

MONUMENT TO TRANS- FORMATION

EXHIBITION, BOOK, ACCOMPANYING EXHIBITION,
FILM SCREENINGS, CONFERENCE

CITY GALLERY PRAGUE, MĚSTSKÁ KNIHOVNA
(MUNICIPAL LIBRARY), VALENTINSKÁ 1, PRAGUE 1
28th MAY – 30th AUGUST, 2009

THE EXHIBITION IS ORGANIZED BY TRANZIT
AND CITY GALLERY PRAGUE

GENERAL PARTNER
OF THE EXHIBITION AND BOOK:
ERSTE STIFTUNG

MAIN MEDIA PARTNER:
ČESKÁ TELEVIZE (CZECH TELEVISION)

WWW.MONUMENTTOTRANSFORMATION.ORG

The exhibition presents the outcome of more than two years of researching „social transformation“. It is conceived as an imaginative and analytical space that – with a certain distance – enables the visitor to see and reflect the processes of change that started by the fall of the Iron Curtain and have to an extent continued until the present. The way this topic is approached is influenced by a feeling of affiliation to these changes which are in a way co-formed by us and whose impact affects and influences us. It is therefore an attempt to look at “transformation” as at a “lived out” and gradually receding process.

The curators do not believe that art can provide any direct and easily applicable answers to political and social problems and conflicts. Art does however create a space which provides the basic pre-requisites on which thinking, dreaming and discussions about politics and society are based.

Thinking about transformation is conceived as structured in tension between various methods of social sciences and artistic practice. The experience of transformation in “Eastern Europe” is an independent theoretical field. In the context of transformation studies, the so-called Eastern European region has its own specifics that originated in the geo-political division of the world, irrevocably decided at the Jalta conference as a consequence of the 2nd World War. The power division of the world into East and West can no longer be mechanically adopted without reservation – it cannot be used when trying to understand the processes of cultural signifying, cultural production and representation in that region. If one automatically accepts such a division, one assumes that those geo-political power polarities are recognizable in the “cultural material” – which means that cultural production is not viewed a priori, as creation, as a polluting semiosis, but as a mere representative of the recognizability of the East-West power polarity.

While researching transformation processes, we abandoned the reductive theories of the region that we come from and that we represent. We extended research to artistic and theoretical outputs that reflect the transformations in Greece, Spain, Portugal, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, China, Mexico and Argentina. The attempt to newly formulate trans-local specifics of transformation meant to abandon the stigmatic construction of so-called “Eastern Europe” and opt for a differentiated, authoritative and new map of the world of transformation.

One of the possible ways how to approach this exhibition is to see it as a “rhizomatic” structure. In the terminology of archaeology, it means a layer with various artifacts that are mutually connected. The exhibition presents a group of theoretical and artistic outputs that go back together to a certain time and place and represent a sum of past activities. The motif of this common return to the past is the need to destroy the clarity and definiteness of the view of the “transformation” that one has gained through individual experience. This is almost an ontological need to subvert the essence of one’s own experience with this past – it is necessary to shed paranoia on the things recently lived. The suspected and experienced contradiction, conflict and complexity of the transformation period are negated by too much clarity and trust in one’s own experience. The only past is the “present past”: therefore we carry out this attack on the “clear” representation of the transformation period with respect to the current state of thoughts and to the “future pasts” that we try to provoke in this way.

The exhibition will present several unique works of art that have never been on display in the Czech Republic before and that belong to the cornerstone references of that period.

The movie “Intervista” (Interview) by the internationally renowned Albanian artist Anri Sala from 1998 was the starting point of a whole school of Eastern European video. In the film archives of the Albanian Communist party, Sala discovered by chance a silent movie record showing a speech by his mother who used to be a fervent communist in her youth. Without her knowledge and with the help of a hearing-impaired person, he was able to reconstruct the text of that speech. Later he made a film interview with his mother where he confronted the transcript with her interpretation and her memories of the speech. This work sensitively and on a personal level touches the basic trauma of “settling” with the post-communist past.

The film “Mary Koszmary” by Yael Bartana (Israel) is an agonizing confession and accusation: Slawomir Sierakowski, a popular young left activist and editor in chief of the “Krytika Polityczna”, is shown in the empty soccer stadium in Warsaw. It was from here that the Polish Jews were transported into concentration camps during Second World War. In his monologue, Sierakowski captures and comments upon a Polish national trauma – the relationship of the catholic Polish society towards the Jewish minority.

Polish artist Artur Zmijewski brought together young representatives of two political groupings in his film “They”. He staged leftists and conservative Catholics in an empty fabric space to persuade each other and to lead discussions. It is an exemplificative display of real political controversy that is the basis of society. The film is based on a definition of democracy as a natural conflict where different views of the world are a natural component of the system. The system, however, has to be embedded in such a way as not to wipe away the mechanisms of conflict and not to become violent (Chantal Mouffe).

The project of the Hungarian-Scottish art group Big Hope Inside Out 1997–1998 is a radical move, taking up on Jean Luc Godard’s famous proclamation from the 1960s: give the cameras to the workers and let them make a movie about themselves, about their work and their living conditions. Big Hope created a photographic project with the homeless of Budapest: they provided the homeless with cameras to document and capture their favorite spots where they live, rest and fight for survival, and included their commentaries.

Another unique piece is a series of videos from Indonesia (10 authors). From various perspectives and using various methods, it shows the revolution in Indonesia that started with student outbursts just like the Velvet revolution in Prague and ended in overthrowing Suharto’s regime, Indonesian society undergoing transformation ever since.

South-Korean artist SASA44 who has so far only sporadically exhibited in Europe has created a grand-scale assemblage specifically for this exhibition that comments upon the pop-culture, politics and social reality of the current transformation in South Korea.

The art work Triangle by the Croatian feminist artist Sanja Iveković from 1979 is a very individual reaction to the politicization of public space under Communism. During a presidential visit in Zagreb, Iveković sat on her balcony so that she was visible to the sniper on the opposite roof. She drank whiskey, read a book and pretended to masturbate. After a while, the sniper tipped off the policeman stationed near her house on the street. He rang the bell and ordered Iveković to “remove all persons and objects from her balcony to the inside of the flat immediately”.

The exhibition is curated by Vít Havránek and Zdeněk Baladrán.

Vít Havránek is an art historian and theoretician. He worked as a curator in the Municipal Gallery Prague, in the National Gallery in Prague and since 2002 has been the director of the initiative tranzit.cz (www.tranzit.org). He writes texts about contemporary art for catalogues (Centre Pompidou Paris, MIT Press etc.) and organizes and curates exhibitions (Secession Vienna, tranzitdielne Bratislava, Le Plateau Paris, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Municipal Gallery Prague etc.). He is an associated editor for JRP Ringier, Zurich, and lecturer at the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague and abroad (Stedelijk Museum, MIT Boston, Konstfack Stockholm etc.). In 2010, he will be curating the European biennial Manifesta 8.

Zbyněk Baladrán is an artist, author and curator, living and working in Prague. He studied art history at the Charles University in Prague and visual arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. He regularly exhibits in the Czech Republic and abroad (Manifesta 5, Folkwang Museum Essen, Monthermoso Vittori etc.). He is one of the founders and curators of the gallery tranzitdisplay in Prague. Since 2006, he has been working on the project Monument to Transformation.

LIST OF ARTISTS

LIDA ABDUL, VAHRAM AGHASYAN, VYACHESLAV AKHUNOV, LARA ALMARCEGUI, ANASTAS AYREEN, BABI BADALOV, Yael BARTANA, RICARDO BASBAUM, ERIC BELTRÁN, DAVID ČERNÝ, EDWIN, MIKLOS ERHARDT, PATRICIA ESQUIVIAS, HARUN FAROCKI, GÜNTER FORG, RENÉ GABRI, ANDREA GEYER, IVAN GRUBANOV, JOÃO MARIA GUSMÃO, HAFIZ, LISE HARLEV, NICOLINE VAN HASKAMP, SHARON HAYES, THOMAS HIRSCHHORN, DOMINIC HISLOP, IFA ISFANSYAH, SANJA IVEKOVIĆ, SUNG HWAN KIM, ZDENĚK KOŠEK, LUCKY KUSWANDI, LITTLE WARSAW, ANÍBAL LOPEZ, MEENA, PEGGY MEINFELDER, CANTOR MIRCEA, IVAN MOUDOV, CIPRIAN MUREȘAN, DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS, NIKOLAY OLEJNIKOV, ANATOLY OSMOLOVSKY, PEDRO PAIVA, CHANG-KYONG PARK, YAN PEI-MING, LIA PERJOVSCHI, ANGGUN PRIAMBODO, WALID RAAD /THE ATLAS GROUP, ANRI SALA, SASA[44], WILHELM SASNAL, JAN ŠVANKMAJER, AVDEY TER-OGANYAN, TOMÁŠ SVOBODA, STEFANOS TSIVOPOULOS, VANGELIS VLAHOS, CLEMENS VON WEDEMEYER, WISNU SP, HAEGUE YANG, CHANG YOUNG-HAE /HEAVY INDUSTRIES, ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI.

BOOK

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive publication entitled Atlas of Transformation. This book with almost 900 pages is a sort of global guidebook of transformation processes. With structured entries, its goal is to create a tool for the intellectual grasping of the processes of social and political change in countries that call themselves “countries of transformation” or are described by this term. The Atlas of Transformation will first appear in Czech and it contains more than 200 “entries” and key terms of transformation. Several dozen authors from the whole world contributed to this book and also some influential period texts were republished here. In the second half of 2009, the book will be published in English in co-operation with the Swiss publishing house JRP-Ringier.

Published by tranzit.cz, distributed by Kosmas

Editors: Zbyněk Baladrán, Vít Havránek, in co-operation with Věra Krejčová

Authors (selection): Václav Bělohorský, Homi Bhabha, Frederic Jameson, Bohumila Groegerová, Josef Híršal, Václav Havel, Václav Klaus, Tomáš Ježek, Jiří Havel, Jiří David, Milan Knížák, Vladimíra Dvořáková, Slavoj Žižek, Boris Groys, Keiko Sei, Gaytri Spivak and many others.

Graphic design: Adéla Svobodová

Edition size: 1000 copies

Prize: 626 Kč

ALONGSIDE THE MONUMENT TO TRANSFORMATION, THERE WILL BE A SOLO SHOW OF THE DISTINGUISHED GERMAN FILMMAKER HARUN FAROCKI (BORN IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA).

HARUN FAROCKI

28th MAY – 30th AUGUST 2009

CURATOR: VJERA BOROZAN IN COOPERATION WITH ANTJE EHMANN AND HARUN FAROCKI

TRANZITDISPLAY, DITTRICHOVA 9/337, 12000 PRAGUE 2

WWW.TRANZITDISPLAY.CZ

Harun Farocki was born in Nový Jičín in the Sudeten two years before the end of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. After the war, his family moved to Berlin where he later studied at the famous DFFB (German Cinematic and Television Academy). In addition to writing theoretical texts, he has scripted numerous films and television productions. For many years, he was editor-in-chief of the journal Filmkritik. He writes theoretical texts, books and catalogues and lectures at universities in Berlin and in Berkeley. He is a visiting professor in Vienna at the moment.

The main topic of his works that the artist himself defines as “film essays” or certain “forms of intelligence” is the nature of media and the process of reproduction of images. In a specific kind of montage, he combines archive film images with own cinematic material, adding a commentary. In distinctive analytical method, inspired among others by Berthold Brecht and the writings of Walter Benjamin or Vilém Flusser, he uses the film material as a tool for examining both pictorial and social structures.

THE EXHIBITION WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY A FILM SERIES PREPARED BY ART THEORETICIAN TOMÁŠ POSPISZYL.

TRANSFORMATION IN DOCUMENTARY FILMS

MUNICIPAL LIBRARY PRAGUE, MARIÁNSKÉ NÁMĚSTÍ 1, PRAGUE 1, WWW.MLP.CZ

THE FILMS WILL BE SIMULTANEOUSLY INTERPRETED INTO CZECH. THE SCREENINGS WILL BEGIN AT 6 PM.

3. 6. 2009

HARUN FAROCKI

VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION

GERMANY AND RUMANIA, 1993, 106 MIN.

11. 6. 2009

KIM DONG-WON

REPATRIATION

SOUTH KOREA, 2003, 149 MIN.

16. 6. 2009

ARTURO RIPSTEIN

LOS HÉROES Y EL TIEMPO

MEXICO, 2005, 108 MIN.

18. 6. 2009

PATRICIO GUZMÁN

CHILE, OBSTINATE MEMORY

FRANCE, 1996, 58 MIN.

CONFERENCE – MONUMENT TO TRANSFORMATION

10th – 12th JULY, 2009

The conference focuses on the hypothesis that it is possible to compare the transformation processes based on a new geographical view of transformation countries (Eastern Europe, Greece, Portugal, Indonesia, South Korea and some South American countries – Uruguay, Chile and Argentina etc.). The authors and participants in discussion will attempt such a comparison, based on the analysis and subjective interpretation of some of the entries of the “Atlas of Transformation”. The conference papers will open up a plurality of methodological and imaginative approaches that the authors of the project employed. The conference is intended for a specialized public interested in active investigation of transformation processes (researchers, university professors etc. from the fields of theory of art and art, sociology, history, economics), and for international curators and students.

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