

**No ifs, No Buts** | 1 December 2010 - 9 January 2011  
DEPO / Tütün Deposu, Lüleci Hendek caddesi, no. 12, Tophane, İstanbul  
www.depoistanbul.net

Opening:  
30 November, 18.00-21.00

Curators:  
Gülşen Bal and Walter Seidl

Artists:  
Nevin Aladağ  
Zbyněk Baladrán  
Ursula Biemann  
Esra Ersen  
Marina Gržinić / Aina Šmid  
Siniša Ilić / Goran Ferčec  
Daniel Knorr  
Aglaia Konrad  
Marco Poloni  
Nada Prlja  
Santiago Sierra

The changing experiences with time and space formed the post-modern and postcolonial subject, which, according to Fredric Jameson, has been exposed to a loss of maps, and thus attaches less importance to the geographical departure and arrival points than to interim stages, which are mostly perceived in passing, yet producing significant visual, linguistic and cultural codes of interaction, the economic transition flow of the past decades necessitated an increased concentration on various forms of signification in mainly urban environment.

In exploring the new ways of thinking about multiplicity of subject-positions “that begins from the critique of its present conditions (‘being’) in order to embark upon the careful construction of mechanisms of engagement (‘becoming’)”<sup>1</sup>, we are interested in how this might offer the possibility of a “new” space. This is intended to produce relational entities in which an interrelation takes place as “an activity of an un-framing [...] which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself.”<sup>2</sup> This is where “identity-form” can be re-evaluated beyond “I-other” dichotomy beyond representational boundaries.

This brings up a question: how is all this manifested within the realm of creative practice and brought into the spaces of art?

Revealing the rapid transformation of several turning points in pursuing a nexus that constitutes new forms of life within the framework of different topologies is the starting point for the exhibition projects **No ifs, No Buts**, which focuses on the geopolitical implications of what governs the walls of East and West divide. The questions of geopolitical topology find themselves addressed in specific cultural conditions. The latter suggests that the sensitiveness of these issues marks the production of cultural spaces reflecting the respective representational politics. It is therefore necessary to engage or share an artistic platform of discussion as one of the remits of this multi layered project. By discussing radical modes of self-referentiality which allow **No ifs, No Buts**, thereby forming counter strategies to globalised forces which restrict personal space, the exhibition raises questions about trans-cultural forms of geopolitical and economic conditions, which lead to a new mapping of terrains on a visual and discursive level.

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<sup>1</sup> O’Sullivan, S. and Zepke, S. *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Guattari, F. *Chaosmosis: An Ethicoaesthetic Paradigm*. Translated by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 131.

### **Nevin Aladağ**

*Hochparterre*, video documentation of a live performance, 2010

Nevin Aladağ spoke with the residents of the Große Bergstrasse in Hamburg's district Altona about their living conditions and experiences they have had. From these encounters she created an audio portrait of the street. In her performative work *Hochparterre* the multi-voiced assemblage is represented by the single face of the actress who moves her mouth according to the playback and outlines the invisible speakers through the display of a precise mime.



Since all of the statements collected by Aladağ share the same interface, namely the face of the performer, none of the speakers run the risk of being perceived as prototypes of a sociotope. As confident subjects of a staging that continuously and transparently refers to itself, they offer a rich description of their environment. The result is a concrete poetry of the city, in which the spectator, the actress and generators of the original soundtrack become actors of a fair play with authenticity and curiosity.



### **Zbyněk Baladrán**

*randez-vous nowhere*, video installation, 2008

The film is founded on the confrontation between the Communist Manifesto and the utopian ideas of functionalist architect Karel Honzík. Based upon the film footage of socialist Czechoslovakia a question is posited here regarding the further development of post-communist countries. The Communist Manifesto and the concepts of Karel Honzík, who in the early '60s developed in his literary work the idea of a perfect communist society as the inevitable goal of cosmic matter, serve as a reflective bridge for considerations directed towards liberal capitalist societies.

### **Ursula Biemann**

*X-Mission*, video essay, single channel, 40', 2008

*X-Mission* explores the logic of the refugee camp as one of the oldest extraterritorial zones. Taking the Palestinian refugee camps as a case in point, the video engages with the different discourses – legal, symbolic, urban, mythological, and historical – that give meaning to this exceptional space. According to International Law, the Palestinian refugee represents indeed the exception within the exception.



In the course of 60 years they had to build a civil life in the camps, fostering an intense microcosm with complex relations to homeland and Diaspora. The refugee camp harbours an intense microcosm with complex relations to homeland and to related communities abroad. Given the vital connections among the separated Palestinian populations, the video attempts to place the Palestinian refugee in the context of a global Diaspora and considers post-national models of belonging which have emerged through the networked matrix of this widely dispersed community. Special case studies include the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in Lebanon and the entanglement between the Qualified Industrial Zone in Jordan recruiting its labour force from China and India and Palestinian refugees of a nearby camp.

The narrative relies on a series of interviews made with experts (lawyer, journalist, architect, anthropologist, historian) interspersed with multiple-layer video montage deriving from both downloaded and self-recorded sources. Speakers include Susan Akram, Bilal Khabeiz, Samar Kanafani, Ismaël Sheikh Hassan, Oroub elAbed, Beshara Doumani. The video also reflects on the fine distinctions between humanitarian and artistic missions.

### **Esra Ersen**

*Which One You Choose*, video installation, 17'39", 2003



The work *Which One You Choose* confronts 'gender-specific' positioning in very specific contexts – Turkey and Japan – as well as the issue of identification while it provides alternatives to conventional ideas against the backdrop of multilayered hierarchical structures.

This sub-set has been brought together in the context of "the constitutive political subject as well as the class that is excluded - *de facto*, if not *de jure* - from politics" out of the practical reading of Agamben. In the same line of enquiry; the discourse on overcoming this fundamental biopolitical fracture, Esra Ersen draws our attention to the precarization that has emerged in the past decade, forcing us to rethink of a specific conjuncture of a simultaneous relationship of the proliferation of the sites. This reflects the importance of the "politics of space" that reinforces the issues further by the eventuality of the possibilities for a variety of forms of precarization in recognition of a dialogical subjectivity to come into existence beyond gender-specific positioning and identity politics at a distance from the cognitive capitalist game.

**Marina Gržinić, Aina Šmid** in collaboration with Zvonka Simčič  
*Naked Freedom*, video, 25', 2010

This video work, connecting Ljubljana, Belgrade and Durham USA, presents a conceptual political space of engagement that allows for rethinking what local community is. It conceptualizes the possibility of social change under the conditions of finance capitalism and its financialization processes that permeate art, the social, political and critical discourse. The collective process of making the video *Naked Freedom* is about the enactment of social, political and collective performative practices for the screen that resonates with the performers' own off-screen lives.



In Ljubljana seven young activists, musicians, poets and youth workers, members of the Youth Center Medvode, a village near Ljubljana, discuss capitalism, colonialism, education and the power of art as a possibility for politics. They also rethink the possibility for a radicalization of a proper life. The work is not only recognition of local youth power but as well an initiation, through the making of the video work, to social relations that will make visible those agencies seeking new possibilities.

### **Siniša Ilić, Goran Ferčec**

*A Letter to Heiner M/Version 2*, installation, 2010

The joint work of Siniša Ilić and Goran Ferčec with the working title *A Letter to Heiner M/Version 2* has begun during KulturKontakt's AiR program in Vienna as research into the wide field of potential relations between text and picture. A performance text by the author Goran Ferčec *A Letter to*



*Heiner M/Version 2* was taken as the basis for Ilić's reading, presented in story boards.

Siniša Ilić is interested in text as it offers instructions for performance, since its structure is aimed at a performance, which is possible in the borderline area between the private sphere and artistic statement, but which is not necessarily linked to culture as an institution. That reveals the process of the continuous re-articulation of our own position in the world we live and work. Siniša Ilić will present a work in progress' proposition for newspaper/art book project.

### **Daniel Knorr**

*Architecture București 2001/2005*, photographs  
Courtesy of Kontakt - The Art Collection of Erste Group

The work *Architecture București 2001/2005* consists of 26 unique photographs made by Nea' Costică, a street portrait photographer, after the instructions of the artist. The photographs deal with urban wasteland and the construction as well as deconstruction of new and old buildings. The phase of urban transformation of Bucharest is shown in these photographs, which are made with an old-fashioned plate camera, referencing to the uniqueness of each photograph, which exists in both positive and negative prints, showing the ambiguities of Bucharest's changing urban outlook. The black-and white images convey a spooky character of the town as a place where corruption and dubious business is still under way. Meeting the standards set by the EU is still a difficult task for a city, which has for a long time been seen as Communism's most biggest city, and which is gradually adapting to the overarching European norms. Reforms in urban planning become a task, which still seems difficult to tackle with regard to the city's past and future.



### **Aglaia Konrad**

*Desert Cities*, video, 55'40", 2008



Aglaia Konrad focuses a direct gaze on cities such as Cairo, Alexandria, and Anwar el Sadat. This is not a classic documentary video: The artist asked two writers to come up with their own text, which makes the video oscillate between reality and fiction through the voice of the narrators. The video shows the application of "modernist" principles to architectural development in desert landscapes. They spotlight an improbable dialogue between imported models and vernacular elements, constructions and sites, desert and communities, modernity and tradition. People moving into

these buildings try to find a new exclusivity for social as well as living standards. Yet, many of these new housing projects from the 1990s are already falling into ruins and got abandoned; raising questions about the necessity for such grand endeavours far from traditional traffic routes. How do deserts attract attention and how easily are the dreams of utopian places destroyed? Konrad's video is testimony to these unusual developments.

### **Marco Poloni**

*Persian Gulf Incubator*, installation,  
2008

In *Persian Gulf Incubator*, Marco Poloni's starting point was a found amateur photograph from the 1970s. It shows a woman waving farewell amid



a group of passengers on the Italian luxury liner "T/S Raffaello" in the harbour of New York. This photograph encountered by chance provides the

backdrop for an (also autobiographically motivated) investigation – in his childhood Poloni actually took this ship from New York to Naples – that climaxed in a stealthy survey trip the artist took to the Iranian nuclear compound of Bushehr, which is a primary target point of current US warmongering. The result is a large medial wall installation that inexorably generates a dramatic scenario.

### **Nada Prlja**

*Queue*, installation, 2010



The project considers the phenomenon of “waiting” – referring to the obligatory queuing at airports’ passport control, when entering a foreign country. The visitors, upon entering the gallery, find themselves queuing in line, in meandering lanes created by line barriers, without the possibility to escape, or redirect the direction.

### **Santiago Sierra**

*Polyurethane sprayed on the backs of 10 workers*, video, single channel, 66'08", 2004  
Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery (London)

The work was created by spraying ten men and women with polyurethane – a poisonous liquid plastic that hardens quickly in contact with air. What makes this piece so controversial is the fact that all the ten hired participants were Iraqis. The themes, then, are the Iraq war, chemical warfare and the torture of Iraqi prisoners. Despite being toxic, polyurethane is commonly used for household insulation, so it has connotations of both safety and danger – a metaphor for the combination of defence and aggression that motivated the invasion of Iraq.



A video projection documents the entire process. Lined up in groups, jets of polyurethane spattering over their backs, the participants have to wear chemically resistant clothing and a thick sheet of plastic draped over their backs and heads. Given the context, it comes across as a kind of militarised, updated version of the veil, that most stereotypical of ciphers for Islam, emblematic of a range of Western anxieties about the Middle East. A parallel can be drawn here with the hidden atrocities of warfare: war crimes and torture. The idea is that war, and certainly the Iraq war, is a continuation of capitalism’s inherent violence.

**Supported by:**

Anadolu Kültür A.Ş.

Initially this project started as a work in progress at **Open Space - Zentrum für Kunstprojekte** from of 7 September - 3 October 2010. For further information: <http://www.openspace-zkp.org>

the previous edition of the project was supported by:

BM:UKK

Stadt Wien - Kulturabteilung MA 7

**About project curators:**

**Gülsen Bal**, PhD – Dr., is a visual culture theorist and exercise curatorial practice in various places and venues in the U.K. as well as in Europe and Turkey. She has edited books, published articles in art magazines such as Third Text, Mute, Afterimage, ARTMargins, Sanat Dünyamız and Toplumbilim while contributing in various conferences and panels internationally.

She has been the Director, Head of Development of Projects and Programmes at Open Space - Zentrum für Kunstprojekte, Vienna since 2007. Bal, the founder of Open Space, aims to create facilitating for contemporary creative practice concerned with contributing a model strategy in search for new outlines of the possible practices. She has also been lecturer at Visual Culture Studies department for a new developed program Critical and Curatorial Investigations for Masters Degree at Technische Universität Wien since 2008.

**Walter Seidl**, was born in Graz, Austria and is based in Vienna. He earned a PhD in Contemporary Cultural History and studied in Austria, France and the U.S. Seidl works as curator, critic and artist. As a critic, Seidl writes for various international art magazines such as Camera Austria, contemporary, springerin or život umjetnosti. His curatorial work has included projects in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Switzerland and the U.S. Since 2004, Seidl has been in charge of the art collection of Erste Group.