

UNIVERSAL

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Finnish Minister of Culture
Tanja Karpela:

“I shall do my best”

“I think we can find a way to support
an important activity like EU-MAN”

UNIVERSAL COLOURS

European Union Migrants Artists Network Magazine

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Events accelerate, run as an octopus spreading its tentacles to eat up our time. I do not know if there was any value for time in this dirty world of ours.

I do not know why I started this editorial with these words. I know that the reader on the other end is expecting positive expressions, but what should I say when I am helpless having nothing but these words and some ideas I paint.

Maybe the reader is expecting to read an introduction to what this issue has between its pages and my opinion about what happened lately.

OK. I shall tell you what happened. We had to close down the gallery for "... " reasons, but we kept trying to do our other things as usual. We met the Finnish Minister of Culture Ms. Tanja Karpela and held our exhibition "ExoArt", which was mentioned in many publications.

This issue between your hands we pushed ourselves to publish as we know very well that the budget for this year is not enough to send this issue by post. But the persistence of all the people who work in the magazine pushed me to decide to take the risk and publish it. So why is this persistence while we are far from reality, having nothing in our pockets? What does it mean to carry on our work in this unfair world? Yes, we want to say that we are still active and effective.

What does it mean when a foreigner from the second or third world, according to the European classifications, participate in building the culture and the intellect of his country of residence? Is it a myth or madness?

Many critics, including those who wrote about ExoArt, put emphasis on the effect of the European art schools and styles on the foreign artists, but they forgot that the foreign artist effects the society as much as he gets effected with it.

I wrote plenty of times and said that we as foreign artists have effected the European communities in the whole Europe. Maybe some do not like this affect, but this is not the problem.

Go to any supermarket and browse the oriental or "foreign" goods on its shelves. Ten years ago these goods did not exist, no rice was available nor even little souvenirs. We have influenced the economical structure of these societies, which means also the intellectual and cultural structure. Are these not positive additions?



Museums and art galleries did not know the art of "the other", but now it is available. So it is possible to approach the "other" and get to know what he is doing and he thinks, not as he is an exotic being, but as a partner in the culture building process.

Our projects are many, our hopes are numerous and we are going on in our path.

Amir Khatib

Art goes Exo



EU-MAN exhibition, Exo-Art, took place at Porvoo Art hall between 25 of June till 27 of July. The event attracted a big number of audiences and was talked about in the press.

A welcome speech was given by Daniel Katz, a writer in Liljendal, Finland, who put emphasis on the importance of art in life saying: "I always envied artists that they can be understood every where, whereas a writer can be understood only by those who can read his words in their language."



EU-MAN gallery shut down

EU-MAN gallery and headquarters was shut down after months of struggle to keep it opened. Shutting down the gallery was a result of the financial problems the association has been facing for a long time.

The gallery was opened for a year and 7 months and it witnessed 14 exhibitions. Two workers had jobs there.

Dialogues

Amir Khatib and Walid Shikha participated in the international biennale "Dialogues", which takes place every other year at Manege museum in Russia

AGENDA

Arrivederci in Stockholm

The Italian Cultural Institute invited EU-MAN to hold an exhibition at the Institute's branch in Stockholm. The exhibition is due to take place next spring.

Those who wish to participate can send pictures for their artworks accompanied with their CV before February 2004 to EU-MAN's Post box (523, 00101 Helsinki).

EU-MAN at Jyvaskyla art museum

The Jyvaskyla Art Museum invited EU-MAN to hold an exhibition in the museum in the near future

Although no time has been chosen for this event, negotiations are taking place and more information will be released soon.

The Power of Art

The aims which pushed me to interview the Finnish Minister of Culture Ms. Tanja Karpela were clear and on a very high level of importance. Thus she received me on the same level.

We discussed many issues related to our situation as professional migrant artists living and working in Finland. Our situation that becomes the inevitable truth. The main issue was of course the Finnish cultural policy concerning the migrant artists and their organisations, the horizon of developing and encouraging this policy towards a better future and the way to ease the difficulties which the migrant artists are facing in their lives.



Karpela:

"I promise to do my best to find more possibilities to support."



Minister Karpela browses EU-MAN publications

As it is well known, there is an organisation working for the migrant artists established on the 10th of January 1997 named EU-MAN (European Migrant Artists Network). This organisation was and still is struggling to find space among the Finnish art organisations.

As the founder of this organisation, I can say that I have the experience in the field of the migrant cultural organisation and I can say a lot about the lives of this group of people. Our organisation was established because we are underlined in the society and we try to create space for ourselves. So we have done some 11 exhibitions in six European countries and we have kept publishing our quarterly magazine named Universal Colours, which spreads news about the art world and helps a lot of people of our community. We presented our activities to the Minister of Culture Tanja Karpela during our meeting.

We showed her our publications, six catalogues and some of our magazines and she valued our experience and appreciated what we have done during the last six and a half years.

EU-MAN MEETS THE MINISTER

I can not say that I was surprised by her knowledge and understanding of the nature of our work because she is from that kind of people who follow and care about others. But she was more sympathetic with the cultural affairs than I expected, especially the youth and children. She stressed in her conversation on the necessity of taking care of the children. Her attention to our movement was not less than her attention to the children. She expressed a great sympathy and understanding to our group and received our material with many thanking words. The networking between migrant artists is always important and strong. It is easier to figure out more ways, it is better for the Finnish society and the migrant too, she says.

The fact that the attention to the migrant art and artists issue started in Finland more than two years ago, when a group of officers and one MP, Ms. Sirpa Pietikainen submitted a paper to the governmental council suggesting to develop the cultural policy and the life of the people who work in the cultural sector including the migrant artists.

Why not, since the issue of the migrant artists, is a question of history to the whole country. Katalin Kesru, a Hungarian art historian, wrote an article about this mentioning a Hungarian artist who lives in Germany (it is a specific question of art history) traditionally the assemblage of a national school, where the works of artists are not living inside the country of origin. Do we write Hungarian art history here, or the history of art in Hungary?

I agree with the writer of the article mentioned above. When I started the movement of EU-MAN I was aware of what I was saying and our aims were not for a short time or to gain personal benefits only. Or in other words as some might say that I'm looking for a job opportunity, even though I do believe that it is my right to have and continue my work.

On the 14th of December 1999 I wrote an article in Helsingin Sanomat in which I insisted on the necessity of having some professional organisation, which should embrace the migrant art and artists. I asked questions and wondered about the careless attitude of the cultural authorities towards our movement.

On June 2001, we arranged a seminar with representatives of the Ministry for Education Mr. Mikko Cortes Telles, Finnish Art Council Mr. Risto Ruohonen, and the leader of the cultural authorities of Helsinki Mr. Yrjö Larmola the Cultural Centre of Caisa and the Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art and many Finnish and migrant artists discussing the importance and the ways which might lead to keep the EU-MAN.

Once more, I wrote an article in Helsingin Sanomat on the 12th of May 2002 named "Acknowledgement is coming next year" (Tunnustus tulee ensi vuonna) stressing on the same issue and looking forward to keeping the organisation and asking the same questions to the authorities.

Now and after quite a long time of waiting, the Minister of Culture Ms. Karpela came to save this work and understand the necessity of this organisation

She promised to do her best to support our work and our organisation and above all she believes that the work of this organisation is important.

The network has served more than 120 artists during its relatively short time and with its limited financial resources. The organisation has no stable yearly fund since its establishment. This and many other issues the minister understood. "Still it does not mean even I know that the budget is tight as always with that we can do nothing. Still we have a lot to do or to do as much as we can. But we have to face the reality and we have to work harder to find the way," the minister says.

Above all she said: "I promise to do my best to find more possibility to support, but we all have to understand that the challenge is that how to balance and I think that we can manage to find the way to support any important activities."

I realized that the power of art is still strong in Finland and the understanding of the Minister of Culture Tanja Karpela fortified my bonds to my belief to our movement, to our need for a professional organisation such as EU-MAN.

Paintings and Censorship

by Daniel Katz

I have to admit that I am a bit envious of painters, sculptors, musicians and dancers. As a writer I am bound by the language, my language, which despite its richness still is, like any other language for that matter, a somewhat restrictive means of expression, in the sense that it is not directly accessible to someone who does not know it. Any poem, story or novel, when translated to another language acquires a new form, through the mind and the hands of the translator. The result is never quite the same as the piece of writing the writer created with blood, sweat and tears. Whether it has lost or gained something in the process can be discussed case by case, and is often a matter of taste. But one thing is certain: the writer, even if he is able to understand the translation, seldom feels that the text is altogether his anymore. In the visual arts, on the other hand, any painting, sculpture or other artistic creation on display can directly and immediately be appreciated, criticized, liked or disliked by anyone who is able to use his or her eyes. How this work of art is understood and interpreted by art lovers belonging to other cultures that are another and more complex story.

I think the most important qualification for understanding and appreciating a work of art of an artist coming from another cultural and artistic tradition is an open mind, a mind that does not automatically

"I refer to the fact that in many countries the artistic freedom is curtailed, restricted or totally nonexistent"

Paintings and censorship

reject any unfamiliar ways of depicting an unfamiliar world. A mind which unprejudiced is ready to meet with what seems initially new and strange, possibly uncomfortable or even a bit intimidating, in order to try to find out what in that given work of art is universal, apprehensible and maybe, in the end, even familiar. This comprehension, this skill we can gradually learn by reading literature, by listening to music, by watching films and plays and admiring visual art created by writers, composers, musicians and artists with other cultural backgrounds than our own. What we need is in other words activities and events such as this current international EXO-ART exhibition, which we have the pleasure and honor of arranging here in Porvoo, an exhibition of the works of 16 artists from 8 countries in 2 continents.

The importance of international exhibitions representing manifold cultures and styles can not be overemphasized in a world that notwithstanding all recent globalization seems to foster so much racial, nationalistic and tribal prejudice and xenophobia, so much intolerance or condescending attitudes toward foreign cultures, and at the same time so much petty nationalistic conceit.

But if the understanding and approval an artist can hope to gain from abroad is important and flattering, this understanding and approval is for him a necessity in his own country, among people of his own culture. And that can be even more difficult to obtain. I don't mean approval in the sense of striving for esteem as an artist, which is of course, important. I refer to the fact that in many

Paintings and Censorship

countries the artistic freedom is curtailed, restricted or totally nonexistent. Some art forms are not tolerated at all; others may be tolerated to the extent that the artists conform to the official and approved ideology. There are too many countries where artists who do not conform to the ideas and views of a regime or a ruling clique about what is the purpose of art, what kind of art is morally, ethically or politically acceptable, what kind of art is art at all, become outcasts, are treated like criminals and are ruthlessly punished. According to Amnesty International thousands of artists, writers, filmmakers, not to mention journalists, languish in prison in numerous countries, only because their views of life and the current reality and how to depict it in their art, differs from the official truth of their rulers.

Thousands have lost their life. And manifold is the number of those artists who have renounced their artistic activity and chosen to remain silent, because they refuse to produce works of art which are incompatible with their views of life.

Many others who also refused to learn the art of faking and lying or molding the official lies into art, have taken the sad step out and immigrated to faraway and strange countries, where they have been able to start all over again as freely creative artists.

Romans put it:

*"Life is short,
censorship is even shorter,
but true art crosses
all borders
and lives on forever."*

Paintings and censorship

For in the end true art always triumphs over vile censorship. The true artists will prevail, alive or dead and the bigoted censors will rot in their unknown graves. This has been their ultimate destiny since the beginning of time, already some 30 thousand years ago, when our forefathers, the artistic Cro-Magnon had the idea of painting those wild oxen on the walls of their caves in southern France, those splendid animals and their funny looking hunters. Whatever their intentions and aspirations were, whether they wanted to tell us something about their life, or create something beautiful for them and others to enjoy, whether they got paid or not, or whether they just didn't have anything more useful to do. Be that as it may, probably the paint on the wall had hardly dried, when the artists were followed by the Cro-Magnon critics, who looking at the paintings, claimed that those oxen on the cave walls were too naturalistic or too stylized or lacked originality, and they had seen better bulls painted on walls already thousand years ago.

And the critics were followed by the censors, who proclaimed that oxen should not be painted on any walls anywhere, because they were only animals, or they were unholy, unkosher, or they were too holy and too kosher, whatever, hereafter no oxen should be painted by man and those who did not heed to this holy prohibition, would be put to a gruesome death.

And so the painting of those splendid oxen ceased for some thousand years. Until there began to appear new paintings and sculptures of oxen, and the artists were Egyptian, Chinese, Cretan, Greek, Scythe, Indian... and Pablo Picasso. Because nothing can hold back the true artists and their fury and urge to let loose that frenetic creative power boiling inside them. As the Romans put it: "Life is short, censorship is even shorter, but true art crosses all borders and lives on forever."

This speech was given in the opening of ExoArt exhibition in Porvoo

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Crossovers: New Avant-Garde Design Territories

2003-10-08 until 2003-12-14

Barcelona, , ES Spain

Crossovers: New Avant-Garde Design Territories forms part of the programme of DESIGN YEAR and is organised by the FAD. This international exhibition sets out to show and analyse new tendencies, authors and creations that refuse to be pigeonholed by the classic disciplines of design and architecture, cutting across the board, using languages and strategies that are a mix of graphics, jewellery, architecture, objet design, the visual arts, fashion, etc.



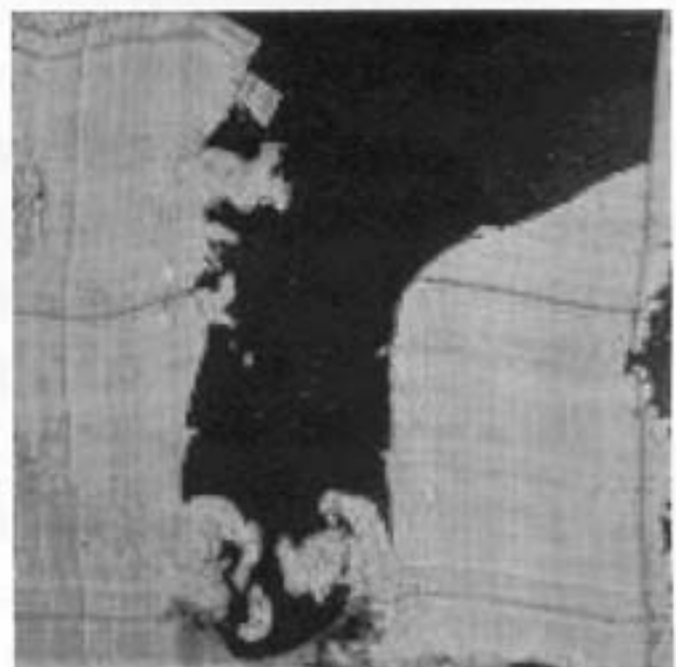
The exhibition is the result of a look at the near future of the professional disciplines represented by the FAD, indicating, among other things, that the borders have disappeared. Now that the borders between disciplines have been demolished, it is

Alexis Harding: New Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture

2003-10-08 until 2003-11-08

London, , UK United Kingdom

The Andrew Mummery Gallery is pleased to present a new body of work by Alexis Harding. Harding's paintings emphasise their own inescapable materiality through playful chemistry and a vertiginous sense of their own collapse. The work is made by exploiting the incompatibility between two different painting media to create dynamic and emotive compositions. His method involves pouring gloss paint through a perforated trough across a wet oil surface, to create a grid, which is then left to dry.



Approach the Future: The Asymptote Experience

2003-09-27 until 2004-01-18

Rotterdam, , NL Netherlands

The installation for the exhibition of the New York-based architectural practice Asymptote: Rashid and Couture, breaks like a wave into the NAI's largest gallery. It encompasses a 10,000 square foot exhibition of Asymptote's extensive ongoing body of work from 1989 until the present. The suspended undulating grid, which begins as a ceiling at one end of the gallery, descends and divides the gallery into separate spaces at the other end was designed by Asymptote as a means of not only exhibiting the works but also as a dramatic spatial organizational system and experience.

The installation is a dramatic architectural gesture that clarifies many of Asymptote's ideas and works by presenting them in dynamic combinations of built works, numerous maquettes, virtual reality environments, furniture designs and speculative drawings and spatial studies.



The Sky's The Limit

2003-09-20 until 2003-11-07

Langenhagen, , DE Germany

The exhibition "The Sky's The Limit" explores the boundaries of comprehension. Knowledge is conveyed through epistemological models and their visual or linguistic formulation. The exhibition looks at space - in the sense of an abstract concept as much as physical quantity - as a case study, since scientific discovery, technological innovation and philosophical deconstruction have resulted in a thorough revision of conventional ideas of space. The artworks brought together in the exhibition visualize these observations via various metaphors - from Plato's Cave to black holes.



Migrant art

By: Katalin Keserü

It is a specific question of art history - traditionally the assemblage of national schools - where the work of artists not living inside the country belong to. Do we write Hungarian art history here, or the history of art in Hungary? If the former, does it cover any Hungarian artist no matter where he/she lives? If the latter, are we only interested in what is done inside Hungary, by anyone?

It is of course not compulsory to think in terms of national art history, for art is said to be universal and modernism international. Yet the local is still valid, as even the monographs of most current phenomena reveal. They include the ones about new expressionism, which is confirmed not only by the different regional names of the style but by the importance ascribed to it by authors (such as Donald Kuspit and Irving Sandler of America) who are farthest removed from a national approach.

The history of art in the 20th century does abound in artists who had to leave their homelands, because of revolutions, dictatorships, imposed isolation or simply peripheral existence. It is well know how many artists left Hungary around 1970. Their life paths are all individual, not being united by emigration. László

Lakner, Emő Simonyi, Endre Tót live in Germany, but that is all they share in common. Moreover, the '70s witnesses a migratory state of genres and branches of art ("border cases") among themselves. In this general migration, several art types emerged that can be transported, as letters, ideas, parcels, without the precaution required by customary art objects, or can be produced on the spot, with local validity. (These alternatives of art objects also expressed a protest against art trade.)

Back in those days, something else was Emő Simonyi's concern. She worked as a graphic artist (in the Quintet group in Budapest, and she had hardly graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts when she won the Best design of the year award in London (1968) on which she could build a career of design in Germany.

In spite of all that, she won the grand prix of the city of Munich as a painter in 1988 and she has been the savage painter of new expressionism ever since, in a style attracting few female practitioners but based decisively on drawing from its beginning. That is also why the style is labeled the style of minorities (regions, genders, genres, representational types such as figuratively) in that it has brought to bear personal experience everywhere, and that is why this style present everywhere can be called universal (as Gerard Xuriguera does).

German savage painting, as the jealousy of the western more regions earlier pace-setting in art makes them claim, already emerged in the '70s with the intention of rehabilitating German consciousness. Had it been no more than that, how could several East-Central European artists have become active participants in it? Isn't it rather the common Central?

"I refer to the fact that in many countries the artistic freedom is curtailed, restricted or totally nonexistent"

European experience of the iron curtain and the Berlin Wall that has been released from the bottle with elementary force? Isn't it quite understandable that instead of art under the protection of the dictatorship in Hungary, Hungarian experiences also took shape in divided Germany's art in search of its own identity, in a web mutually interlaced with secret police and terrorists?

Living in Germany since 1971, Emö Simonyi translated doubled experiences into pictures when in the early

'80s she "discovered" painting, with the sensuous euphoria of discovery swinging her pictures off being stuck in the concrete historical situation, as Julia Fabényi had analysed earlier (Dialogue, Ernst Museum, 1992, catalogue). Though in Hungarian art it was she who formulated the Central European nightmare, the horror of the crime against civilization, the works are themselves universal visions of dances macabres.

Her monumental wrestling human monsters with twisted bodies, devouring one another, are heralds of an all-round civilizational disaster, which we in Hungary perhaps overlooked but which was also conveyed in pictures by another Hungarian artist, Tibor Csernus living in Paris. They must be then the most natural links between Hungarian and international arts.

Simonyi's picture creation is personal. But the intimacy of a picture does not merely depend on the ratio between reality and its echo as subjective experience. To make a subjective picture, you must let its own nature assume itself (material, technique, tools, etc.). Emö Simonyi's art seems to progress along this course. Her figural paintings rampant with intensely dynamic, lively and characteristic figures have transformed into figures assembled from body parts painted on foldable cardboard boxes. The nature of her pictorially is animation, lifelikeness, but she deconstructs the figurative picture to trace it back to its magic roots. That entails objectifying: the body parts assume space and perspective through the boxes, and live their own lives governed by a peculiar anatomy. That is how the full figures become enlivened, subjective: totems or golems.

While art inside Hungary also shows up similar creatures (the paper works of József Gaál and József

Szurcsik), Emö Simonyi's creations are typical migrant works. Like a showman with his side-show, she can set them up anywhere. While she assembles or pulls down her creations, she also generates the question of the great illusionists: what is indeed reality, what is art? The answers change by age and accumulated knowledge. Today, our knowledge says reality consists of particles that are parcels of energy incessantly in motion. No stable objects exist - they are illusory.

That's like Simonyi's works. They are real, but when they get into exhibiting spaces for a few weeks, they become petrified, they turn into illusion? Into art in the conventional sense? At any rate, they only display one state, one manifestation, which will vanish. As reality does.

Art history also changes by ages. Complying with the specificities of the discipline, it tries to stabilize certain states, but always highlights new cohering forces, pointing out their significance and preserving them for remembrance. Emö Simonyi and Hungarian/Central European migrant art is a fact of art history. We have been preoccupied with similar facts for many decades. It is only up to the cohering force of the discipline to prevent the realities of our art history from vanishing in thin air.

"Simonyi - Papierskulpturen · Papírszobrok · Paper sculptures · Plastiche in carta", Kunstverein Rosenheim - Budapest Gallery, 2000



LAST DROP

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Overvalue

During my relatively short stay in Finland I met with many artists, some were native and others were foreigners.

I did not know much about art before getting to know EU-MAN and its activities, but I started having small talks and discussions with the artists.

My findings were interesting. The idea of being an artist differs between a Finn and a foreigner. A Finnish artist might say "I am trying to express how I feel with my artwork". But when I had the same discussion with foreign artists, I found out that some of them consider themselves pioneers in their work to the extent of saying "Finland did not know this kind of art before me".

The kind of art they might have been talking about was for example copying a face portrait, which any school pupil can do in the art class. It is good to feel that art has value, but I think it damages the credibility of an artist if valuing turns to be overvaluing.

Jobless

Is art a job for those who do not have a job?

In Egypt my fellow citizens thought that if you can not have a job, you can be a journalist. I quit my career as a psychologist and suffered for five years to be a professional journalist. Until now I am defending my choice since journalism is as important as any other profession.

The common characteristics between journalism and art are that both are ways of expressing, one uses words and the other colours or shapes.

In Finland I encountered some of those who call themselves artists, but in reality they are not. They do not even know what they are talking about. Professional art is something else. They are just artist, a title which gives them the right to feel important, intellectual and sophisticated and to look weird and dress even weirder. Should art be the refuge for those jobless?

Last drop

"I did never know so full a voice issue from so empty a heart: but the saying is true 'The empty vessel makes the greatest sound'.

-- William Shakespeare

Maath Alousi



Maath's coloured faces are hiding many stories behind them.

Some of these stories are secrets, some others reveal.

However, those faces might be a loud scream at the viewer's face.

The

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