

Normalization 4 - *That from a long way off look like flies*

Daniel Bozhkov's *DARTH VADER TRIES TO CLEAN THE BLACK SEA WITH BRITA FILTER* (2000) is the record of a performance by the artist on the Black Sea coast, in the town of Burgas, Bulgaria. Posing in the costume of the Star Wars anti-hero performing a noble but impractical ecological intervention, the image is a statement of hope even in the knowledge of inevitable failure.

"Daniel Bozhkov is a Bulgarian-born conceptual artist whose work has involved assuming a variety of roles and engaging professionals in diverse fields. Positioning himself as an intruder/visitor/amateur, he seeks to introduce new strains of meaning into seemingly closed systems. [In *Darth Vader Tries to Clean the Black Sea with Brita Filter* (2000), Bozhkov posed as the Star Wars anti-hero in a noble but impractical ecological intervention.] In *Training in Assertive Hospitality* (2001), Bozhkov took a training course and worked as a People Greeter at a Wal-Mart in Skowhegan, Maine. In between shifts, he painted a fresco in the layaway department of the store. Later on, the fresco was half-obsured with Wal-Mart merchandise: artificial trees, reclining chairs and Duracell battery packs. The artist continued working as a People Greeter and painting the places he could reach between the merchandise. In 2002, Bozhkov created a 300ft x 250ft crop circle portrait of CNN host Larry King in a farm field, and took flying lessons in order to photograph his work from the air. He timed the piece, *Learn to Fly Over a Very Large Larry*, to coincide with the release of the Hollywood film "Signs." Most recently, Bozhkov has organized walking tours of cities that are unfamiliar to him. Posing as a local expert, but with the curiosity of a foreigner, he invites tour-takers to take a fresh look at their surroundings." Julia Dzwonkoski

Daniel Bozhko is based in New York.

On the Wing (1999) documents a series of playful texts stencilled on the wings of LUXAIR airplanes by **Nedko Solakov**. A distraction for Solakov's fear of flying and for other passengers, each text preludes a larger narrative, offering a means of escape and a way to gaze beyond the immediate reality: *Dear passenger, somewhere down over there, behind the second mountain, on the left bank of a tiny river, is a little hill. In that little hill there is a little hole and in that little hole lives a little mole. Frankly, she would love to be in your place right now - almost 10,000 meters above the ground..*

"Nedko Solakov is widely known for his witty installations/narratives, full of masterfully executed details. These involve the media of painting and drawing, the object, the text, multimedia. They rely on spatial arrangements and have lately ventured for realization in public spaces. His stories often incorporate, and are motivated by, easily identifiable truisms, while following their own clear narrative. In Solakov's works truisms about faith, the entirety of the artwork, the function of art, the place of the artist in today's world and the great expectations defining it, are intertwined, transforming and invading the works from within while constructing ironical and self-ironical messages. The discovery and the recognition of such truisms by the viewer construct quite specific and intimate relationships between the artist and his audience." Iara Boubnova

Nedko Solakov (1957, Cherven Briag) lives and works in Sofia.

With "The Invisibles" (2005) **Lala Rascic** has created a family story of alienation. Undertitled as "A rehearsal for an audio drama" the video shows

the artist in a sound-studio like situation surrounded by two microphones. Switching the mics as well as her voice she's acting the story-script by herself swoping from character to character, from the invisible family members to the "normal" people.

The idea of invisibility has always played an important role in human history as back as we look for it. In the tradition of science fiction literature, it focuses itself on the individual condition of invisibility. The artist is playing with the fantastic elements of science fiction but at the same time as science fiction also does, is deeply identified and simultaneously opposed to real time and space life.

The phenomenon of invisibility serves as a foil for the issue of otherness both with its disadvantages and advantages. In the context of society and social interaction, invisibility can either be applied as an obligation or it can be subjectively chosen. In Rascic's video performance the invisible family reflects the community system: both invisible and visible. In terms of recognition the invisibles are rejected both by civil and legal structures. The process of their legitimation becomes a troublesome journey within the bureaucratic system, which is arbitrary.

The disability to see each other interferes with the idea of community that becomes visual as well as fractal.

Lala Rascic (1977 Sarajevo, based in Amsterdam) is currently on residence with Platform's Istanbul Residency program supported by the American Center Foundation.

In the video *Sample City* (2003) **Calin Dan** expresses another/the experience of estrangement brought on by rapid transformation of Bucharest. Impersonating a Romanian folk character and carrying a door on his back, Dan explores the multi-layered reality of the Bucharest cityscape, using as a guiding agent the contemporary impersonation of a character from an old Romanian folk tale. Sort of Balkan Tjil Uilenspiegel, he is carrying a door on his back, becoming thus a migrant architecture endlessly wandering through the city.

The original sound track is a club mix of various subcultures, from Gypsy *lăutar* (peasant migrating into *café concert*) orchestra, to *manele* (urban folklore with Oriental influences), to local hip-hop and drum-'n-base.

"The image of the Sisyphic fool haunted me from the childhood, incomprehensible and so powerful that in every house I inhabited during a nomadic existence I was looking for the disposable door that I could carry around, in order to understand that feeling of (supposedly) alienation and displacement. After giving away my last Bucharest home (leaving in the balcony a door prepared for the big ordeal), my commitment faded out slowly, till reaching the reasonable conclusion that I should delegate the experience to somebody who can handle it more elegantly, and without trauma." (Călin Dan)

As theorist and artist Calin Dan (1955, based in Amsterdam and Bucharest) works independently and in the artist group subReal, that he co-founded in 1990.

The ethereal drawings and sculptures by **Elmas Deniz** propose an entire disengagement with reality, moulded together by a series of micro-environmental misunderstandings. Through aesthetical and thematical

references to literature, philosophy and scientific experiments she creates an encyclopedia of her own microcosm.

The drawing series "Unrealized Journey" (2004) blurs the gap between fiction and reality, like in a travel itinerary the motives seem to be sketched from real life. Ranging between the micro and the macro the subtle/detailed drawings show bees, landscapes, castles or astronauts freely floating in the space.

The sculptural work "Bean" (2004), a 4,50 meter high plant with huge leaves made of white paper that whirls around a fragile stem, evokes references to the scientific experiments of Johann Gregor Mendel, as well as to fantastic fairy tales. Climbing up on a giant, magic beanstalk Jack discovers a mystical world above the clouds with man-eating ogres, a hen that lays the golden eggs and a singing harp. The notions on biological principles of genetic heredity and the imaginative power of fantasy are interwoven in a fragile but steady structure.

Deniz' Oeuvre resembles a kind of Cabinet of Curiosities with scientific paths and experimental descriptions like the scheme on "Polar Stratospheric Clouds" (2002) drawn on textile, artifacts as her series of found objects (2003), putatively preserved insects (Larva, 2002) and a series of sketches and drawings. Time becomes significant, as it seems in most of her works frozen as her objects become eternal through the use of specific material.

Elmas Deniz (born 1981) lives and works in Izmir, where she co-founded the artists' initiatives Kutu and K2.

Returning A Sound (2004) by **Allora and Calzadilla** is an exploration of the real island Vieques on which the artists continually focussed with a series of works.

Vieques is an island off the mainland of Puerto Rico that has been used by the U.S Military and NATO forces to practice bombing exercises for some sixty years.

The first piece *Land Mark (Foot Prints)*, 2001-2002, was directly linked to the widely and heterogene protest movement in Vieques. One strategy of protesting in order to disturb the bombing was to enter the area in which military had infrared sensors to detect body heat. If someone got in by law the bombing had to stop. Allora and Calzadilla collaborated with various activist groups and designed rubber soles that protesters could attach to their shoes to leave an index or a trace in the sand when entering the area. Each sole featured critical images and short messages composed by the protesters.

After these huge protests of the civil-disobedience movement, the bombing finally stopped in May 2003 and the land was opened to the public for the first time. This process of demilitarization, decontamination, and future development are brought to attention in *Returning A Sound*, 2004, by a motorcycle driver who moves through the island, the muffler on his bike replaced by a trumpet to produce a loud resounding call. Vieques' is in a period of transition between destruction and recovery.

Nowadays Vieques is a wildlife resort run by the US Department of the Interior but there are still open questions concerning the long time damages: When is it going to be cleaned up? What will happen to the people made sick by it's contamination? With the currently ongoing video project *Under Discussion*, 2005, Allora and Calzadilla are focussing on these questions. In the video the son of a fisherman who was a leader of the civil-disobedience movement in the '70s will drive with a conference table that is turned upside down, attached with a motor and launched in the water, to all the places who's future is under discussion now. This piece will be shown at the Venice Biennale this summer.

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla (currently living in San Juan, Puerto Rico) have been jointly creating complex conceptual works of art steeped in history, politics, science, and even economics for the past nine years.

Aslı Cavusoglu's fictional islands are formed by intrinsic modes of evolution, reliant on invented strategies of ownership their unrecognized state reflecting real geographic situations, as much as those imaginatively composed.

Even though islands are defined by natural borders, they are subjected to the arbitrarily constructed borders of any kind. In her work, the artist deals with themes of constructed and questioned national, linguistic and domestic closed geographical standards.

For "Kofferland" she developed the basics of another language system called *Water language*. She refers to historical matters, mentioning a famous poet who was writing in this language and whose work has been translated into English and Portuguese.

In her world cartography there also exists the "Parlevüfranse Island" which is situated in the sea between France and England, where the power structures collide with the island belonging to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the one country and the Ministry of External Affairs for the other. The language problem and its reflection on the inhabitants is obviously shown with the example of a famous actor coming from there. The phenomenon that certain islands are floating whereas some are static in-between internal or external politics verifies the absurdity of territorial belongings.

In human history islands have always been places of utopic reflections. The notion of the island being surrounded by the sea, can be applied to any kind of nationaly or linguistically constructed community. These islands can be found anywhere.

Aslı Cavusoglu (1982, Istanbul) studies Cinema-TV at the Marmara University, Istanbul.

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Moreover, their works are deeply intertwined with the context in which they are created and/or exhibited. It is as if the artists consider their works inextricably bound to "place" as a social and historical signifier. Whether "place" is defined in terms of geography, or even in terms of time, its importance in each work adds layers of meaning to what in some cases, may be a simple object such as a bell, a palm tree or a carpet. Extending the collaborative nature of their art-making process, this artist duo more than often offers their works up for social interaction. This engagement with the public evolves as a natural progression of their process of production."

From: Silvia Karman Cubina: Allora & Calzadilla's *Floors*". In: ArtNexus

"My general approach is to refuse is that things are clear and they can be explained which also means that for each artistic outcome of mine, I have an opposite idea. That's why any explanation can cover all of my works. I can talk working method rather than one starting point. I have a couple of levels. First is to work with the symbols I merge in the works. They are so uninteractive with the viewer so they can hardly be realized. I use the term "merging" since I keep the story for myself. I try to establish a structure fed by me that I strongly hide. This emotional relation I establish is based on my personal experiences and the information I hide. My absence on the final phase is propulsive power and a real tension for me.

The second is not a single source. but books, philosophy, old scientific experiments, encyclopedia, myself with a romantic escape dreams... I chose images or stories which have their metaphor in their own. And I use them for to hide additive of my real narrative. With this invisible layer I can lock in myself.

Though I establish personal interrelationship among my works form wise they do not look alike. Since I do not try to establish a style and language and I consciously avoid this, I prefer I take each work of mine a different method and narrative. Time to time I do try to break my own line in order not to establish a personal style or line. I like to take risks and to deepen them. This is my greatest aim." Elmas Deniz

Shared understanding turns them into fast friends. It is the relation to the viewer and the mutual expectations saturating the exhibition space which have most recently attracted Solakov, both emerging as important narrative trends in his installations. The visitors in his "A (not so) White Cube" (2001) in P.S.1 in New York, or "Chat" (2001) in IASPIS Gallery in Stockholm, or "(about) Fourteen" (2002) discreetly spread all over the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, peer into window panes and stretch their necks, they crawl under a staircase and crouch by the wall, almost lying down on the floor in order to read the texts or to see the miniature drawings. In "A High Level Show with a Catalogue" (2002) in CCA, Kitakyushu, Japan the public is first sent on a search in a specially produced catalogue featuring close-ups of the texts in order to better recognize the small stories on the floor or at 4,5 m height. The viewer complements and completes the work by becoming a real participant, either by his/her own wish or by "force". I am not sure whether such a directing/motivation/manipulation and even coercion of the viewer re-confirms or refutes the truism about the traditional mutually respectful expectations of artist and viewer. However, the works from the cycle Insolent Art are engaged with precisely that. The first one was realized in 2000 in Regina Gallery, Moscow where on a large wall lighted by a single spot light there was the following text: "You, viewer, are part of an audience, which (especially on New Year's Eve) is not so important to my

career, therefore, it is not appropriate for me to exhibit something more substantial here." The second one is to be shown in Kassel within the show "In den Schluchten des Balkan". It questions the touristic nature of these relations while insisting that they should be reevaluated over and over again."boubnova about solakov