

Update: Berlin

By kelmayer@gmx.net

After one day of visiting all the galleries for contemporary art around Hamburger Bahnhof on Saturday (Janet Cardiff at Hamburger Bahnhof was breathtaking best show I've seen for years!), I spent Sunday on the Museumsinsel. After walking through the fantastic galleries of Bodemann and then Pergamon-Museum, I was so much pleased with having seen so many high quality exhibits that I knew it might be a bad idea to walk to meet my temporary Kunsthalles Berlin. However, before I was supposed to meet my artist friends for coffee and cake, there was a little time left and I decided to include at least one place of contemporary art in my artistic Sunday schedule. I look it for a good sign that you can find this Kunsthalles without any problem or city map, coming from the Museumsinsel you virtually walk into it. Architecturally it's not a beauty, but being a temporary space this was not something that bothered me. I later heard that the blue and white colour scheme at the outside had been designed by Gervald Rockenschuh and stands for a cloud in the sky, because it's also changing all the time... Oh dear, I should have known this before, because it shows about the intellectual level you get from this project.

Entering the reception I was surprised: nothing looked temporary really, instead a fully equipped bookstore was there, including a little project room (bad, certainly only included in order to get money from local funds) and the reception desk. Neither temporary was the entrance fee: Of course it depends where you live and what prices you are used to pay, but in Berlin 6 Euro is a lot; as a reference I dare mention the Bode Museum again, which costs 8 Euro including an audio guide and so much to see that you can easily spend half a day and more in it. However, it was the last station on my Sunday art trip and I decided not to surrender because of 6 Euro. Being a tourist my pockets were full of little Eurocent coins, so I thought I could get rid of them now. When I counted my collection of fivers and tens and put them onto the desk, I noticed the receptionist's face, looking at me as if I was an extra-terrestrial creature. Berlin has this very particular concept of public services where you are first expected to apologize if you have a question before you are told to find out the answer yourself. So even if I didn't expect a friendly service anymore, I was ever so slightly shocked about this deplorable attitude to small coins – it's money for Gods sake and if you have enough of them you can go and change it into a banknote!!

I went into the exhibition space showing three pieces by Simon Starling. Neither the exhibition space looks really temporary but much more like any Kunsthalles in any place all over the world. I spotted a little door and approached it in order to go into the next space, but when I came closer I noticed a sign announcing a restaurant behind the door. So I had paid 6 Euro for an exhibition space with one room showing three works, by one artist. Him... not very pleasing!

Meeting my artist friends for coffee I asked them about their opinion of Temporary Kunsthalles. They have actually never been there, neither for an opening nor for a show. None of us could find a good reason why this Kunsthalles should be necessary or what it stands for. The concept of being temporary is certainly interesting, but why should it lead to an architecture that doesn't reflect in any sense what a temporary exhibition structure means but instead tries to look exactly the same like any other European Kunsthalles, just by cheaper means? A bookshop that looks the same, a reception that looks the same with prices that are the same: an exhibition hall that is big but not great; and on top of that a restaurant in an area already stuffed with café bars, museum restaurants and whatever other places to have drinks and food.

This is what I meant before with the intellectual level of the place: There is no vision, there is no inspiration, the only thing there seems to be is somebody who wants a Kunsthalles in the very same way as a little girl

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WeAreTheArtists



Top: Text by Oliver Kidmeyer. Photos by Sudi Pasovic. Starring Anna Kateri (Stacey), Celia Katali (Stacey), René Fahmi (Oliver) and Paul Herper (Christina), guest starring Clare Goodwin at the crissled third hand. Photos were shot at the opening of Club N. Ego's show at K3 project space in Zurich on June 20, 2009. Continues on page 2.

Update: Athens

By arandhothcity@hotmail.co.uk

Athens Biennial and Remap2

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We eventually arrive safely though and make our way into the city. Athens is thick with heat and blindingly bright with mid afternoon sun. After finding a hotel, we find a paint shop and a tin of yellow house paint. Armed withing tourist map of Athens, an Athens Biennial map and a Remap2 map we set

wants a sweet at Dunking Demos. Like Simon Starling, but does showing his work - or that of Katharina Grosse or at the moment Allora & Calzadilla, all artists of the first annual programme - really enrich contemporary art discourse in a city like Berlin? There is absolutely nothing daring that I could see, neither from an architectural, nor institutional, nor artistic point of view. Instead Temporary Kunsthalles seems eager to line up with all other existing (non temporary) bluechip places. No risk, no vision, no intellectual stimulation but just a status quo copy of an already existing museum scheme. Has anybody been waiting for this? Does it offer any new perspective of what institutions and initiatives of contemporary art are capable of? Does it reflect temporariness in any kind of way? Unfortunately not.

Update: London

By update_zurich@gmx.net

Watch out! Ex-Gallerist Alex Pollazon was seen at Liste Basel this year. In 2006 he opened a glamorous gallery on Howland Street, Central London. His promising program included quite a few Swiss artists, among them Vida Galdston, Andreas Dohler, David Rongelli and Fabian Marti. After a successful start, the gallery's financial situation got tight by the end of 2007. Nevertheless Pollazon continued his program, but without paying the artists for sold works, abusing the trust people put in him. He got entangled in a mess of lies, becoming a master of delaying tactics. After the liquidation of the company, he disappeared from the scene and walked out of the ball with many issues unresolved. Because of unpaid storage space, some artists are still waiting to get their works back. Since he's showing his face again at art parties, be aware that he might be looking for new contacts. This guy is not only a shame for the art world, but also a crook!



Alexandre Pollazon (left) with a friend (right) at Liste art fair in Basel

Make yourself heard!

Make yourself heard on this page by placing an ad! No matter if you are an artist, a gallery, a museum, a collection or just a sponsor, you are all welcome. You can buy space here in different sizes; contact weatherheart-ls@gmx.net for details. Number 15 of WeAreTheArtists is published with 4000 copies in December 2009; deadline is November 15.

Update: Zurich

By tati_x@gmx.net

Little Red Riding Hood

As I have heard of WeAreTheArtists several times but didn't know what it is, I googled it and came to a text called 'Dinner at Presenhuber'. It's been a long time I haven't had such a laugh! 'Dinner at Presenhuber' must have thought that I had gone nuts or taken some drugs, because there was just too much laughter coming out of the window into the backyard...

It's also because I have a little story myself, a telling example out of this well known art decadence. Presenhuber actually called me once - about 10 years ago - and asked me to write a text for his gallery. I told him I was interested in my work; he wanted me to show her some samples at her gallery in Zurich. But then I was actually totally treated with putting together my big Manor-Prize exhibition and I was working day and night. So I said (imagined): 'Well, basically yes, but now I actually don't have time, so what about later?' Giggling...! However, she said I should contact her again in one or two weeks, I can't remember really. Of course it took much more time in the end, also because after the opening of my show I was busy with working on the catalogue. But I thought: Hey, she's a pro and certainly takes it as a sign of a real artist, if the work is more important than a cheap instant effect kind of fame!

Well thought, but badly done. When I sent her an email, announcing that my show is open and I am ready for a meeting now, I only got a short reply by one of her assistants, telling me that Eva was not around and would get back to me in this matter. Time passed by and finally I decided to join the upcoming opening at the gallery; there I was chatting with the artists of the gallery and was flattered by the assistant who told me how much she had liked my Manor-Prize show. So I thought this is going to be easy: Eva and the assistant must have discussed my show and would both have the same opinion... situation!

So Little Red Riding Hood waited bravely and moved closer to the front of the office rooms, where some orange juice was served (the door was locked as somebody seemed to have an audience there already). Meanwhile the other guests had left the opening, but I was sure that my personal presence would be a nice and welcomed surprise for Eva. The assistant finally came back; a bit confused and very sincere she told me that Mrs Presenhuber had no interest in my work and it would not fit into her gallery concept. So Little Red Riding Hood became Little Shir Riding Hood... Ever so slightly irritated I walked along the street to the train stop. There was something in the air, something very familiar and banal! I still remember it was the summer heat that smelled like gasoline and the asphalt of the streets. This was my world somehow! I shook my head, still wondering at these recent events. It wasn't until much later when I could understand it all: I really had been like the innocent stupid Little Red Riding Hood.

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front of the maze of trails winding through the bushes. I buy a few beers and we watch the men milling around walking back and forth, cruising. There doesn't seem to be much else going on, it's four in the morning and my feet are exhausted so I drag N. away to our hotel room for the night.

The next day we call my friend The History Major and he drives us to the Biennial, the main portion of which is in one of the buildings that was built for the Olympics near the waterfront. There's a lot of very good work - especially video - it's a strong show and we end up spending several hours wandering the labyrinth of spaces. Athanasios Argyrakis stands out for his sculptures which assemble rocks, screen-like drapes and objects together

into sculptures that look like antique physics experiments in sound. Kenneth Auger stands out too, but everyone already knows about him. We have a fight over a double screen projection of a skinny jeans lipster dancing as though he's either drunk or paraplegic, or both. In one screen he's dancing amongst shrouded with a wheel chair in the background. In the other he's dancing in what looks like a small East London gay club. Both dances are synchronized and drunken but beautifully choreographed in a quasi-disco kind of way. I love the landscape and disco thing happening but can do without the wheelchair overkill. N. thinks its pretentious and I suppose I agree now in hindsight but I still love it and wish I would've made it myself.

That night we head to an opening of a new huge four-story gallery, whose name I can't remember. There's a massive Steven Shaeer text piece on the side of the building and the show inside is a mix of painting and sculpture created by someone that everyone feels the need to tell us is from New York.

There's a party raging on the top floor of the gallery by the time we get there but it's already run out of booze. After a bit of a search we find a forgotten half full bottle rum, some plastic cups and go for a walk around the space. We run into a few, some Londoners and the music is great but everyone is drunk. We're not so we enjoy the view on the huge third floor balcony instead, then head down into the gallery to look at the work. I honestly can't remember any of it except for the wall piece outside.

The thought of coming to Greece and not swimming in the sea is really bothering me, so the next day The Art History Major drives us down to the coast to get some much needed fresh air and open space. I can't help but question why I come on these biennial - triennial - quadrennial - art fairs things? I'm tired from chasing and looking at art and grumpy from lack of sleep. I always end up wishing I spent more time on the beach, in the park or just enjoying good food and drink instead of slapping all over the city, exhausted and getting lost looking for interesting art.

The water here is turquoise blue, and the sun is brighter than anything I've ever experienced in London. I'm surrounded by half naked people frolicking together, not to mention the company of my dear friends N. and The Art History Major. We have a picnic on the beach trying not to let the strong wind and blowing sand bother us too much, and when we leave we forget to leave a yellow X.

Back in London, the only thing I regret not being able to see was the Mathew Barney performance, which happened on the island of Hydra the day we were meant to arrive in Athens at sunrise and sunset. But I'm beginning to regret it only because it meant travelling to a Greek island to surprise and amuse. I wonder if the yellow X's will last and if any other art tourists will see them and wonder what they were about and why they kept appearing in galleries and on the way to other galleries. At times the project seemed utterly pointless in a city completely tagged with random graffiti. Then it also seemed important to have something small and insignificant that might only be noticed by a few eyes. Traveling to Athens to see the Biennial and Remap2 was in a way a work vacation but as N. and I left those repeated marks and documented where we were and what we saw onto our own map, we increasingly felt like Hanel and Gretel leaving clues to those who might follow in our footsteps and want something more than art. It felt like a defiant gesture against art tourism - however small and insignificant.

N. and I spend a few hours together at the copy store making our Athens intervention into a cohesive visual document that maps our 48 hour whirlwind into a picture diary and map. We call it 'In Case We Get Lost' and we send it out to galleries, curators and to our friends via email and facebook and we talk about doing it all over again for Venice, for Istanbul... for Prague.

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And it's me who organises everything all the time! And it's me who's got the strong arm we use to paint with! I really think we should split up, I want my own career, and I want my own massive solo show.



5

Haha! You and a solo show! If it weren't so funny it'd be tragic, really. If we separate, it's certainly me who's gonna have a big solo first. Stacey solo, haha...

2

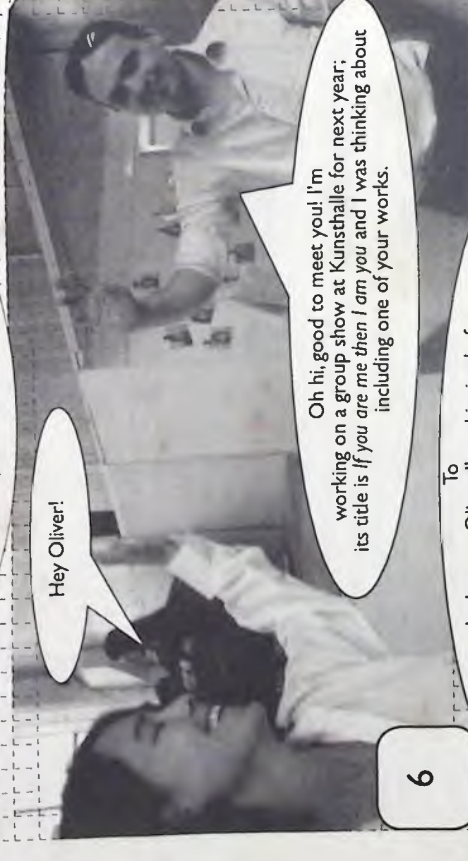
You can't be serious. Without me you'd be nothing, either in life or in art! It's me who always has the good ideas! And I'm the one with all the contacts!

3

Oh why don't you just shut the fuck up! I'm fed up with you nagging me all the time; yes, we may be an artist couple, but my personal life is none of your business!

4

Hey Oliver!



6

Oh hi, good to meet you! I'm working on a group show at Kunsthalle for next year, its title is *If you are me then I am you* and I was thinking about including one of your works.

7

To be honest, Oliver, I'm a bit tired of showing my work in group shows at the moment. I'm even tired of showing as an artist couple with Tracey all the time. I think it's definitely time for a big solo; would you give me a solo?

10

But as soon as I get rid of Stacey my work's going to explode! It's gonna be free from the lethal influence of this dull and uncreative parasite!

Well, first of all, I think the title's totally shit; I mean, practically anything could be in a show with a title like that.

Actually I wasn't asking for your opinion regarding the show's title; I just wanted to know if you would be interested in showing one of your works in it. To be more precise, I was thinking of the series of drawings you and Stacey did together called *I'm a good girl, I'm a bad girl*.

Don't take her seriously, I think she's still a bit dizzy from all the alcohol in her brain. The real question is: would you give me a solo?

Well to be frank, I really don't think that your body of work is substantial enough at this stage to warrant a solo show. Not even as an artist couple. No offence, but I think some of your pieces are very good and fit very well into certain thematic contexts, but some others are really mediocre. So all together your oeuvre is just... uh... let's say fine; and that's not good enough for a solo.

11

It'll more likely implode.

9

8

12

Well I think you have to sort this out between yourselves first. I know that you're hip somehow, but it's certainly not because of your breathtaking artwork, it's more because you are... uh... special.

What do you mean we're special?

13

14

Hi there!

Hello Christian.

Hey Christian, how's it going?

Fine thanks! It's so amazing how many invitations I get to big shows since I've become a Muslim... It seems like it's totally hip to be Muslim now; not only am I in group shows in the best museums all over the world but also I'm finally getting offered massive solos! And you?

15

Well, the twins are really driving me nuts here. I've already lost the plot. Stacey & Tracey want a solo show, but I refuse to give them one; at the same time they want to give separate and then each have a solo show; meaning two solos; or something like that.

16

17



I'm really sorry, but a solo show only makes sense if an artist has a body of work that is a real contribution to the contemporary art discourse. Sometimes it's also important to wait until some outside factors are favourable, like a relationship with a good gallery for example. But Tracey & Stacey work with a second rate gallery that has no international flavour or range at all! From my point of view their work is a) not amazing enough and b) lacking any strategic reason to be presented in a solo show.

19



Well girls, take a piece of advice from me and just forget about your hip operation. If you become two independent artists you'll certainly be far from hip. No offence, but at the moment you're fucking freaks, and the art world likes freaks!

22



With Stacey you may be right, as an independent artist she'd be forgotten within a few days!

23



Not if I produced a video about our hip operation!

It seemed hip enough a minute ago when you were begging me for a solo show there...

24



You can stick your solo show where the sun doesn't shine! I'm off.

25



But I'm not! If Tracey doesn't want the solo anymore, let me do one!

18



But who's responsible for all this misery? It's you, only you! Being in the jury for the art award and not giving it to us! If we'd have got this award we could have already been separated by now! We could have finally paid for the hip operation and I would have been perfectly able to do my own solo show!

20



It's really unfair, but life in general's unfair so why should it be different in art? You certainly can't complain, because you're not being treated unfairly but belong to the happy few who are known and shown. And who really cares if it's just because you're Siamese twins?

21



Exactly! I think that's one of the reasons why they're doing fine in the art world; it's not because of the unique quality of their work but because they're so - uh - eye-catching. If they were ugly overweight women, nobody would even know they produce art! There are a lot of artists in international shows for a lot of reasons besides the quality of their work. There's something like an average level consisting of very good artists, but the reason why these artists are known is because they know the right people or fit into a certain socio-political discourse. And sometimes it's just because they're very good-looking, special in whatever sense or because they are simply lucky. At the same time there's at least the same amount of artists with the same artistic qualities but for reasons of - let's call it bad luck, they are not part of the international art world.

I'm sick

of your openly aggressive and offensive behaviour! I refuse to cooperate with you on any project whatsoever. I cannot believe how disrespectfully you treat us artists... And this, coming from such a mediocre curator like yourself stuck at your shitty, little, provincial, long way from hip Kunsthal!

Weeks then.

However, to come back to my first and only question: Would you contribute I'm a good girl, I'm a bad girl to my show, yes or no?

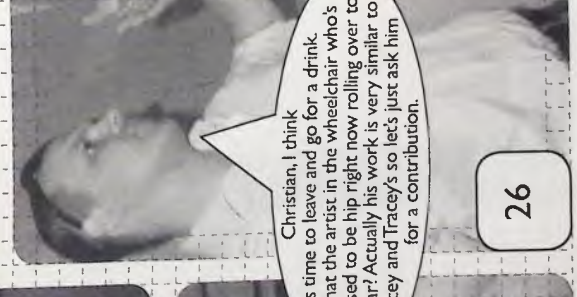
Oliver, you're fabulous!

Thanks, I know.

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Christian, I think it's time to leave and go for a drink. Isn't that the artist in the wheelchair who's supposed to be hip right now rolling over to the bar? Actually his work is very similar to Stacey and Tracey's so let's just ask him for a contribution.