

ATLANTIS

Hidden Histories – New Identities

Traces, Histories and new Identities on the Borderlines after 20 Years.



Exhibiting artists:

Peter Barényi, András Csefálvay, Anton Čierny, Eja Devečková, Tomáš Džadoň, Andrea Kalinová, Radko Mačuha, Štefan Papčo

Special guests: Christoph Höschele and Kai Kaspar

Curators: Ivana Madariová and Katarína Slaninová

Venue: Open Gallery, Baštová 5, Bratislava

Private preview: 30 July 2009, 6pm

Exhibition runs: 31 July – 30 August 2009

Opening hours: Wed - Sun, 12 – 6pm

The international project **ATLANTIS** thematizes an issue of transformation of the European countries after the year 1989 and via artistic outputs reflects political as well as social changes occurring after this year. Confronting the opinions of artists and professionals coming from former Eastern and Western Europe ATLANTIS enables to perceive this period from various perspectives and provides diverse ways of perceiving and understanding this transitional period.

The main idea of the project uniting the partners from Germany, Greece, Bulgaria and Slovakia is a mythical country sunken in the ocean that stood as a model for an allegorical example of the ideal state in the discourse about egalitarian or elitist ideas of society between the philosophers Plato, Sokrates and Aristotle. 20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain the mythical Atlantis gains a new meaning. The Fall of the Curtain is the fall of one of the political systems – socialism and right now in the time of celebration of this event, during the financial crisis also the other political system – democracy is being examined.

The Atlantis project should be a symbol for all utopias about the ideal state. Therefore we have chosen it as a title of the project which by means of artistic approaches and research wants to broaden our knowledge about last 20 years in the development of the Central European region. The methods of artistic approach and exploration, adaptation and development will deepen the view of the past history in the way politics can never name. The project will be a dialogue between artists coming from the former authoritarian Eastern Europe /participants from Slovakia, Bulgaria/ and the former democratically constituted Western Europe /participants from Germany, Greece, Austria/. This dialogue will promote the European identity formation and support the European Constitution process. The core of the project create site specific works based and realised in the borderline areas with a very peculiar atmosphere, in so called no man`s land as well as works committed directly for the gallery space reflecting an issue of political, social transformation and socialism itself.

Time line of the project follows historical milestones when particular activities for the public were organized. The journey of hidden identities has commenced in Germany at the romantic castle Sacrow which once served as a place for exchanging the secret agents between Eastern and Western Germany and the Berlin Wall went through its park. Here the first of the series of exhibitions takes place. Symbolism of similar borderline areas will be followed also by other projects in the participating countries – Slovakia – Austria – Hungary, Italy and Slovenia (Gorzica and New Gorzica), Bulgaria and Greece (Plodiv and Thessaloniki). It is important to capture the particularities of the specific local situations.

In its original conception the project should have been realized on the borderlines of all the countries of the former „East Bloc“. In its final version it will take part only on the borderline between Bulgaria and Greece, Eastern and Western Germany. The Slovak exhibition through some of the art works addresses a borderline in general but deals with specific borders and national identities.

Slovak artists participating in the ATLANTIS project:

Peter Barény | Eja Devečková

Tangerines, nstallation, 2009

The artists address the era od socialism in Slovakia and consumption habits of its inhabitants. As most of the participating artists also they experienced this period only as children and one of their strongest memories is an exclusive aroma of tangerines. Tangerines as a commodity, delivered during Christmas only in limited quantity, not onbly due to its ripening period, stand for the artists as a synonym of unfunctioning economic system as toilet paper in Poland or sugar in Russia. „We both associate tangerines and their aroma with the Christmas and the impossibility to buy them any other time and in bigger quantity /what we didn`t realise then as it was a status quo/.“ Symptomatically the production of the exhibition in the middle of summer became the same nightmare as shopping for tangerines 20 yeras ago. „In the context of the exhibition the installation looks back to the times of communism and plays with an impossibility to buy anything. On the other hand it also reflects a currant situation when, plainly said, redundancy becomes a new impossibility...Thus many of poor tangerines are rotting somewhere in the corner.“

András Cséfalvay

Songs for Her, a Collection, installation, 2009

András Cséfalvay`s work focuses on the identity of a man stigmatized by an ideologically constructed opinion on nationality in the era of communism. His family belongs to Bratislava inhabitants of Hungarian origin who in the period of communism were forced to adjust from multicultural to dictated identity of a nation living for the better future. This may be a reason for the artist`s national „uprooting“ when the author more easily identifies himself with the Nordic countries than with his own environment. Cséfalvay`s installation Songs for Her, a Collection „is a model of a studio desk with papers, letters, quotations and thoughts on its top. Thematically they reflect the identity of a Nordic man (Idea of the North and anima nordensis). I partly explain, partly mystify my own attitude; sentimental, maybe even infantile idealism.“

Anton Čierny

Border Series III., Organela

In his work Anton Čierny has been addressing an issue of borders for a longer time. Noteworthy was a workshop organised for his students on the Slovak-Ukrainian borders, in the area undergoing a permanent transformation. For the Atlantis project, a week before the opening, he created the action during which he symbolically appropriated a part of a land on the borders of Slovakia and Hungary creating a mythical Atlantis. The action consisted of a small happening where during an amicable meeting the land was changed and cultivated. The participants were able to mow a part of their own Atlantis. The documentation of the project was accompanied by a ballooning. The exhibition presents video documentation of the action.

Tomáš Džadoň

The Tamed block of flats, object, 2009

The tamed block of flats as well as majority of Tomáš Džadoň`s objects, spatial installations and concepts reflects a process of uprooting from the original environment of a traditional folk culture which was violently pushed away by sterile socialist architecture of blocks of flats. In Džadoň`s understanding the tamed block of flats becomes a gesture – overcoming this trauma prevailing mostly in the memories of the older generation. It is a materialization of his effort to deal with an unwanted heritage of socialism and accept it as a legitimate part of the identity of a young man from a postcommunist country. Džadoň does not approach this period in a pathetic way, neither criticise it. He strives to handle this phenomenon objectively and incorporate it into a current collective memory.

Andrea Kalinová

The guards on the Danube river, double slide projection, 2009

„The work Guards on the Danube river consists of a double slide projection presenting parts of texts from a book „The guards on the Danube river“ from edition Our army that tells the stories from the life of border guards. Selected extracts present two contradictory views on propagandistic literature for children before the year 1989. The texts are selected by means of a literary recycling. „I kept a form of a book selecting the most significant parts.“ The author`s attention was caught by propagandist texts combined with trivial stories. She chooses parts of the book reflecting contemporary rhetoric ranging from using content and idealizing and radical agitation. Selective work with a text also emphasizes distorted perception of borders, work and life of border guards.

Radko Mačuha

Fragile, paintings on boards, 2009

Export Import, object, 2009

In his work Radko Mačuha continuously addresses the identity of Slovakia. For the Atlantis exhibition he prepared a series of works dealing with a portrait of Slovakia and its relations to the neighbouring countries. In two panel paintings FRAGILE with a hint of irony and humour he tries to capture fragile Slovak and Hungarian relations as well as our attitude towards the Czech republic, accompanied by a constant need to compete and surpass our once „better and more successful brother“ in the economic as well as cultural field. In the object EXPORT IMPORT he searches for particular characteristics of the young Slovak republic: „The object consists of EURO palette as a symbol of supernational trade (the Tatras` tiger) that is changed into the Slovak flag, tricolour. The double cross is captured as a railing of the public transport stop cut and refuted from the ground.“ Mačuha`s works consciously deal with the national symbols and generally known and understood signs. Formally they intentionally do not avoid „straightforward pop art-like character“, almost „naive“ simplicity and descriptiveness making his works be understandable for the wider public without losing the deeper meaning.

Štefan Papčo

United Mountaines, object, 2009

„ In the period before 1989 for a certain group of people mountain climbing offered an approachable platform of self-realization and opportunity to cross political restrictions. In the 70`s and 80`s the High Tatras were visited by many mountain climbers who were intensively practicing and climbing trying to get into the national representation. Every year the representative team went for a winter and summer training in the Alps. In the 70`s during one season a coach of Czechs and Slovaks climbed up and down more tracks than the rest of the world.

In that period the mountains were the space resistant against political and social restrictions. They had their own rules which were independent and the same everywhere a man went. The only criterion for a perfect functioning were experiences, technical and physical conditions of an individual.

The concept of the United Mountains ignores the urban and any other inhabited spaces. It is a selection of selected (in terms of climbing) European mountain ranges put together into one country with a specific model of rules. It draws the attention to a value and an inner potential of alpine environment.

Christoph Höschele a Kai Kaspar

Gränzenkickerl, video documentation of action, 2009

Two years ago on the border crossing Petržalka/Berg the artistic duo created a unique action consisting of a football match between Austrian and Slovak artists and curators. Symbolically the pitch had its middle line placed on the borderline and throughout the match the identity of players was checked by “customs officers”. The exhibition features a documentation of this action.

International partners:

Germany, Potsdam – Heinrich Böll Stiftung Brandenburg, www.boell.de

Germany, Potsdam – Rohkunstbau, www.rohkunstbau.de

Greece, Thessaloniki – ArtBOX.gr, www.artbox.gr

Bulgaria, Plovdiv – Art Today Asociacion, center for contemporary art, www.arttoday.org

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