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Pushing the elastic Cube

Introduction by Lisa Glauer	5
Johannes Abendroth · <i>New Bricks On The Block</i>	9
Rosa van Goudoever · <i>Color me in arttransponder</i>	11
Xinglang Guo · <i>Travelling Cube</i>	13
Angeliki Makri · <i>Escape</i>	15
Yvonne Morales Traulsen · <i>Cuando se enfrentan, saben que son el límite uno del otro</i>	17
Process Institute · <i>How to exist?</i>	19
Carly Schmitt · <i>The American Reputation Aid Society</i>	23
Eriphyli Veneri · <i>EXPO</i>	27



Pushing the elastic Cube – Mobile by Circumstance

Video, Installation, Sound, Performance.

Exhibition: March 12th – April 9th, 2010.

Eleven artists from the Masters program ›Public Art and New Artistic Strategies‹ at the Bauhaus-University exhibited work based on the idea of memory and the dissolution of the ›white cube.‹ The artist themselves are ›in transit‹ from Germany, Canada, the US, Greece, Chile, Mexico and the P.R. China, living temporarily in Weimar, Germany for the duration of their studies. The ›white cube‹ is a significant point of reference within a globalized Eurocentric perspective on contemporary art. As public artists, the participants explored the elasticity of the term's edges, testing for abstract potential, flexibility and mobility.

Process: Testing/Collecting/Experimenting ⇒ Do project groups need a project space? What do ›public artists‹ need a gallery space for? What are the advantages of having a space? The disadvantages? Can this be tested? What happens to a process-oriented work that takes place in the public realm, outside the ›white cube,‹ when it is translated into a work that functions in a gallery space? Can any of these

questions be addressed in a short-term project in a meaningful way?

These were the questions in mind while producing this exhibition. The artists worked on both more traditional, gallery-based art objects as well as process-oriented works outside the actual project space. Carly Schmitt's *American Reputation Aid Society* used mobile structures to test the US reputation and its discontents. The Process Institute provocatively tested the boundaries of an exhibition at the Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin entitled *squatting. errinern, vergessen, besetzen* by *parasiting, squatting* the show with the help of their mobile office and being – as expected – chased away. Eriphyli Veneri performed a gallery space in Kreuzberg by taking on the persona of a ›flasher‹ showing work attached to the inside of a shiny black coat that she periodically opened, flashing passersby with art.

As initiator of the project, I took on a more traditional curatorial position than in previous exhibitions, directing the placement of the work in the gallery space. I made this decision based on the short time-frame (two months to prepare and produce the exhibition) and the diversity of the artistic approaches. I decided not to participate as an artist but instead placed and coordinated the pieces and groups in such a way that an axis would be formed by the work that seemed to be both inside and outside the space, expanding the ›cube‹ of the space visually. (The bril-

liant white interior of the exhibition room formed a space that perceptually approximates a literal cube. Largely bare except for a white cube containing a minimalist toilet, the room's floor plan approaches a square, and the ceilings are 4.5 meters high.)

Xinglang Guo's video shot from a traveling bus, showing movement through Berlin's urban landscape, was projected onto the frosted storefront window facing Brunnenstrasse. The appearance of the video changed throughout the day, becoming more sharply defined and bright at night and remaining more ephemeral during the day. The immediate environment was palpable as the weather and different light situations of a stormy April changed the perception of the piece and made the connection between time, space and movement poetically clear. Emphasizing the site-specificity of a momentary experience, it alternately glittered, jewel-like, and faded away.

Sofia Dona exhibited a minimalist video of a prefabricated house being transported on a trailer behind a truck. Shot out the front window of a moving car, the video was projected onto a screen in the center of the space, directly opposite Guo's video, so

that the viewer was placed between videos showing movement in opposite directions. Behind the screen, Natalia Matta's video from the project *Leftovers* was projected onto the rear window, so that the space was, ideally, impossibly expanded all the way to a location in the Chilean landscape, where an important part of her work had taken place.



In the rear right corner, Rosa Goudoever presented a collage and hung ear phones covered in felt: a bright red spot tying the exhibition together in the form of a red line that travelled through a

moveable wall-structure by Johannes Abendroth, all the way to Angeliki Makri's ribbon network in the front of the space.

Mario Rizzi gave an artist lecture at the opening of the exhibition. He is an artist who in this context might function as an ›insider‹ working outside mainstream institutions in the production of his work. During the talk, Makri temporarily ›closed shop‹ by ›knitting‹ the door shut, separating those inside from those outside with a network made of red ribbon. A pair of scissors for ›emergencies‹ was displayed prominently by the door and was used for ›cutting the red ribbon/tape.‹ The ribbon temporarily marked

the public realm by commenting on and commemorating the transition from ›inside‹ the white cube to ›outside‹ it in a both ironic and celebratory way.

Location ⇒ artransponder is an artists' association that has run a project space for five years on the heavily gentrified Brunnenstrasse. It was named one of the spaces that ›count as the hummus of contemporary art production in Berlin¹ and recently faced the closing of the space in May 2010. In both a literal and a metaphorical sense, artransponder, which has focused on supporting participatory projects at the interface to other disciplines, can be seen as consciously working inside and outside the ›white cube.‹

The works presented in this exhibition project play with the question of how an art space might continue after it is (re)moved from its precarious position within existing architectural structures in a rapidly transforming urban environment: as an idea, a concept, or an actual mobile space. Less activist and more politically contemplative than I expected, many of the works developed for the project seem to claim and defend a conceptual, discursive space, reminding me that this is the prerequisite for effective action.

This publication transports these ideas to artransponder's new location on Soldiner Strasse 92 and beyond. In the new location in the diverse and vibrant area around Kolonie Wedding, we've already found several former neighbors fleeing exorbitant

rent increases who have relocated there, so that lines of developed networks promise to be re-attached, re-connected and expanded.

Artists Exhibited ⇒ Sofia Dona, Carly Schmitt, Eriphyli Veneri, Angeliki Makri, Natalia Matta, Rosa van Goudoever, Yvonne Morales Traulsen, Johannes Abendroth, Xinglang Guo, Zoe Kreye, Carlos Leon-Xjimenez, Catherine Grau, Irene Izquierdo.

Artist's Lecture ⇒ Mario Rizzi's work is about storytelling, about documenting and re-enacting, about borders and engagement, rooting and uprooting, diversity and tolerance, about reality miming fiction, about finding exceptional events behind the stories of ordinary people, about utopias and prosaic globalization, about being without a land or ›below the visa line,‹ about making visible invisible forces, undisclosed emotions or unsaid memories.

Lisa Glauer

¹ Translated from: Claudia Wahjudi, ›Heiter Scheitern,‹ Tagesspiegel, April 28th, 2010.



New Bricks On The Block

Johannes Abendroth

After the ornament had been completely disregarded in early modernist architecture by influential contemporaries like Adolf Loos (*Ornament and Crime*), it gained massive popularity once again in late modernist architecture after 1960. This lasted through the 1980's. Materials like concrete, plastic and synthetic fibers made it possible to replicate a single form in large numbers and to assemble them into repetitious patterns over large surface areas. Tessellations of molded blocks were often a popular means of design in the GDR ›Kunst am Bau‹, or ›percent-for-art‹ schemes. Usually they were used as gable ends, partitions or as outer walls in Plattenbau constructions. Even though molded blocks were not a particular feature of the socialist era, today in the context of concrete settlement constructions they evoke memories of that time.

Like Plattenbau buildings which were made out of precast concrete slabs, repetitive patterns are amazingly flexible. They can be produced quickly, stored efficiently, assembled and disassembled in a very short time. As realizations of Louis Sullivan's paradigm ›form (ever) follows function,‹ tessellations of molded blocks ever follow space. Intended as ornaments, they achieve the status of mobile architecture.

The temporary installation *New Bricks On the Block* alludes to the creative potential of decorative tessellations and commemorates its aesthetic.

www.johannes-abendroth.de

Photo by Jakob Hoff.

Text was translated by Lisa Glauer and David Knowles.



Color me in arttransponder

Rosa van Goudoever

Color me in arttransponder is a transcription of (an outside work) into a gallery. The original work is called *Color me Weimar* and was located in Weimar in the winter of 2010. Another version of the work took place in Sarajevo around the same time.

Color me Weimar is a guided audio tour describing the first impressions of a foreigner in Weimar. It locates the listener by asking questions about place, space and time and questions the notion of knowledge by letting the public, mostly tourists, be informed by a dilettante.

When the work was performed in Sarajevo impressions of Weimar were placed in other surroundings, connecting and disconnecting Weimar and Sarajevo. A double portrait of two cities, talking about the tension between locating physically and mentally.

Now the work has moved to inside arttransponder and changed shape. A headphone is hung from the ceiling and the audio work adjusted and combined with collages on the wall.

Can one travel from inside and stay inside and still travel without moving?



Travelling Cube

Xinglang Guo

Mobility is something relatively still. We move with this planet every moment without realizing it. There's neither absolute mobility, nor stillness. They chase each other in a circle that never ends. Stillness is just comparatively related to the ground we step on. Sometimes mobility is just a feeling inside of people's sub-consciousness and the psychological reaction from people's vision.

The idea is to show a sort of relative mobility of physical space in the ›white cube‹. I created a video while traveling in Berlin by the public transportation (U-Bahn/S-Bahn/Bus). The video consists of two parts-daytime version and night version; they are projected alternately onto the window of the ›white cube‹ according to the time of day and night.

For me, it's a way of showing sense of mobility for the viewers. While ›travelling‹ with this cube, people would realize that it is also an exploration of the relationship between themselves and the city of Berlin. At the same time, this work brings the question of ›How to define the board of inside and outside,‹ for it inducts the perspective of outside into a conventional gallery space and creates another dimension between these two spheres.



Escape

Angeliki Makri

Separating those inside from those outside by a network made of red ribbon, the gallery's door was woven shut and temporarily closed. It took about 30 minutes to knit/weave the space framed by the door shut. A pair of scissors for »emergencies« was left inside by the door ...

From the outside, the web divided the white cube from the public outside, protecting, somehow the inside public. Only the people inside could cut through the net and ... escape. This escape refers to the real »escape« of the place itself since arttransponder is currently facing the space's closing.

Escape transferred the public installation *Ribbons* (next page), which was done in Thessaloniki in 2008, into the galleryspace of arttransponder.

Photos by Lisa Glauer.





Ribbons

Angeliki Makri

The performance titled *Ribbons* by Angeliki Makri was held on May 7th, 2008 on Dagli Street in the heart of Thessaloniki. Employing an artistic approach, the performance dealt with Wim Wenders' »Faraway, So Close!«, or the well known phrase in Antonis Samarakis' book titled »Ziteitai Elpis« (»Hope Wanted«) that says: »never before have the roofs of houses been so close and the hearts of men so far apart,« using an artistic practice that takes us back to the late 1960's, when the term »process art« was first used.

Following an invitation extended by the artist to the local daily Press and community, she prepared the reception of the project, which was positive beyond all hope and expectation.

She used red ribbons, which signified a vehicle-link-tie-means of communication, and the end-result was a complex, intricate mesh among the balconies of the buildings, as in the interpersonal relationships that were formed and/or strengthened during the performance.

The work is the ephemeral artistic result of collective action under conditions of utter freedom, with the artist playing the role of the shareholder-shaper-regulator of things, with emphasis not only on the procedural aspect of the event, but also on its socio-political aspect. This is an effort that touches upon

one of Art's current issues, namely its identification with life – and, as we all know, art draws close to politics when it is identified with life. It refers to a socio-ideological action, recommending a way out of individualistic and almost autistic modern artistic introversion. In this particular case this was achieved through the collectivisation of the result by including not only those directly involved, but also the broader community through its announcement via the local television channels.

In her own way she aims at the demystification of the artistic process and at the ritualistic initiation of the viewer to creative thought and action, transforming the latter into a contributing factor of the project, or even into a co-creator. This concerns art's critical dialogue with the real world, based on the common principle of raising the viewer's awareness of current problems and situations that function on a specific and also universal level.

As opposed to a-political art today, with the social element giving way to the private element, the artist essentially removes herself from society, interacts and generates new ideas, criticises and detects new functions, only to redefine her very self in the end.

This text was first printed in »Action Field Kodra '08 catalogue«, Thessaloniki 2008.

Photo by Sophia Papakosta.



Cuando se enfrentan, saben que son el límite uno del otro

Yvonne Morales Traulsen

»Cuando se enfrentan, saben que son el límite uno del otro.«

—Coral Bracho

Spatially speaking inside and outside are counter-concepts, the borderline between them is visually obvious. What is inside that cannot be outside and vice versa? Must a container and its content remain physically static? Is a container only adjudged to inside spaces? Is the outside not also a container? What happens when this borderline is altered?

Attached to the idea of mobility I found interesting to actually start moving the cube as a response to the process that arttransponder is going through and also as a response to the content of the exhibition itself.

My particular interest is to accentuate a dialog between in and out, to alter the borders, to move them and erase them. To project a state of transition and mutation. To question their limits.



How to exist?

Process Institute

In the advent of artrransponder closing its space and the Process Institute founding itself as an artist collective without a permanent space, we entered a common ground of questioning. If temporality and mobility are the contemporary answer to sustain culture, we want to initiate an invested exploration of the possibilities of this phenomenon. The Process Institute: *how to exist?* poses concrete questions of how to parasite spaces, collaborate with other institutions, funding possibilities, what kind of infrastructures are needed in art-production, as well as exploring the deeper issues of adaptation, appropriation, migration, and how to remain rooted while mobile. During a one-month residency, the Process Institute used artrransponder's space as an office to establish itself as a collective through introspective and external inquiries. A common mission amongst its members was established through workshoping and a conscious approach to collaboration. Networks and guidance were sought through a series of interviews about working structures with groups with similar approaches and interests. An archive was compiled as a result of these inquiries, which will develop further as an open, practical resource to assist others on a similar trajectory.

mobile office ⇒ a platform for active artistic research

The *mobile office* was developed and tested as a mobile research platform for an active, grass-roots artistic practice. We believe that mobility is a strength, as it enhances our context specific analysis and prompts a richer, more flexible and permeable research process. This strategy enables us to insert ourselves into a given context when we are actively engaging in a project. Therefore we choose a public working space that migrates according to our creative needs and interests, while still relating to community, everyday living, social and spatial possibilities, and fostering public creativity.

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NEXT TO TEMPELHOF AIRPORT (NEUKÖLLN)

THE INTEREST ON CONTESTED SPACES
~~MAKE~~ PUSHES US TO RESEARCH
ON SITE. THE MOBILE OFFICE
ATTRACT SOME ~~PASSER-BY~~ PEOPLE.





The American Reputation Aid Society

Carly Schmitt

»Food is strength, and food is peace, and food is freedom, and food is a helping to people around the world whose good will and friendship we want.«

—President John F. Kennedy, 1961

Our Story ⇒ The American Reputation Aid Society was established in 2009 by founder Carly Schmitt in Weimar Germany. Schmitt came to Germany in 2008 on a American-German exchange fellowship, which immediately put her in the role of American culture ambassador. Born into a family of food-enthusiasts, Schmitt is the fourth generation in a family of German immigrants. Her Great-grandparents lived in New Ulm, Minnesota and ran a delicatessen specializing in the traditional recipes brought over with them from Germany. Schmitt's great aunt also went on to run an epicure shop. A more ›high-end-twist‹ to her parents enterprise in St. Paul Minnesota, but each weekend her mother would travel up specifically from New Ulm to bake the bread for her shop. In this next generation, Schmitt is now returning to the land of her family's heritage with the ›tried and true,‹ great-American-recipes she grew up with. She

hopes that by working together we can shed some light on the complexities of American culture, and spark a dialog that asks: »How can we all become better members of the global community?«

Reflections on ARAS Actions in Berlin; Pushing the Elastic Cube ⇒ In collaboration with arttransponder and The Process Institute, from March 27th to April 1st the American Reputation Aid Society conducted a series of ›trial runs‹ in Berlin public spaces. Below you will find excerpts from an e-mail sent by the artist after her time in Berlin, reflecting upon the experience.

April 6th, 2010 ⇒ The ARAS is up and running and I wanted to tell you all about it and send some pictures. I was in Berlin last weekend for the project, I employed the Aid services of the ARAS aid wagon at four different places around Berlin with much success. My first attempt was in Mauer Park on a Sunday afternoon. It amazed me how international Berlin is, I only spoke one person in German the whole day, crazy! However at the same time this was good because people could read the sign ›American Reputation Aid Society‹ and understand what was going on here. I had many nice conversations about food, culture and cultural perceptions of the USA (exactly what I was hopping for).



The next day I questioned why I was trying to target »markets« and decided to set up the aid wagon on a busy neighborhood street in between commercial Establishments, bakeries and restaurants. I was out there for an hour, and not one person wanted to engage with me. I guess this justified my choice to be working in established markets, where this process of walking by a cart and engaging in some sort of an exchange is more common. In the following days I performed the aid action at the Brandenburg Gate (because of the charged connection between that landmark and world politics, also being directly in front of the US Embassy.) And at the Turkish Market. These were very successful spots with lots of international visitors to Berlin ready to engage in conversations or at least be tempted by baked goods. Important to note: I was asked to leave the Turkish market after one hour and a half because the »Marktmeister« said I was not registered with the market and giving unfair competition to the other baked goods vendors in the area. I left without much fuss. The cart was well designed and easy to move

around a city, I took the U-Bahn everywhere. People responded enthusiastically to the cart. Many people came by to talk not because they were hungry, but rather because the cart was so charming. Conversations came easily, the name of the project is a very good indicator of the territory it's dealing with and people responded enthusiastically. One Italian man even told me, »hey, I should do this too, for Italy, Italy also needs some reputation Aid.«

I was not charging money for the baked goods, but did accept donations when people pushed. In all I took in 32 euros in donations, which is about exactly what I spent on baking supplies.

The most typical interaction when like this: Aid recipient: »Did you make these yourself? What are you doing here?« Me: »Yes, this came from ... (then explain the personal significance of the item to them) a real American brownie, apple pie, peanut butter cookie, etc. I'm showcasing good examples of what America can be as a way of providing aid or help

to the American reputation.« Aid recipient: »Ha ha, that's funny ... yeah American does need some reputation help ... but I think it's a lot better not that Obama's in power, or?« Me: »Yeah, it helps ... but I still sometimes feel like our reputation is tarnished by the things that are exported, from food to pop culture.« Aid recipient: (usually offers up a story of when they were in the US, or what they heard about the US) Me: (give a counter story) Aid recipient: »Well, thanks for the baked good, this was really, really, good. And good luck with your project.« I was really surprised how easy it was to have these types of conversations. Things went much better than I had even expected it would, and after this experience I have a clear idea of how I will re-calibrate and continue providing American Reputation Aid with this mobile structure.

For more information, about ARAS and how you too can get involved please visit our website:

www.usrepaid.org



EXPO

Eriphyli Veneri

I realize a one day performance in the public space of Berlin. With the persona of the flasher, I showed off images of gallery based works I produced in the past, attached to the inside of my trench-coat. As a mobile exhibition space, my body, I, the artist will be carried and flashed my work to the passers-by. Where is the art and what is an artist (Who decides on this)? Which is the connection between the art and the artist? What is the relation between art, the artist and the audience? Who is the audience? Which can be the possible relations between art, the art and the gallery?

Two large-scale prints, depicting the trench-coat-dark glasses figure, one viewed en face and one from behind: whereas the en face one will indirectly be presenting the gallery-based works (as attached on the trench-coat), the one behing will be creating a gap between gallery and public art (the performance artist's back to the gallery).

The prints were accompanied by a video documentation of the performance.

The title *EXPO* refers both to exposing or exhibiting artwork, but also to exposing oneself (on one hand the flasher, on the other hand the public artist immediately exposed in real life).

