

YOUNG ART
16 SEPTEMBER – 27 NOVEMBER 2011
KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

TEXTS IN THE EXHIBITION

The Zurich-based artist duo **Biefer/Zraggen** began working together sporadically in 1983, collaborating on a regular basis between 1986 and 1999. During this period the work of Marcel Biefer (born 1959) and Beat Zraggen (born 1958) was awarded a number of art bursaries and was shown in prestigious exhibitions and institutions both at home and abroad, such as the Biennale of Sydney in 1992 and the Venice Biennale 1993.

The conceptual, predominantly sculptural works offer a humorous take on the themes of archaeology, ethnology and the modern art business. Between 1985 and 1988, the duo embarked on a forensic exploration of our built environment by digging up the concrete floors of exhibition galleries. As archaeologists of the present day, they also unearth artefacts of a fictional apocalypse, buried remnants of our culture that include the 'Megalith from a Family of 12', a series of concrete columns reminiscent of cultic relics.

Stefan Burger was born in Müllheim, Germany, in 1977, but now lives and works in Zurich. His work explores the frontiers of photography; yet although 'photography' is the starting point for most of his works, they ultimately take on a wide variety of media forms. 'Analogue Monument' (2008), consisting of a 16-mm film, a projector and an Ilford studio umbrella, is one such example of 'expanded photography.' The film depicts the demolition of the Agfa factory in Munich and thus evokes, with a touch of melancholy, the end of an era, namely the age of analogue photography. Simultaneously, the absurdly ironic arrangement of the work's individual parts and the frantically rotating umbrella lend a refreshingly light-hearted touch to the whole.

The Israeli artist **Keren Cytter** (born 1977) produced the three-channel video installation 'Cross. Flowers. Rolex' (2009) for the exhibition accompanying the National Gallery Prize for Young Art at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. The work is based on shocking yet absurd news items from the Internet that are claimed to have happened in 2009. There is a woman who is alleged to have stood up and carried on living after being shot in the head, a man who twice jumped from the fifth floor of a skyscraper and survived, and another who was supposedly murdered openly in the street with 'eleven knife stabs in five seconds.'

Keren Cytter replays these horrifying scenes in 'Cross. Flowers. Rolex' using actors, openly revealing their theatrical staging. The filmed dialogues, too, are clearly recognizable as the artist's inventions. The videos masterfully play with – and on – the clichés of violence and death and form part of Cytter's psychological studies of our everyday dramas and social disintegration. 'Cross. Flowers. Rolex' is an allegory of human emotional states with an eminently surreal flavour.

The work of **Latifa Echakhch** (born 1974 in El Khnansa, Morocco) explores political and cultural structures and systems. Adopting an approach that is both poetic and conceptual, she reflects on our often-prejudiced perception of the unfamiliar – of national and religious identities. Frequently, she takes everyday objects from western or eastern cultural environments and by slightly altering them she opens up a completely new perspective and meaning of these allegedly familiar objects.

'Fantasia', the work shown here, consists of nineteen bare flagpoles painted black, criss-crossing randomly and symbolizing the dissolution of national identities. It was created for the exhibition 'Shifting Identities,' which ran from June to August 2008 at the Kunsthaus Zürich and was Latifa Echakhch's first institutional presentation.

Haris Epaminonda was born in Nicosia, Cyprus, in 1980 and has lived and worked in Berlin for some years. Epaminonda employs a wide range of media, but central to her oeuvre is the principle of collage. She often uses found materials, be they illustrations from books, films or sculptures, and assembles them into multi-layered spatial installations and groups of works. She thus creates marvellously poetic and, at the same time, enigmatic pieces that exist in a kind of suspense – as with the five Polaroids shown here. They are part of a series of 365 such photographs created since 2008, each depicting an illustration from a book. The series creates the impression of a journey around the world, and is part travelogue, part anthropological research and investigation of colonial history. Epaminonda's work is located precisely in this 'in-between state': it is everything in one and yet none of all that, but quite simply a wonderful work of art.

Tobias Madison (born 1985) works with a wide variety of media. But he returns again and again to the 'Yes I can' flags of the Radisson hotel chain, using them as canvases for paintings that are always a cooperative effort with others – both artists and non-artists. The work purchased in this case was produced together with fellow artist Vittorio Brodmann. The paintings recall the formal idiom of the Abstract Expressionists, but with an ironic take on their grand painterly gesture. The choice of colours for the works, for example, is derived quite simply from the colour composition of major international logos; here, for instance, the 'RB' in the title stands for Red Bull. One logo becomes another, or indeed a work that is by Tobias Madison even as, in a sense, it is not. It is worth noting that Madison began working with the 'Yes I can' flags before the phrase came to worldwide attention as part of US President Obama's election campaign.

Cat Tuong Nguyen was born in Vietnam in 1969 but left when he was a child, ending up after an adventurous journey in Switzerland, where he now lives and works. This biographical background, together with themes such as migration and identity, constantly flows into his art, as with 'Milgram's Wake' (2010), which deals in an emphatically physical sense with the clash of cultures. To produce it, Cat Tuong Nguyen copied diagrams, pictures and fragments of text drawn from medical textbooks on the psychopathology of westerners and sewed them onto scraps of clothing. Partly, it is a reference to the sweatshops of his former homeland, Vietnam, in which people struggle to survive under conditions of extreme adversity; but he also confronts this economic hardship with the psychological suffering of western society. 'Milgram's Wake' is a striking image of our globalized world and the coming together of widely differing values and desires. It also represents a key stage in the development of the artist's experimental approach to photography.

Andro Wekua was born in Sochumi, Georgia in 1977. In 2001 he moved to Zurich, but now lives and works as an artist in Berlin. His production encompasses a wide range of media, from drawing and painting to video and sculpture. Wekua produces works in which the theme of memory – both individual and collective – plays a central role. He often creates dream-like stages populated by doll-like doppelgänger figures. At the core of his work lies the principle of collage, which enables him to combine quite different and, in some cases, mutually alien materials to form a new whole and thus to distil visually powerful moments that embed themselves in the memory.