



The Center for Contemporary Art – Ancient Baths, Plovdiv, and the Art Today Association present

CRITIQUE OF PURE IMAGE - BETWEEN FAKE AND QUOTATION

the first edition of the

International Project for Low and High Technics in Contemporary Media Art

Written and curated by Dimitrina Sevova

Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 7 October-8 November 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear guests, dear friends, dear colleagues,

I have the pleasure today, as the curator of this project, together with the organizer, the Art Today Association, to invite you to the Center of Contemporary Art in the "Ancient Baths" in Plovdiv, and welcome you to our new project "Critique of Pure Image – Between Fake and Quotation," the first edition of the "International Project of High and Low Technics in Contemporary Media Art." To enjoy and celebrate with us the opening, as well as all other parts of this event – likely the largest international event in the field of contemporary art in the Bulgarian art scene, with an

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international exhibition and series of performances with 30 participating artists and collectives whose work corresponds with the topic, a theoretical symposium with 18 lectures opening up a space for debate and critical exploration, and an intervention in the urban space with an openair screening of a selection of short movies on the main pedestrian street in Plovdiv. All three parts of the project are equally important and present three different approaches to the topic. I'd like to emphasize that despite its large format, it is not a festival, and it is not its aim to fulfill any representative function.

As so often when artists from the West present their art in the East or vice versa, you may well have a question on the tip of your tongue: What is the context? or: What happens to art when it's extracted from its original context?

Rather than re-contextualizing, unifying and standardizing, let's try this time to play with the contexts and the contentions of interpretation. Believe me, it can be extremely cool, and great fun to identify oneself in multiplicity and difference.

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While the West can afford a multiplicity of contexts, adopt the exotic and diverse and wrap them up in a universalist structure, the East is characterized by a radical lack of context. Or rather, contexts abound, but they lack a common denominator to unify them, make them comparable.

And yet: Globalization has changed not only the East, but also the West. I dare say that the West has become more oriental, and the East more occidental.

Some of you do not speak Bulgarian – especially among the participants in the project. Others do not speak English, or German. We all know that sometimes meaning gets lost in translation, or we get lost in it. Therefore I'll explain what I have in mind as carefully as I can. Let me try!

Translated to the Bulgarian political, social and cultural context the title of the event may turn out to be difficult to digest. In the minds of parts of the Bulgarian public or some of the cultural institutions, it will sound like a joke. It may not be clear whether it refers to yet another stupid

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talk show with a shallow sense of humor, yet another hot journalistic reportage about trademark counterfeits or life-threatening cheap booze. It may also sound like part of the promise of some new political formation putting all people back into politics. In any event, it will be recognized as something that has come in from the outside, a strange bird, a sequence of meaningless words like they turn up in advertising and burn themselves in the collective consciousness.

Admittedly, the title articulates a certain element of humor, but rather as its own armor. I'd like to convince you that the title is quite serious, and should not get you laughing and poking fun. The project takes a specific approach to things real. It's about real life, real places and real facts. And extends to a debate on the real fake. And on how the interdependencies between these phenomena are reflected in a meticulous critical artistic exploration. Of course, this is the kind of event that must be positioned in the research framework of a discursive, thematic and curatorial

project, which carefully borrows from and refers to historical sources of a European academic tradition of critical thought.

It also presents a new picture of the development of contemporary culture and correspondingly contemporary art, where critical reflections and social implications are based on a new realism, influenced by a strong collective desire of the society for immediate consumption, in which

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along with everything else, wars are consumed, and natural disasters, and scandals, and any other incident is welcome.

We have embarked together on a dangerous adventure in search of the projection of the real fake, the real pure image and the truly great quotation, and how these pieces fit together to produce reality.

Because the debate around the original and the copy has lost its sense outside the circles of the old-fashioned elite, of private collectors of objects and museum experts, or functionaries of the

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offices for the control of trademarks.

Old masters, new masters, clichés, mechanical matrices, Andy Warhol, Elvis Presley, political campaigns, preservatives and coloring for fast food, which help it become healthy, palatable and authentic in appearance. The model fakes in the biotechnics debate around the authenticity of the visual simulations of the DNA links with their excessive aestheticism, or the artificial nature

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of the computer-based animated presentations of microelements in human biology and physiology, of online games, of reality TV programs like the hugely popular show "Big Brother."

As a consequence of globalization, the appearance of digital technics, and <Documenta X> 1998 in Kassel, the arts officially announced their new object to be "Politics/Poetics." Once more art is called upon to fulfill a historical function in society, related to the idea not only of technical, but also of general human progress.

The critical reflections on this process continuously change the terminology of art. It is not only

the system of concepts that changes, but the very object of art, pertaining to a decidedly European, humanist tradition in art – life, or nature. With the emergence of digital technics in art, contrary to the initial expectation that virtual cyberworlds would be created, it turned out that the interest was rather directed towards more nature. Towards even more genuineness and authenticity. This changes not only the design of the urban space, but fundamentally the concepts related to this notion. The “desert becomes more desert,” the “village more rural,” the “mountain more mountainous,” the “wrestlers more wrestly,” and the poor become aestheticizedly poor. What does this do to our perception of the global and the local, and where do we find ourselves on a personal level?

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And this is where the need for critique arises. I suggest, following the arguments of Kant, and after him Foucault, to use our reason in debating the idea of human progress in contemporary media art:

“Kant in fact describes Enlightenment as the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority; now it is precisely at this moment that the critique is necessary, since its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what

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may be hoped.” – Michel Foucault, What Is Enlightenment?

I propose to use the term “critique” in the historical sense of the critical method used by Kant in order to establish the principles of metaphysical knowledge of the nature of the human being, in which it is not our knowledge that conforms to the things, but they conform to it.

Based on a curatorial selection, the exhibition and the series of performances of individual artists and collectives present authors coming from different disciplines, about whose art one can say that it has spilled over the bounds of the idea of art and its own possibilities. In other words, it has overcome the limits of the nature of art. With the new tools, between narrative, functional and documentary strategies, the artistic practices transform themselves into utopian landscapes or radical cultural and social territories. That’s why I can claim that not only the tools have changed. It’s also the archetype of the contemporary artist that has changed. The contemporary artist successfully moves between the roles of a DJ, a priest, a social worker, a manager of a transnational corporation, a barman, a construction worker, a genetic engineer or leader of a political party.

This is one of the arguments why a part of the exhibition has been moved to a billboard in the public urban space, another to squat the electronic advertising panel in the main hall of the cen-

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tral train station. In parallel, there will be a show – a selection of short movies will be presented in an openair screening on the central square of Plovdiv. Of course this breaking out of the gallery space, this intervention in public space, does not go without a risk. It may turn out that the cozy codes of the art context lose their relevance, and the void is filled by the less well-defined codes of the public space. But let's enjoy! Plovdiv can be just as groovy a place for contemporary art as Sofia, Venice or New York.

Dimitrina Sevova – curator of the project

& the team of the Art Today Association

We thank our sponsors for their kind support in realizing this project:

SDC / Swiss Cultural Programme Bulgaria; Pro Helvetia; Goethe Institut, Sofia; Stiftung "Begegnungsstätte des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt"; Austrian Embassy in Sofia; National Fund "Culture"; Victoria Group Hotels & Resorts; Hotel Maritza; Municipality of Plovdiv

Special thanks to all participants for their contributions on all levels and their confidence in the project, to Lilian Räber for her special support, to Sabina Baumann for her drawing that became the mascot of the project, to Alain Kessi for moral and all-round support, and to Emil Miraztchiev for having the guts to invite me to curate this project.

Dimitrina Sevova is an independent curator, theorist and artist, born 1971 in Varna, Bulgaria, graduated from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia 1997. Based in Zurich, Switzerland since 2002.

Participants in the exhibition:

0100101110101101.ORG: Nike Ground

Video installation and 6 digital prints, 2003.

Florian Agalliu, and Eri Daka (LK47): Tirana-Prishtina 385 km: Escaping the Matrix

Three-screen video installation with comfortable sitting area, 2005.

Ursula Biemann: Contained Mobility

Synchronized double screen video installation, DVD 20 min., 2004.

Pauline Boudry / Brigitta Kuster / Renate Lorenz: copy me – i want to travel

Video film between documentary and fiction, 68 min., 2004.

Film about the Bulgarian copy of the Apple II computer, produced in Pravetz, reverse engineering, the green card and women in this business.

The Centre of Attention: Magazine No. 2 and 3

3 video compilations (No. 2-1, 50 min., 2002; No. 2-2, 40 min., 2002; No. 3, 60 min., 2003).

The Centre of Attention Magazine shows a “best of” through images of recent shows and performances, art videos and BBC interviews.

Věra Chytilová (1929-) and her fans: Sedmikrásky (Daisies)

Feature film, 74 min., 1966. Downloaded and reassembled in small bits coming from the computers of her wired fans across the world via the shared peer-to-peer networks.

David Crawford: Stop Motion Studies – Series 13

Video film installed on the electronic advertising panel in the main hall of the central train station in Plovdiv, 7 min., 2004.

Alexandra Croitoru: Powerplay – Untitled and ROM Series

4 digital prints on canvas, 2004; 5 digital prints, 2004.

Guy-Ernest Debord and his fans: The Society of the Spectacle

Feature film, 87 min., 1973. Downloaded and reassembled in small bits coming from the computers of his wired fans across the world via the shared peer-to-peer networks.

Maria Draghici: hope & nostalgia; sound: William S. Burroughs, No More Stalins, No More Hitlers, 1989

Flash animation, comparative view between an Eastern European family archive and Western professional photographs, 2004.

Etoy: Frequently Asked Questions

Mixed-media installation with a computer server with hardware and software specifically produced by Etoy, telephone installation, 2002.

Nadia Genova: Ornament

Interactive mixed-media installation, electric light and sound, 2005.

Rumen Zhekov: Self-criticism – Pure Image, Quotation, Fake

Selected piece of original wall of the exhibition space, its digital print reproduction and its hand-painted copy on canvas, each 300 x 150 cm, 2005.

Oliver Kiehmayer: WeAreTheArtists: Get Real!

Mixed-media installation with a specific space, text and a selection of unfinished or abandoned videos, 2005. Included in the selection are videos by Gernot Wieland, Aleksander Komarov, Irina Botea, Enisa Cenaliaj, Christina Hemauer, Susanne Kriemann, Petra Maitz, Irene Weingartner, Kunstfly, Philippe Winninger, Ursula Palla, Aurelio Kopainig and Paulina Egle Pukyte.

Athanasia Kyriakakos: Dreams-World: Work in progress

Video installation with selected videos, 2001-2005.

Rudi Maier: that's revolution – ads & revolt

Specific thematic selection by the author of 30 digital prints of ads from 1967-today.

Karin Michalski: Pashke & Sofia (video film between documentary and fiction, 28 min., 2003)

and Monika M. (documentary video portrait, 20 min., 2003)

Emil Miraztchiev: Made in EU

Mixed-media installation, actual working bar, oversize teddy bear, objects, video interviews plus

performance, 2005.

Monochrom & Georg Paul Thomann (Johannes Grenzfurthner & Günther Friesinger): Who shot Immanence? – On The Dynamics Of Appropriation And Intervention In The Work Of Georg Paul Thomann (*video film, 2002*) and The Funeral of Georg Paul Thomann (*video film, 2005*)

Mixed-media installation with 2 video films and digital prints.

Oliver Musovik: flags

Collection of 4 postcards with Musovikian flags selected from a flash animation, 2005. Cf. the info section of the exhibition space.

Vlad Nanca: 30 years of social history (*video animation, 4'45"*, 2004) and The Flags (2 objects, *real-size flags, 2004*)

Dorel Naste: Daily Stories 1-3

3 short video films installed on the electronic advertising panel in the main hall of the central train station in Plovdiv, respectively 26", 24" and 30", 2004.

Nebudu group (Borjana Ventzislavova, Mladen Penev, Miroslav Ničić): Tabula rasa
Digital print/billboard installed in the central city space at the corner "6-i septemvri"/main street, 2004.

Veselina Sarieva: Good models to copy

Mixed media installation, digital print, stolen video and objects, 2005.

Sexismus Productions (Gaby Baldinger, Sabina Baumann, Lilian Räber): Retrospective 1999-2002 of video performances, public actions, documents and objects: Second Hand, Testosterone for All, Neosexism, Piss Police, S-C-U-M

Selection from the **Shedhalle** archive

Documentation in DVD format with a focus on the 1980s protests and riots in Zurich against the funding of the opera house, and for free, non-commercial spaces for the production and presentation of independent art and culture.

Mirjam Wirz: Free West Copy East Trade – Shifts in the Flow of Information (*photo installation, 2004-2005*), Auto Portraits – Collective and Alternative Initiatives In Vilnius At This Moment (*photo installation, 2004-2005*) and Daily Conversations – Recorded (*compilation of video interviews, 2005*)

The Yes Men: The Yes Men (*video, 83 min., 2005*), The Horribly Stupid Stunt (Which Resulted in His Untimely Death) (*video, 23'39"*, 2001), Smokey the Log (*video, 3'20"*, 2004), New Ice Age? (*video, 1'44"*, 2004), Up Came Oil! (*video, 3'03"*, 2004)

Video installation and one digital print, 2004-2005.

Artur Żmijewski: KR WP (Representative Guards of the Polish Army)

Video film, 7'50", 2000/2001.

Tim Zulauf: Eat Police, Eat ID

Video film between documentary and fiction, 23'20", 2003 (*new editing 2005, with English subtitles*).

Program Overview

Friday, 7 October

- 18:30h** **Opening of the exhibition** “Critique of Pure Image – Between Fake and Quotation,” curated by Dimitrina Sevova, at the Old Baths/Bania Starinna; additional locations of the exhibition: billboard at the corner Blvd “6-i septemvri”/Main Street; installations in the main hall of the central train station. The exhibition will be open to visitors from the opening on 7 October to 8 November.
- 19:00h** Performance “Second Hand” by Sexismus Productions, Zurich, at the Old Baths/Bania Starinna
- 20:00h** Party with DJ Pauline Boudry
- 22:00h** Cinema projection: Surprise Movie

Saturday, 8 October

- 11:00h** **Opening of the Theoretical Symposium** by Dimitrina Sevova (curator of the project)

Participants in the Theoretical Symposium

Pauline Boudry/Brigitta Kuster/Renate Lorenz, Alice Cantaluppi, David Crawford, Maria Draghici, Etoy.ZAI and Etoy.HAEFLIGER, Indymedia Sofia, Oliver Kielmayer, LK47 (Florian Agalli, Eri Daka), Rudi Maier, Monochrom (Johannes Grenzfurthner & Günther Friesinger), Karin Michalski, Dr. Klaus Schönberger, Sexismus Productions (Sabina Baumann, Gaby Baldinger, Lilian Räber), Nina Stuhldreher, Mirjam Wirz, Vencislav Zankov, Peter Zorn, Tim Zulauf

- 11:30h** Oliver Kielmayer, curator and art theorist, Zurich, Switzerland: Lecture on the conception of the media project “WeAreTheArtists”
- 12:30h** Peter Zorn, independent film-maker, curator and media theorist, Werkleitz/Halle, Germany: Lecture “The Image as Common Property”
- 13:30h** Alice Cantaluppi, independent curator, art producer and theorist, Zurich, Switzerland: Lecture “Reinventions of History”
- 14:30h** Lunch buffet
- 15:30h** Dr. Klaus Schönberger, media theorist, Internet anthropologist, Scientific Coordinator of the Forschungskolleg Kulturwissenschaftliche Technikforschung, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany: Lecture “Apparently Un-True – or How False Online Information Creates True (Real-Life) Events”
- 16:30h** Rudi Maier, media theorist and activist, anthropologist, Ludwigsburg, Germany: Lecture “that’s revolution – on ads and revolt”
- 17:30h** Discussion
- 19:00h** Performance “Who shot Immanence? On The Dynamics Of Appropriation And Intervention In The Work Of Georg Paul Thomann” by Monochrom (Johannes Grenzfurthner & Günther Friesinger), Vienna, Austria

Sunday, 9 October

- 11:00h** Maria Draghici, artist, Bucharest, Romania: Lecture “Family Archive”
- 12:00h** Etoy.ZAI and Etoy.HAEFLIGER, media artists and corporate activists: Lecture on etoy.HISTORY and the etoy.PERSPECTIVE on the culture of fakes and quotations, and on how important it is to Etoy not to fake, but rather to lastingly manipulate reality in

- order to change values
- 13:00h** Vencislav Zankov, artist, independent curator, media activist and theorist, lecturer at the New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria: Lecture on the “E80 Exit Strategies & Projects” and the “Close up” discussion club
- 14:00h** Lunch buffet
- 15:00h** Monochrom (Johannes Grenzfurthner & Günther Friesinger), media artists, theorists and activists, Vienna, Austria: Lecture “The Life and Work of Georg Paul Thomann”
- 16:00h** Mirjam Wirz, photographer and artist: Lecture “An Alternative to the Idea of Market Failure”
- 17:00h** Sexismus Productions (Sabina Baumann, artist; Gaby Baldinger, journalist; Lilian Räber, journalist), Zurich, Switzerland: Game “The Sloppy Copy”
- 18:00h** Discussion
- 19:00h**
- 21:30h** **Openair Screening** curated by Dimitrina Sevova: Selection of Short Videos, on the main street of Plovdiv near the municipality building

Openair Screening – Films Shown:

Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz: sometimes you fight for the world, sometimes you fight for yourself; *5 min., 2004; music: flying lizzards*

David Crawford: Dance to the Radio; *music: Joy Division*

Daniel Lo Iacono: Digitalsnapshots - Minute Manipulations of Space, Place and Time; *4 min., 2003*

code flow presents: All Your Base Are Belong To Us; *4’21”, 2001; original Flash movie by Bad_CRC; music: The Laziest Men On Mars (Invasion of the Gabber Robots) from a selection by Emil Miraztchiev:*

Yavor Gardev: Bedspotting; *2002*

Plamen Solomonski: PS tv market; *2004*

Kamen Stoyanov: Hello Lenin; *2003*
from a selection by Athanasia Kyriakakos:

Lina Theodorou: Addiction; *3 min., 2005*

Ioanna Myrka: Game; *1’59”, 2004*

Chi-Jang Yin: ICON; *4’30”, 2005*

Morgan Showalter: Smoke; *3’15”, 2004*

Monday, 10 October

- 11:00h** David Crawford, media artist and theorist, Chicago, USA/Göteborg, Sweden: Lecture “Stop Motion Studies: Script, Performance, and Montage”
- 12:00h** LK47 (Florian Agalli, independent curator and artist; Eri Daka, artist): Lecture on the artistic and curatorial practice of LK47 in Kosovo
- 13:00h** Indymedia Sofia, media activists, Sofia, Bulgaria: Presentation of the indymedia idea and practice and of Indymedia Bulgaria in the global context
- 14:00h** Lunch buffet
- 15:00h** Pauline Boudry, artist, theorist, musician; Brigitta Kuster, artist, theorist; Renate Lorenz, independent curator, theorist, artist, Berlin, Germany/Zurich, Switzerland: Lecture on fakes and quotations in “copy me – i want to travel”
- 16:00h** Karin Michalski, independent film-maker, Berlin, Germany: Lecture “women and queeries speak up – attempts to create feminist and queer media spaces”
- 17:00h** Tim Zulauf, artist, theater author and director, art theorist, lecturer at the University of Art and Design Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland: Lecture “Imitate Yourself”
- 18:00h** Nina Stuhldreher, artist and reality researcher, Vienna, Austria: Multimedia lecture-

19:00h
20:00h
22:00h

performance “I’ve Seen My Body Electric or How Subcultural is my Body Intelligence?”
Discussion
Euro-Bear Drink Party, with a bar-performance by Emil Miraztchiev, and the “Hugging Performance” by Athanasia Kyriakakos
Cinema projection: Surprise Movie

Critique of Pure Image – Between Fake and Quotation
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International Project for Low and High Technics in Contemporary Media Art
Written and curated by Dimitrina Sevova

Opening: 7 October 2005
Exhibition: 7 October - 8 November 2005
Theoretical Symposium: 8 - 10 October 2005

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Billboard

Center for Contemporary Art
Ancient Bath

FAKE

FAKE

6-th September blvd.

Main Street

Tzar Boris III blvd.

Office Arttoday

Tunnel

9 October 2005, 21:30
Open-Air Screening
Municipality Building

FAKE

Main Street

Plovdiv Scheme

Central Post Office

FAKE

Ivan Vazov str.

Central Station