long black hair she excused herself for being late. The rental car had broken down in the middle of the road and she had had to wait for a new one. When we passed the crucial spot later on she explained and excused herself again. Just to be sure.

When you enter the city, a disproportionately large Bill Clinton waves down at you from his image on the highrise apartment blocks. This is Bill Clinton avenue. You turn left pretty soon after Bill's gracious welcome. Follow down the road past the casino, turn right, past Hotel Prishtina on your right. If you go straight, you will be driving into 'police street'. The street owes its name to the many UN cars that are parked here. However, just before the UNHCR building you turn left. Just when you think you arrived at a dead end, when you think you are about barge into the Prishtina soccer stadium, you turn left, pass through the gates, bend right and park on the lot. The best way to do it is by driving up to the end and hit the brakes with conviction. Without further ado we were presented with large quantities of food and endless amounts of macchiato and 'Peja' beer. This was to become the custom in the weeks to come. I suppose we were equally flattered and overwhelmed.

Our group, or the 'Palatti group' consisted of 6 artists. Eline, Aurelio, Kel, Sara, Betty and me. Goal of our trip: Gallery Hani i 2 Robertëve, located in the Pallati i Rinisë, a.k.a. the Youth Centre. The Pallati is an enormous Tito-construction built around the same time as the univer-



Palatti group

sity of Prishtina and the Grand Hotel. The buildings were intended to put the city on the map, so to say. The buildings do just that; you can't miss them, nor can you ever forget them afterwards.

The project that the Palatti group had come to work on, was called 'Out of Foreign Focus'. We had something of a mission: to make site-specific-art. We had 3 weeks till the planned opening of the exhibition. The exhibition space was a huge square room. One wall consisted completely of windows and stared, from an angle, at the main building of the Youth Centre. Making 'site-specific' art entailed art that was either based on or influenced by the site. The 'site' was in this case Kosovo, independent province Serbia and Montenegro, more recently 'Kosovo independent province of Serbia', also known as 'Kosova, soon to be an independent country'. The latter was something the world agreed upon as necessary and inevitable, although nobody seemed so sure about how or when.

Well, we figured we'd just have to go see for ourselves and launched ourselves into a marathon of openings, dinners, daytrips, night trips, train trips, road trips. Our naivety became clear when we discovered that analogue printing of film, esp. middle format was next to impossible. During the war and the destruction of the years that had proceeded it, labs had been destroyed. After the war people had invested exclusively in digital photography. Well, we were artists, creative souls by definition, so we managed to solve most of our problems quite well.

The time was ripe to become sick. Aurelio got something like a cheek-infection... well it was an infection somewhere on his lower cheek, I'm not sure how else to describe it. Sara had to sleep from pure exhaustion. I got a bad case of runny cha-cha-cha. Eline and Kel didn't get sick because they took a daily cocktail of fascinating looking drugs. I don't know why Betty didn't get sick. Probably because she had the latest, newest Mac-notebook.

We learnt a lot during our stay. We learnt what UNHCR, KFOR and UNMIK stand for. Well, their initials anyway. It was harder to figure out what they stood for content wise. What was United Nation's Mission in Kosovo? To move out, because the EU was taking over? We also learnt that a 'traumatic experience' could cause people to believe in different contradicting ideas simultaneously. We learnt that 'history' is matter of opinion. It made us question things like; "should I hold grudges against my Spanish friends for the Spanish Habsburg rule in The Netherlands 500 years ago?"



City view of Prishtina

As well as we could, what with all these impressions, we continued to work our asses off for the exhibition. It's a miracle that the exhibition turned out so well. Of all possible evenings, wedding parties took place on exactly the 3 evenings before our show. Merita and Fadil had made camp in our working space because there was more space in the restaurant. While we tried to concentrate on the final decisions, loud sounds from the adjacent rooms pervaded our brains and art. The loud female singer gave way to ecstatic drummers, who gave way to Cher from the stereo.

On the way to the toilet, you had to push your way through the line of dancing men and women. Their chain featured raised arms, bored looks and was a slowly moving step forward, step back aaaaaand step over! Once you made it to the bathroom, you came eye in eye with towering women on stiletto heels. Although I don't think it was so much their heels that made them tall, as their hair... let me say no more. The perfumes were murdering.

But it all took place. The exhibition was a success. We had a really good time. There was a brief moment afterwards when we thought we might become depressed. We were facing the black hole that follows any eventful period. This didn't happen though. Palatti had some good ideas. Palatti is already working on the plans for the next Palatti.



Book car in Mitrovica. All photos by Aurelio Kopainig

Update: Zurich

By kielmayer@gmx.net

Dinner at Presenhuber

After a fantastic holiday in Egypt I was full of dread opening my entourage email programme on Monday morning. It's not so much the 200something emails that are in each of the 3 mailboxes but the ones that inform you about a rejected application for sponsorship, remind you of overdraft in your bank account or just mean an emergency day of extra work. Expecting the usual worst case scenario I could not believe what the attachment of one of the emails was to reveal: It was a personal invitation for the dinner party in Eva Presenhuber's private condo. Could this be possible? Should finally one of my most-desired dreams for the last 10 years come true? Would I finally be part of the AAA art Schickeria after all these years of labour?

In order to understand my joy it is necessary to say a few words about Eva Presenhuber. After running the gallery Walcheturm in the 1990s, Eva Presenhuber opened her own space in the Zurich 'Löwenbräu'. After a short alliance with Hauser & Wirth she became fully independent – and more and more influential in the international scene. Some years ago I heard rumours about a quote by Pipilotti Rist, who, asked in an interview for the most despicable character in the commercial gallery scene, had named Presenhuber. I have no idea if this was true but it was quite the thing that you could hear about her in Zurich. However, I think that successful people always tend to be criticised so this was not the point. It neither was that the people talking badly about Eva Presenhuber said that she is just interested in business and money, that she doesn't believe that you can make it as an artist older than 35 and that she does not care about the quality of her artists but only their capability of being a superstar; from my point of view this just makes her both a very sensible person and a fantastic gallerist. But the real point was that she was said to uniquely talk to people who are important. I looked at the attachment again: not only was it an invitation into the circle of **real** art VIPs but also the written proof that I was finally sort of **important**.

My joy was slightly irritated by a textline in the email, mentioning that Eva Presenhuber was delighted to have met me the weekend before. Hm, I was in oasis Siwa in the middle of the Egyptian desert then. Should all this be a misunderstanding? As most reasons for my still moderate career are based on misunderstandings I decided to gladly accept her invitation.

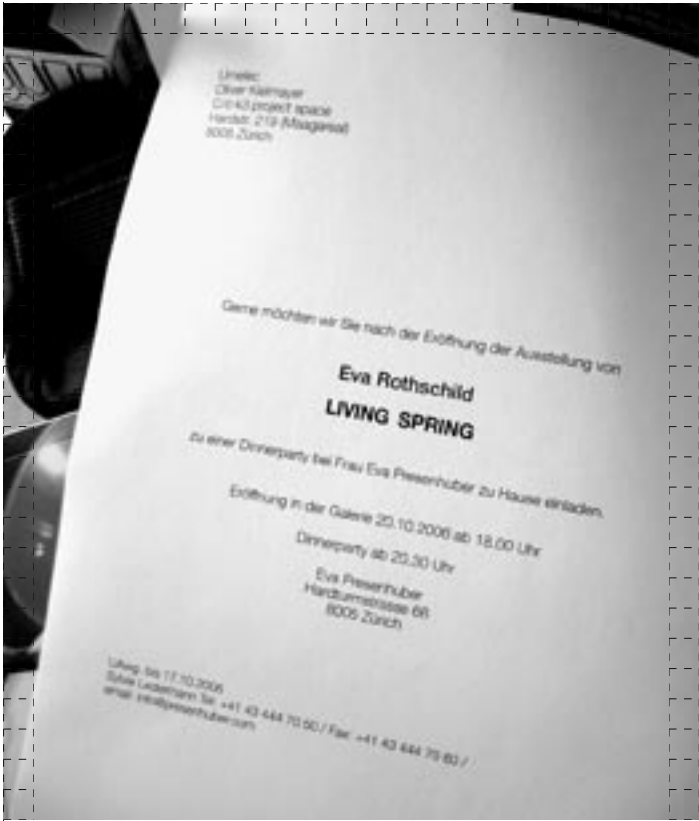
After another 2 weeks the big night was about to begin. Unluckily my mood was really shit; I even thought of better cancelling the dinner party. On the other hand I thought well, wherever I go in Zurich I know at least 10 people to talk to, so I went there.

I was coming late from Winterthur and I actually missed the reason for the party; Eva Rothschild's show was already closed. Fair enough but this meant that I had missed the chance to chat myself into a little group and walk over to the dinner party together. After being a bit nervous ringing the bell (what if they ask me this question again: Yes please? – It's Oliver Kielmayer. – Oliver who? – Oliver Kielmayer. – I have not heard of you. Do you have an invitation?) I was relieved taking this first step bravely (the door just flung open); I went up to second floor. But when I walked into the apartment I was horrified: I didn't know anybody.

After being paralysed for a second I quickly checked my alternatives: a) leave instantly, b) play the rockstar curator who doesn't care or c) mingle and hope. I took c) and walked from one side of the apartment to the other; being quite big, this took me like 5 minutes, including a serious 2 minute look out of the window. I soon discovered that I sort of knew 4 people; but it actually didn't help much: VIP writer Marc Spiegler I just know from saying hello and he was totally absorbed with talking to a skinny but rich looking woman. Then there was Bice Curiger who just never seems to recognise me. Furthermore there was Peter Fischli, but we also just say hello and I think he doesn't remember really why. Person number 4 was Nick who used to work for Bischofberger and now joins the Presenhuber team; he is quite a hunk but knows it so damn well ... I know him from wild party times (ages ago) and, uh, from an internet-chat; there we had swapped pictures with the result that I was not his type ...

I managed to sort my thoughts; I decided to ask the assistant of the buffet where Kerstin was (the one who had sent me the invitation) but the answer was that tonight Kerstin was not here. A drink is always a good way out so I took a glass of white. I was not sure if it corked so I asked if it's possible and if anybody else had given it back; this would maybe give a reason to address this other person and start talking about wine. The answer was no and I feared that with a wrong next step I could annihilate my credibility as a person of taste; however, I insisted on a new glass and here we go: the first one had corked indeed (and nobody had noticed – hehe)! Enjoying this little success of my (basic) knowledge about wine took only a few seconds; but I became bold and headed to the buffet, decided to introduce myself to Mrs. Presenhuber who was casually standing there. I thought I could tell her about the strange email and ask her who this person was she had mistaken for me. But arriving at the buffet she turned her back on me and walked away in order to welcome more important guests. I seriously thought of capitulation – but not with an empty stomach!

I loaded a plate with the fantastic nibbles from the buffet and went to the table to have a seat; luckily there was an empty chair, so I thought I would just sit down and say hello to my neighbours. When I asked if the seat was taken I got another 'who are you?' look but at least the statement: 'I'm not sure'. Fuck you I thought but being in the process of sitting down Bice Curiger came my way; this chair was obviously hers. I said hello and excuse me and moved away. Being pissed of by my failures I went over to the sofa; there was only a tiny little gap of free space but being in a fuck-off mood now I politely asked the guy sitting there if I could squeeze in. And: success, I got a yes! Sitting finally next to somebody and being busy with my loaded plate I was happy; I even started talking to this guy, a German; but as I got only three-words answers to my nicely built questions I soon concentrated on my food. After a couple of minutes Eva Presenhuber came our way; she started greeting charmingly the other people on the sofa and when she came to the skinny and rich looking girl (still talking to Marc Spiegler) she nicely said 'So who are you, I haven't seen you here before? Welcome!' I prepared myself for my big moment but having eaten properly I was totally cool now. But alas! – before it was my turn



The incredible invitation. Photo by Oliver Kielmayer

to say hello she turned her back on me again and walked away! I couldn't believe it! But this time there would be no escape; I followed her. 'Hello Eva, I want to introduce myself so that you know who is sitting in your living room. My name is Oliver Kielmayer. You don't know me. Your assistant invited me and I hope it's not a misunderstanding. She mentioned that we have met some weeks ago, but we haven't, have we? But as she mentioned Umelec as well, I thought it's probably correct so here I am. It's very nice here. Thanks for the invitation'. When she said 'Yeah right, I don't know you.' I thought okay, what a waste of an evening, now I can go home and tell Pascal that I'm a bloody failure. But Eva wouldn't be Eva if she didn't add: 'Of course I know you name, it's just that we had never been introduced. Welcome!'

The rest of the evening was pleasant. In the corner nearby I discovered Nick and two girls who started smoking; I decided to go over and join them. Nick introduced me to the girls, one American who was born in St. Gallen and now lives in Zurich, the other one of Eva's gallery assistants. We talked a lot about culture, the embarrassing administration Bush, holidays in Egypt, India and China and even a bit about art. Eva Rothschild was looking for CDs in order to spice the pleasant atmosphere even more up but in the end was afraid of not having the accurate taste. The assistant of the buffet with the incredibly glamorous name Athena introduced herself as an F+F student and when I was saying goodbye to everybody I was introduced to an important looking guy who enquired about the opening next day at my Kunsthalle. What can I say? Peter Fischli recognises me now.

ArtsCharts Zurich

01 (05)	Migros Museum Kusmirowski show is as cool as a chilled vodka
02 (NEW)	Elizabeth Kaufmann Exclusively good shows in 2006
03 (07)	K3 Mixed Pickles Overloaded – as good as it gets!
04 (04)	Ausstellungsraum 25 After Daniel Hunziker now Tobias Madörin, what a programme!
05 (NEW)	Bob Van Oursov Josephohn show was disturbing and great
06 (NEW)	Hauser & Wirth Rodney (Graham) can do anything; even through potatoes!
07 (NEW)	Les Complices Jean Claude is leaving, we give Andrea a starting bonus
08 (NEW)	Hubert Bächler Andrea Heller's show is well done
09 (02)	Eva Presenhuber Eva Rothschild not as breathtaking as Franz West last time ...
100 (NEW)	Helmhaus Incredibly bad show by Hoefs & Schütz, Nager and Zufferey

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 for details. Accepted data are pdf, eps, tiff and jpg files in black and white with 300dpi. Number 10 of WeAreTheArtists is published with 4000 copies in April 2007; deadline is March 15.

Update: Brasov

By inkamon@gmail.com

Yes, it's true..., there are otakus in Romania too. Quite a lot of them, I may say after the last counting. That was at Otaku Festival in Brasov on the Sept 29t and in Bucharest on Oct 7 & 8.

How did this come to happen? A friend of mine with the nick of "Otaku" owns for some years a forum named manga.ro (soon to become otaku.ro). This forum became a virtual community of manga, anime and japanese culture fans. The most active and creative of them got involved in cultural events like music/new media festivals, as the "manga.ro team". I joined only a couple of years ago and I wasn't very active until Otaku decided to publish a fanzine. It was named MangaInc and it came out on october 2004. Another one followed in may 2005 – named Mecha Revolution. They contained mainly artworks and manga made by local artists. This gave us all a purpose... It wasn't quite like publishing, but it was as close as it could get, regarding the cultural context. This summer Otaku came with the idea of putting up a periodic publication that should contain manga made in Ro, of course, but also articles about the international scene, and reviews of other creative otaku behaviour like self made toys, clothing, object design..."Otaku-Magazine" A team of enthusiasts gathered for the project (I shall name them by their forum nicks: Otaku, Megatron, Unfair-Player, Eyeobs, Inkamon ,Mistik), and the material for publishing came in a flow. We thought it would be nice to accompany the launch of the magazine with an event. We decided to keep it simple and focused on explaining to the public the background and goals of the magazine. Things got easily out of hand and the event gained proportions. Everybody proposed something that should be done: - like an exhibition, the screening of documentaries, anime trailers, anime music videos, a gaming competition, GO sessions... the main word was interactivity. So it became a festival. We had to hurry to find funding, media partners, a big location, co-organizers for a party. Things got crazy, as the time was short, we all unexperienced in organizing at a big scale and busy with our real lives also.

I cannot remember how many things went wrong... including the fact that the magazine came out of print on the 12th of october... But I was amased of how well the festival was received, what a good vibe that place held for those two days. The magazine was presented in digital form, and as soon as it was out people started cleaning the shelves. It was present in the Comics Saloon that just took place in Bucharest and it was appreciated by other authors and publishers in related domains.

In conclusion – it was clear to all of us that the time is right for the Otaku Culture in our country to emerge to the surface. It is time to create our scene and help each other grow. We learned a lot from this experience and the next edition will be much much better.



Art and the City

By artandthecity@hotmail.co.uk

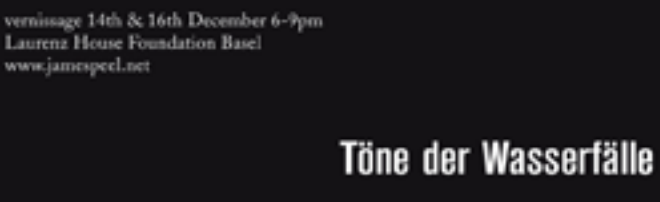
Frieze

It was The Greek, The Israeli, The Rockstar and myself, and about everyone you ever wanted to meet in the artworld descending on London. Since none of us had invites to anything, it also meant a week of slippery entrances. Saatchi's USA Today opening at the Royal Academy kicked it off the week before. "Invite only". We were lucky enough to be walking up the entrance ramp behind a very posh lady who got her heel stuck. In the chivalrous gesture of helping her free herself, The Greek established a rapport with everyone at the entrance and we all slipped in easily. Inside was jam packed with creatures – mostly older people nodding at eachother or looking over their shoulders as they walked up and down the huge ballroom-like steps to the upstairs part of the show. We helped ourselves to the free champagne (only champagne and nothing else) and proceeded to take in our surroundings. The show was typical Saatchi –loud, big, over the top, some of it very good, some of it very bad. When I turned a corner I burst out laughing as I found myself standing in front of a gargantuan red gestural painting by Barnaby Furnas. It was so enormous that it was ridiculous. The stars of the show however had to be Dash Snow and Dan Colon, who The Rockstar knew from his undergrad in the States. Dash was showing a wall of semen crusted newspaper clippings of stories of cops gone bad and Dan had a room where he re-created his friend's bedroom wall complete with graffiti and posters. He did this one piece I absolutely love where he spray-painted on a shitty piece of plywood: "Rama lama ding dong". We spotted them together, all Diesled out, off their heads like two princes in heaven. We were standing next to some very bad fabric sculptures that kept falling over on me when Dan passed us laughing "look at this shit!" Every time we went to the toilet they were both in there snorting lines. It felt like the 80's I'd always heard about but was too young to experience. Apparently this is what New York is like right now. By the way Saatchi is snatching up everything American, it's no wonder the coke is flowing so freely.

I ran into The Sculptor and he gave me a personal tour through some of the rooms. He'd helped install the show and had been working closely with Saatchi in the previous weeks. The best story was The Sculptor overhearing Saatchi on the phone yelling: "I want to know where that three million went!!".

The afterparty was in Mayfair at a swank club where everyone was doing more coke and getting more drunk. The older creatures had thinned out and it seemed mostly artists now. We spotted an empty round table at the foot of the stage waiting with bottles of champagne in their buckets. We couldn't figure out who the table was reserved for so we made it looked like it was for us. We did ourselves the honours of popping the corks and polished off the two bottles. In true style The Rockstar got the waiter to bring over a bottle of vodka. When the waiter opened it then asked for a hundred pounds he snapped at him that it should be free and if its not to take it away.

We decided to mingle outside on the patio but The Israeli was very drunk at this point and the bouncer spotted him wobbling against a fence and kicked him out. He put up a bit of a fight, almost falling over yelling not very convincingly, "I'm not drunk, really I'm not drunk!". We felt bad if we were to stay and he had to go so we all left. The Rockstar took The Israeli home and The Greek and I made our way back to east London snapp-ing blurry pics of ourselves making faces at eachother. The following Frieze week was spent in pretty much the same way.



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