

The Process of the Project

My intention is to adjust myself in a social system with the identity of an artist, rather than with the notion of what reflects on my national identity. I first have to observe this social system I live in, and then I inform myself on historical and philosophical facts. I also have to inform myself in terms of site-specific political and social issues. Here, in Weimar, I can distinguish two main categories of interest. This city is a place very much burdened, in terms of both political and of cultural history. To create minor histories, or change the history of a place, the interesting part is not the history of the place itself, but how the people live with in it. One has to act on a site and at the same time theorize and conceptualize his action. Personally speaking, as an outsider, I have to accept this position courageously, because I am in a transitional space.

-From the Virtual to the Actual

It may sound absurd, but the inspiration for the form of the project comes from a virtual representation.

As a kid I was a TV junkie. I think I belong to a generation whose mentality was literally fed TV with a spoon. One of my heroes was Claudius Caesar. There was a British TV-series shown on the Greek TV called *I, Claudius*.¹¹ He was depicted as an outsider. He was ugly, crippled and the *fool* of the palace. But the TV-watcher could see from his thoughts that he had a strategy behind all that. In fact, someone could see he was the cleverest, and he used his disadvantages to get away from the mean conspiracies of the corrupted people of the palace. In a way his was acting undercover.



The film *The Man Who Fell To Earth*,¹² by Nicolas Roeg with protagonist David Bowie, depicts also a similar case, an Alien who brings advanced technology to our planet, wearing the *human appearance*. Only that this Alien-outsider didn't manage to escape the meanness of the mankind, and at the same time he got stuck to the *other*, he got stuck into his *human suit* and behavior. Though "he brought the future to earth", a theme depicted in the movie with his excellent technological inventions, he never managed to return back to his planet. Woody Allen, being an American-Jew, ironically sets up in his film *Zelig*,¹³ a chameleon figure. A human being that has the ability to "change" his personality according to the people with

¹¹ *I, Claudius*, directed by Herbert Wise, 1976 UK. British History-Drama TV-Series.

¹² *The Man who Fell to Earth*, directed by Nicolas Roeg, 1976 UK. British Sci-fi Drama.

¹³ *Zelig*, by Woody Allen, 1982 USA. American comedy film.

whom he interacts, a disease that results in a literal transformation into every person who would meet with him. What happens, in general, is that he becomes a polymorphic creature, a multi-personality/no-own character persona. As a freak, he is confronted variously with his surrounding, always as an object of exploitation for the sake of each idea, coming from diverse social groups, and perceptions (labor unions, scientists, politicians, mass media, people commodity industry members, etc.). One way or another, in reality he is a creature without personal choice,



without personal belief and expression, he is the *Human-Chameleon*. In other words, all the various forms of the American outsider reflected on one 'surface'. The director sets him up in this position to reflect the negative aspects of the common, oppressed by the system -an american citizen in exclusion. The citizen of this homogenous society that on

one hand absorbs differences and on the other has too many inner contradictions of socio-political categories. Only our society has the tendency to make a show out of everything, and simultaneously make a hero, idolizing, and celebrating the uncanny. *Zelig* is celebrated in a society of the mass.

A similar to this situation is given by Kafka, who presents the unpersonalized, prey-citizen of the western, bureaucratic monster-state, Josef K.¹⁴ His protagonist obviously has no identity. This citizen is in search of a definition of a personal identity, and a way out of unidentified guilt. He is trying to get out of the grey-costume pattern of indifferantiation. The same taste we get from the film of Terry Gilliam, *Brasil*,¹⁵ but with much more references to the futurist idea of the technologically developed monster-state.

-The Tactic of Appearance and Presence

Inspired by these fictitious hero cases, but mostly from the comic-tragic figure of Zelig, of a staged/directed personality and the allegory of social *chameleonism*, I wanted to put myself in a similar set up, to direct (play-act) myself in actions, but with a different to the film maker's expectations. The setup should be in reality, using tactics of the enemy (the absorbing capitalist system), being at the same time undercover and revealing my real identity, acting like an art-spy and a real employee, the way I wanted to present it. I did temporary, mini-practices in chosen jobs. I



¹⁴ Roger Behrens questioning subjectivity makes a juxtaposition of both cases, *Zelig* and *Josef K.*, Kafka's figure in his book *Der Prozeß (The Trial)*.

¹⁵ "Die Ungleichzeitigkeit des realen Humanismus, Konsequenzen, Experimente und Montagen in kritischer Theorie", in the chapter "Strategien des Mißlingens" Franz Kafka-Woody Allen (Traude Junghans Verlag – Cuxhaven-Dartford)

¹⁵ *Brasil*, directed by Terry Gilliam, 1985, UK. British comedy, Sci-fi, fantasy film.

reversed the role of the individual without personal choice, with the freedom that is given to me by my standing position.

Using this scheme, this "mechanization" for practically, transforming my job-character, my "appearance" according to the pattern of each working environment, as a purpose I basically had to:



- Enter the local community and gain the trust of the people.
- Exercise against the alienation of the artist from the real world.
- Act against the alienation of the public from the artist.
- Have an immediate, authentic experience of how each specific functional part of this city works.
- Work on how the public perceives the artist's work beyond the protected and institutionalized space of the Museum and the Gallery.
- Creating my own route in the city as a cultural tactical resistance.

"The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over entirely, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The "proper" is a victory of space over time - it is always on the watch of opportunities that must be seized "on the wing". Whatever it wins it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities". The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. And so are, more generally, many "ways of operating": victories of the "weak" over the "strong" (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.), clever tricks, knowing how to get away of things, "hunter's cunning", maneuvers, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike. The Greeks called these "ways of operating" Métiis." ¹⁶



Indeed, going along with Michel De Certeau's theory on tactics of the weak, the idea of "Repetitively changing occupation" stems from a desire to carry out the image of a polymorphic being, whose talent is the successful achievement of self-piloting in adverse and unfavorable circumstances. I name this polymorphic being, because it has a specific ability of self-piloting, borrowing from technical terminologies from other

¹⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of everyday life*, in the General Introduction, chapter: The consumer production, Trajectories, tactics, and rhetorics, p. 19.

disciplines such as theater, film, chemistry, mythology, etc.: a “joint-er”, a catalyst, the “equal replica of the protagonist”, or the “protagonist idea”, which brings the “Trickster” (of the West-Indian mythology), or, Hermes of the Greek mythology,

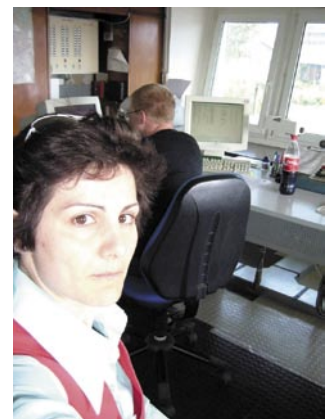


and such figures, to mind. The talent of this figure -who in this case is that of the artist expressed as a living replica of his artwork in performative act, together with the pre-mentioned mechanization of art-function- is that he can bring into communication different parts of a whole that are otherwise scattered. This figure represents the “other”, the “outsider”. In reality, it is a figure that can not be totally socialized. Yet this figure, when mythified, represents totalities and

abstract social personae. I define the adverse circumstances mentioned above as the difficulties that the individual confronts in the era of late-stage capitalism during globalization. These difficulties are of personality and character surviving in a new order of things era, or more preferably, difficulties of creating a qualitative, personally chosen life-style. Concerning the way of how the individual progresses in a social sector: it can be defined by the freedom that the person has, to choose his profession, according to its qualities and the actual talent to a categorized, or, a specific implementation in the functional social system. On the other hand, how is this functional social system is going to maintain progress, since unemployment, or precarious employment, the “One-Euro Job” policy of the government, and in general, flexible employment in international corporations, becomes the main occupation for more and more people on the globe?

Richard Sennett indicates definitions of the terms *job* and *career*, as they are connected nowadays to the idea of what *flexible capitalism* means, according to their original meanings:

*“The word “job” in English of the fourteenth century meant a lump or piece of something that could be carted around. Flexibility today brings back this arcane sense of the job, as people do lumps of labor, pieces of work, over the course of a lifetime.”*¹⁷



“Career”, for instance, in its English origins meant a road for carriages, and as eventually applied to labour meant a lifelong channel for one’s economic pursuits. Flexible capitalism

¹⁷ Richard Sennett, *The corrosion of the character, The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*,1998.

*has blocked the straight roadway of career, diverting employees suddenly from one kind of work into another.*¹⁸

Wondering to what extent one can criticize this social system, offering as propositions the following: coming from the position of the artist in training, being a part of a rising social system, fed with it and progressed in it, being a privileged westerner, and finally living on a continent "admired" worldwide for its civilization and history, a continent rich in heritage and culture, it is like hitting your own face. Belonging to this in transit generation, that has the opportunity to study, and make a free choice of trade, in contradiction to older generations, who had to follow the flow of immigration, in and out of their own country, to man factories and working sites of the up-growing urban areas, plying trades that more or less were imposed on them, one feels privileged.

Could this criticism, produced from the reflections on this system, also become part of the institutionalized system? Miwon Kwon says:

*"...the commodification of the artist is not completely accurate, because is not the figure of the artist per se as a personality or a celebrity, that is produced/consumed in an exchange with the institution. ...the very nature of the commodity as a cipher of production and labor relations is no longer bound to the realm of manufacturing (of things) but defined in relation to the service and management industries. The artist as an overspecialized aesthetic object maker has been anachronistic for a long time already. What they provide now, rather than produce, are aesthetic, often "critical-artistic" services."*¹⁹

We are now on the threshold of a unified Europe. This same society perceived as an abstract idea has a new face. The exchange of populations and immigration has a new face as well. Belonging to the generation of the artists who are called to contribute with their work and presence in the construction of the new European model:

*"At documenta X last summer, several media and art practitioners met in a project titled Hybrid Workspace, and later called Deep Europe. Echoing the words of the Bulgarian artist Luchezar Boyadjiev, "Europe is at its deepest where there are a lot of overlapping identities", the German critical writer Inke Arns characterizes the notion of Deep Europe as follows: "With the notion of Deep Europe we refer to a new understanding of Europe, which leads away from the horizontal measurement of the size of a territory (thus including East/West etc.), towards something that could be called a vertical mapping, or a vertical measuring of the different cultural layers and identities in Europe."*²⁰

¹⁸ Richard Sennett, *The corrosion of the character*, The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism, 1998.

¹⁹ Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another, Site-Specificity and Locational Identity*, in the chapter Unhinging of Site Specificity, Itinerant artists, p.50.

²⁰ From the online article *Statement for the final discussion about exclusion and inclusion in the art world*, by Edit Andras, Euroland-Money Nations, www.republicart.org