

Inside Job (Ula Lucińska / Michał Knychaus)

Inside Job / Ula Lucińska (b. 1992) and Michał Knychaus (b. 1987) work together as The Inside Job duo. Their practice is based on the use of different mediums and materials, which often leads to the creation of specific, multi-layered environments.

They focus on the processes of how identities are being constructed, including the identities of places, within the context of dynamic changes such as: climate crisis, technological acceleration, political shifts and growing anxiety towards the unknown future. Many of their projects refer to futuristic and post-catastrophic scenarios. Combining experiences from various fields, they develop their practice not only in the field of visual art, but also as active researchers.

They presented works during art residencies (FUTURA Center for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czechia; Residency Gurzelen, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland; TestDrive at DriveDrive, Nicosia, Cyprus; Kulturfabrik, Burgdorf, Switzerland), at individual exhibitions (e.g. CAVE Gallery, Wrocław, Poland; Pawilon, Poznań, Poland; :SKALA, Poznań, Poland; 9/10 Gallery, Poznań, Poland; Hot Wheels Projects, Athens, Greece) and collective (e.g. *Body. Gaze. Power. A Cultural History of the Bath*, Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany; *Cała Polska*, BWA Wrocław, Poland; TRAF0 – Trafostacja Sztuki, Szczecin, Poland; *The Death of Man*, Warsaw Gallery Weekend, Poland; WallRiss, Fribourg, Switzerland; Sattlekammer, Bern, Switzerland; Athens Digital Arts Festival 2018, Athens, Greece; DuflonRacz, Bern, Switzerland; Ostrale Biennale of Contemporary Arts, Dresden, Germany; Musrara Mix Festival, Jerusalem, Israel; Callegenera Festival, Monterrey, Mexico).

Current Site-specific **Strategies towards** **Institutional Gallery Spaces**

The text is an analysis of the very latest site-specific activities in the visual arts. Selected practices are considered as an update of the current understanding of this field of art. A review of such activities (over the past few years) is supplemented by outlining their immediate contexts. The examples discussed are related to the intercepting/negation/processing of existing structures and the construction of a new kind of “place”, by evoking in the viewers a sense of “dislocation”. Real spaces are then replaced in this sense by floating, virtual territories that deliberately cut themselves off from their originals. Thus, such artistic actions lead to the definition of a specific, new kind of “non-place”. They are an escape and a quest for such locations, a challenge for both the artists themselves and the audiences. Equally appreciated are temporal projects, focused on a specific moment and situation, which are a kind of speculative game between audiences, artworks and artists.

The first part of the text, focused around the above category of “dislocation”, deals with artistic practices which, still embedded in institutional reality and gallery spaces, begin to evoke in viewers a symbolic impression of displacement. These practices, e.g. through the use of dense smoke, are close to transgressive mystical traditions, in which such smoke was supposed to cut off the participants of the ritual from a specific reality and shift them into the in-between zone. The examples discussed include the *Mademoiselle X* performance by Maria Metsalu, shown during the Les Urbaines Festival in the Arsenic Centre for the Performing Arts, Lausanne (2018) and the installations such as Laure Prouvost’s *A Way To Leak, Lick, Leek* and Dora Budor’s *Preserving Machine*, displayed during the 13th Baltic Triennale in Vilnius (2018). Dora Budor and the video of the Young Boy Dancing Group collective *Fortress Europa* (2018), through overt references to the postapocalyptic narratives, explore “nobody’s” spaces, the left-over ones, related to a hypothetical disaster that occur-

red in the past. This evocation of the speculative images of the vanishing landscape refers to another important category in the text, namely the relocation to new, imagined territories.

The use of the categories of dislocation and relocation, preparing a particular kind of space, as well as physical movement, are more and more frequent artistic strategies that express a specific worldview that contests the existing reality. Obviously, this is not a new trend, yet given that such turns are primarily associated with “mediation of broader cultural, social, economic and political processes organizing life”¹, the current dimension of such activities is a significant update of the understanding of site-specific art.

The second part of the text takes into account the practices of transcending easily accessible locations. The text addresses the attendant methods of mediation, distribution, presentation, and documentation of the image of the action, and thus of a new understanding of the relationship between the viewer/receiver/user and the author. The forms of distribution of photo-video documentation, based on the online circulation of images, make it possible to consider the environment – captured even by momentary interventions in specific places (difficult to see/get, etc.) – as an integral part of the described actions, and thus to extend the work itself by the value of what has previously been the background (the white wall).

In this part, we write, among others, about the exhibitions of the duo Grégoire Blunt and Emma Skensved and the New Scenario collective. Their shows are a clear development of the exploratory tendency resulting from the influence of the previously mentioned categories. These are exhibitions that creatively adapt man-made places and those based on visiting and planning exhibitions in natural locations. These, in turn, are often difficult to access due to weather conditions, being located away from urban centres or other fixed or variable factors independent of the artists. It can be assumed that environmental exploration is also a kind of “wandering” to places where nature still dominates and which may soon turn out to be inaccessible due to inevitable human interference, including accelerating climate change. Interestingly, the exploratory strategies, aimed at locations that are for various reasons often difficult to access are the readings of places outside the dominant narratives. They are thus a critique of authority, which embeds forms of existence of places in authoritarian contexts.

Establishing new connections between a place and an artistic activity is confronted in the text with the notion of *xeno-space* as understood by

» 1 M. Kwon, *One place after another. Site-specific art and locational identity*, The MIT Press, London, p. 3, [after:] E. Urwanowicz-Rojecka, *From site-specific to participatory art. Socially engaged art – an overview of contemporary theories and artistic practices*, „Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne”, 2015, Vol. XXVI, p. 32-33.

by the curatorial and research team of Lietje Bauwens, Wouter De Raeve and Alice Haddad. The prefix “xeno” defines here new paths of marking out space and building a practice capable of speculating on the future. The collective of researchers not only sees the political potential in such activities, but even postulates the necessity of constructing and discussing them. “In the face of persistent impasses—from environmental disasters to the politics of austerity and exclusion—our current cognitive and sensory scope seems insufficient; what is needed is a reorientation that turns away from «what is» towards «what could be» in order to speculate about new constructions that may function as a collective horizon”².

But the point is not to attribute to the above actions the power to further a political or ideological breakthrough. The observed, exploratory trend in visual arts, however, is a kind of *Gedankenexperiment*, a puzzle, a hypothetical scenario that opens up the possibility of constantly shifting the definition of the environment that surrounds us, which, as probably never before, is subject to power relations. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether, in the perspective of the pursuit of new forms of participation, the drive for innovation and progressiveness of artistic strategies is in opposition to or rather in the service of a world that accelerates and gets altered through the allied forces of globalization, digitalization and commodification. ●

» 2 *Perhaps it is high time for a xeno – architecture (of knowing) to match*, <http://www.perhapsitishightimeforaxenoarchitecturetomatch.org> [access: 21.04.2020], por. L. Bauwens, *Accounting for Xeno. (How) Can Speculative Knowledge Productions Actually Produce New Knowledges?* [in:] *The Future of the New. Artistic Innovation in Times of Social Acceleration*, ed. T. Lijster, Valiz, Amsterdam 2018, p. 100-110.