

# WeAreTheArtists



Petra Maitz and Jonathan Meese in Hamburg. Foto by Andreas Krueger, 1998

## Update: Vienna

By [petra.maitz@chello.at](mailto:petra.maitz@chello.at)

### Love story

"he petra, he puts you in his jacket....", the viennese dealer is talking to me? He? he was one the most "viennese" antique dealers of town, now he thinks he has made it...but....This happened one year ago when John Bock was invited to do a one person show with this gallery in Vienna. I knew about because John was talking to me some months ago and he mentioned that dealer in Vienna and that he, John, were a little pissed off because the man was sort of typical pseudosophisticated....typical viennese, not really cool. So but John agreed doing it and he knew there's no better gallery in Vienna. There are more than 10 reasons why you must leave Vienna as an artist, even more as a female artist. You don't find some interesting men....no real fun places to go and no people to talk to....no interesting artists living there.... there's at last of course no good art in this city....as you know.... So I went north....that cool and empty land-scapes without any mountains and the river Elbe, which I love very much....also the sand on the riverbanks in the cities harbourdocks.Vienna-Hamburg .....there I met many very cool people, who I never would have seen in Vienna....and the first club I visited was the famous "subito" in the Stresemannstrasse, Blix Bargeld and Dieter Meier were the first people I met there....some weeks later I got to know the Hamburg musicians and the best Transibar at the Reeperbahn.... All of a sudden I found myself as a student at the art school Hamburg, where Sigmar Polke used to teach in the late 80ties. No Polke was there anymore but some young german boys....they put a lot of money in the machine and drunk a lot of beer....it was the most effort to hear full bottles falling down and being amazed that for 5 Dmarks you got 2 bottles....sometimes... We all became friends....John, Jonathan, Ascan, Klaus... Bendix und Pia....., Rüdiger..We, of course were very bored.... to do what? at the art school? Somebody has to entertain us, we needed to laugh about the burnout of hollywood and the new economy-bourgeoisie and especially about economics of capitalism..... sold-out arthistory....and our individual drama..... the nothing of an individual...the form of selfestimated senselessness...And how to sell that? John started putting everything together and wrote on the school desks.. and explained with much academic seriousness, what is important : "art, success and love..". He showed me the idols of his rural thinking..... Winona Ryder and Josef Beuys were his favorites.



John Bock and Petra Maitz at the HfBK Hamburg. Foto by Jonathan Meese, 1995

He learned that from his studies in economy....he was a guy, who used his knowledge about statistic in economics for his ideas in art...which was very clever...to explain what is art today...it is economics of old ideas...as we know...and personal performance....i was very impressed by his character.... of his natural behaviour and his fine very quiet private virgine soul, we fell in love....this was 95....i had to go soon after to new york, i had this grant for the new york studio from austrian artsection. He loved me strongly...I was very unsecure....about myself, he was so young in love....unexperienced lover, but very intense lover....i was nervous,he was nervous....but we had to go on in life as artists, i finished art school very early... in 95 after 5 semester....he went on studying economics and art and finished both one

year later when i came back from new york...i had experienced the cool manhattan clique, i was part of a group around Marian Ziola from ACE gallery...she worked for a los angeles based dealer...i think his name was douglas christmas...he supported robert smithson in his times. John started doing his lectures in small art locations in Vienna and frankfurt, etc....I everytime watched him, loved it...then i suddenly stopped loving him, he became very straight and behind his career..... I found another german guy...who was much younger then John...they were friends in the beginning...jonathan learned a lot from john, they were together in manhattan, came back to germany...didn't talk anymore to each other... Jonathan was more a prince of total unmale behaviour and we hadn't sex, we loved the trendy names of us...I was emma peel for him, he was the zy-klop...i bought his first student works....in 95....it was a sewing box with a porsche-matchboxcar....i loved it....i still have it on my dessouscase.... also john gave me some works....we did drawings together...very funny...and john did one painting of Coney island series for me...which I sent to asia to do a wall hanging-embroidery from this sketch... My love stories....my love for artists.....my love for art..... I am now returning to vienna from switzerland, it's christmas time and the STUNDENHOTEL is over.....being with women is not as funny .....it is my "postgraduate studies" and much more exhausting to deal with compared to nice men like john and jonathan..... But the story is that some people make their profile through young tough artists...so with john....he became one of the most interesting young artists from Hamburg/Berlin....there is no reason to think that you can know everything about a young successful artist who spreads his ideas like a fountain into the world....so shut up you pseudosophisticated Viennese dealer..... You don't know nothing..... about us....love to art will never die...art will never die!!!!

## Update: Bangalore

By [aeneaswilder@hotmail.com](mailto:aeneaswilder@hotmail.com)

Dear Jim,

Greetings from the departure lounge at Mumbai Airport. Our flight has been delayed due to fog and we will not be departing from these shores for another six hours or so. Plenty of time therefore to let you know about the latest project I have been involved in. As you know I have been in India for a month now. However since I last wrote, from the sun kissed beaches of Kovalum, it has been quite a challenge developing a project under such a disorientating atmosphere. Everything happens one hour after the appointed time; some times two. Still, The KHOJ International Artists organisation have done well under the circumstances. It was no mean feat organising an arts project on such a scale in the chaotic environment that was Bangalore. We were twenty-three artists in all, eleven of us from outside India. Eating and sleeping at the Indian Institute of Science guest accommodation was a palace compared to the roadside slums we drove past each day as we were bused into town to work on site at the Venkatappa Art Gallery. The gallery was an odd venue and the majority of artists chose to work within the grounds of the gallery rather than inside the building itself, which in the end was more suited to the time based media works presented. Many of the artists were new to me and, as always, it is a pleasure to discover the breadth of creativity outside the glitterati world of glossy art magazines and their collector/curator/dealer/director/ patrons. They constitute such a shimmering but small tip of the iceberg. It is a shame you did not get to meet any of these KHOJ artists when I used to drag you round the openings back in Edinburgh using that stalwart carrot on a stick \_ free alcohol. We had many good nights listening to traditional songs sung by some of the Indian artist. There was also free curry available each day of the workshop, which for an old chef like yourself, may have held your interest longer than the art I fear.

From day one the German couple Dagmer Keller & Martin Wittwer were off producing an architectural cinematic panorama with a single minded devotion that reflected their Dusseldorf Academy background. A single minded devotion was also evident in the illustrative painting work of Nan Khushiya Shyam, a tribal artist (some call it folk art) from Bhopal, who has carried on the work of her husband, he himself having committed suicide, after being fleeced at the hands of an international art dealer, three years ago. Jehangir Jani from Mumbai and Karl Antao from Ahmedabad both created works dealing with the religious riots in Gujerat and their ongoing reverberations within the fabric of Indian Society. Jehangir created minimalist alters which were symbolically cleansed with fire in a private performance ceremony witnessed only by those few people canny enough to observe his actions. Karl preferred a more literal approach installing an inflatable mattress held aloft by the points of household kitchen knives, the favoured weapon of the rioters.

You would have liked the over all feel of the exhibition even if you would have not fathomed all the art works presented. The Sri Lankan artist Manjula Priyadarshana created a visually impressive sight specific work, connecting the adjacent art museums reflection with the grounds of the art gallery by way of a cascade of red cloth flowing down the wall and into the moat surrounding our venue.

As I mentioned in my earlier letter, the auto-Rickshaw is an ever-present part of life in India. Three artists chose to work with these icons of Indian transportation. Both Melina Berkenwald from Argentina and Betsabee Romero from Mexico chose to focus on the physical reality of the auto-Rickshaw, exploring its impact as a vehicle of self-expression. Melina developed an intimate space surrounded by the painted works adorning the rear view windows of most auto rickshaws, while Betsabee furthered her explorations into the way in which she can impact on the culture of the auto(mobile) through her infinite imagination. The Indonesian artist Pius Sigit Kun-

coro chose to use the auto Rickshaw as the vehicle by which you were taken on a mystery tour to the places of Bangalore dear to our very own rickshaw driver, Uma who had been assigned to us for the duration of the event. It was rare indeed to be charged the correct fair for a rickshaw ride otherwise.

What impressed me the most about this whole event was the opportunity to attend presentation evenings where each artists showed examples of and talked about their work. These were very informal affairs and offered us all a deeper insight into the workings of each artist. Some of the artists were elder statesmen, some were still green, others having participated in the biennales of this world or had their works snapped up by the bastions of high art. Only one artist chose to inflate his ego beyond the physical confines of our group, showing us all his buttocks and waxing lyrical about Aristotle and what true art really is. I had to walk out of this slide talk after half an hour as I realised that not only was the artist talking shite, but also that he was not even half way through his general introduction to the topic. Maybe the irony was lost on me when this artist, Inder Salim from New Delhi chose to exhibit his own shit during the exhibition, as a "memento mori" from a performance to which we were (thankfully) not privy. That may sound entertaining from the comfort of your sofa back in bonnie Scotland but it was excruciating at the time.

Thankfully there were other artworks that made a big impression. K.T. Shiva Prasad from Hassan created a large double doored installation where by you, as the participant, could symbolically lock away unwanted memories by fixing an available padlock to this door, and then afterward throwing away the key. This shamanistic performance meditation really worked and by the end of the exhibition the door heaved under the weight of the padlocks and, I suspect, the memories of buttocks. Who would have thought that there were so many memories waiting to be banished from the mind!

My project was realised with the help of a local graphic designer Nandesh. We commissioned a 3 metre by 6 metre billboard to be painted. This was installed on the perimeter of the gallery grounds, facing out onto the street. The billboard company did a fantastic job rendering the Bollywood stars Jyotika and Govinda in acid pinks and yellows so that they were barely recognisable as great film stars. The eyes were cut away, so that you could look out from behind the facade onto the street in front. Above their heads in beautiful Kanada script (the state language of Karnataka), was a translation from the Robert Burns poem "To a Louse". You will remember the line no doubt "to see ourselves as others see us". The work was of course interactive, with steps allowing the audience to ascend to the level of the eyes. When I have time I will send you some pictures. You would have liked this project, as the main audience for my work this time was not that of the gallery going public but the tens of thousands of commuters passing by the billboard every hour. I should mention that the traffic congestion in Bangalore is both beautiful and horrific at the same time!



Aeneas Wilder, Billboard installation in Bangalore, 2003

If you did not catch us on New Delhi Television while vegetating in front of your satellite dish (why not I wonder? The programme was repeated 10 times), then you can always brows through [www.khojworkshop.org](http://www.khojworkshop.org) to see some of the works created.

Well time is flying and I hope to be too, soon enough. I trust all is well in Auld Reekie and look forward to seeing you there at some point. I am off to Japan again to do several more solo shows this year, so I won't be back in bonnie Scotland in the near future. However I am always keeping an ear out for the call from my homeland.

With best wishes for now, Aeneas.

## Update: Bucarest

By [vetanow@yahoo.com](mailto:vetanow@yahoo.com)

So, what do we have here in Bucharest, Romania, artistically speaking? We have exhibitions, snow, books, Internet lists, just like everywhere else. And probably just like everywhere else people are coming more to see shows if the artist is famous and well established and it is good to be seen in such a company. Most of the exhibitions are low budget, and rarely you can see what it would be for us a „high budget exhibition". Does it make it better? If the prints are huge and there are 10 video projectors is this enough? Is this the key to a success? Here, it can be! Because this is the country which had 10000\$ budget for an international Biennial (in Iasi). What else?

Our Prime Minister is buying art! What sort of art? Last year around his birthday one art gallery-shop in Bucharest has increased its sale ten times. That gallery is specialized on paintings (mainly local failed impressionists) and sculptures (bronze). I heard he recently understood that photography



is an art too, I still won't vote for him.

I do not know if it is harder then elsewhere, but it is hard to be an artist in Romania. The art market is ,missing' and the majority of ,public taste' has stopped around impressionists. Why? Even we had experimental art (super8 films, installation, land art), since 1960 it was underground and we had only heard of it after 1990. We had 40 years of portraits (all with our nation ,beloved son and daughter'). Artists have been in jail, or have responded to oppression with ,neo-orthodox style' (mainly paintings with religious atmosphere when religious believes were forbidden). But if you want more details and facts you can read the book of Ileana Pintilie ,Romanian Actionism'.

It is hard but exciting! As an artist you can be a pioneer. Now is the time of changing. So low budget artists are struggling together with low budget curators and gallerists, or something like that.

In September or October there will be the opening of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Casa Poporului, our dearest Parliament Building, the second largest building in the world. That can be a chance for us. Who would have come for the opening if the museum would have been placed else where? Lucky us to have such a building that all the foreigners found it amazing. Or maybe we shall thank to our ex (Ceausescu). Personally I do not worry about that. There are constantly fresh flowers on his grave. Hmm, that was morbid.

So what is going on here?

We are struggling, we are trying, I hope somebody sees us.

## Update: Erlangen

By skriemann@hotmail.com

### Press Release

#### The Quiet American

Accidentally, the American Dr. Olaf Miller discovered a new kind of biological light. The light frequency Advanced Bio Lux, designated as ABL, is an important discovery for the medical world. It is also of interest for the BND (German Secret Service).

In december 2003 the press departement of the University Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany) recieved an e-mail by the American chemist Dr. Olaf Miller. Dr. Miller has lived the past 15 years in Erlangen. This Siemens employee researches light waves in his leisure, which appear as color streaks in photographic processing. In december 2003, he made a great discovery. He found that the black, red and yellow coloured streaks indicate an advanced form of biological light: ABL. Advanced Bio Lux has the characteristics of converting cholesterol into Pro-vitamine D3. It is good for the heart, circulation, sugar and water balance, fertility, mood, and body performance. Also, it lowers the risk of heartattacks or cancer. As proven in medical research, the 'universal-white' neonlight causes a weakening of body resistance and therefore triples the risk of cancer. On the other hand the black, red and yellow coloured ABL reinforces the body resistance and therefore decreases the risk of cancer.

Advanced Bio Light has another quality, which is the dissolution of the silver-gelatine layers of film. After being struck by ABL, the film layers melt and transform into undefinable color streaks. Here the BND, the German Secret Service, enters the scene. ABL can be assigned to wipe out secret film documents in an extremely practical way. For Dr. Olaf Miller this is of great convenience. The BND will finance the move of Dr. Miller's home lab to a secret location. His research can be undertaken in perfect conditions and without the pressure of daily labor. As for his safety, Dr. Olaf Miller isn't worried at all: "I trust in the BND."

The Galerie der Stadt Erlangen established contact with Dr. Olaf Miller in january 2004. They proposed to give public access to his discarded home lab. For public safety reasons, the Advanced Bio Lux Lab will be reconstructed in the Galerie der Stadt Erlangen. For further information please contact elisabeth.puyplat@stadt.erlangen.de

## Update: Rotterdam

By skriemann@hotmail.com

The Dutch government commissioned the Advance Bio Lux Laboratory (ABLL) of N'djamena (Republique of Tchad) with the development of a film material, which would dissolve itself shortly after its development. The film material was meant for the Dutch intelligence service. ABLL completed the order successfully at 21/11/03.

Olaf de Molen bought a Chinon 35EE at the fleamarket. The film of the former user was still inside. Out of curiosity, he developed it. The images show military sites. The set reminded of an African landscape. Olaf de Molen could recognize a flag in blue, yellow and red. The images didn't really catch his interest, he put them away.

Monday morning, Olaf de Molen went to his job: Dordrecht - Rotterdam by train. As always, he bought the Volkskrant. Headlines of 24/11/03: a Dutch reporter disappeared in the Republique of Tchad. No traces of him have been found yet. It is suspected that the kidnapping is politically motivated. The article stated that there might be a connection with the release of a new material by ABLL.

At 17.00 Olaf de Molen returned home. Once again he scrutinized the film closely. All the imagery had dissolved and replaced by abstract color variations. Enlarged they look like this one:



## Update: Tirana

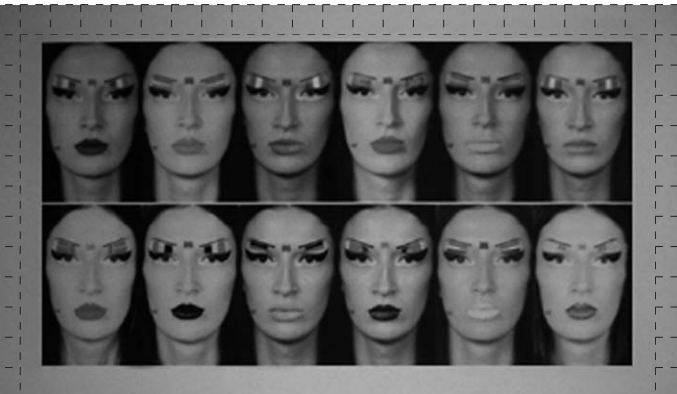
By ilir\_dupi@yahoo.com

### Catch me if you can

It is said that the world is heading towards unification, with increasing possibilities of communication and movement; that it is becoming smaller and turning into what is frequently called a "global village." But although we speak of greater possibilities of movement, there are still various obstacles facing an individual, depending on his status in society, or on his national, or religious status, or depending on the kind of passport he is holding. It seems as though the attendant obstacles are an integral part of this process of unification, reflected particularly in the helplessness of the individual in the face of them; and these obstacles determine the individual's fate.

"Catch me if you can" is the title of a recent American film in which the main character, in a game of cat-and-mouse, attempts to evade the law by every means he can, including changing his profession and identity. But an obstacle blocking us in our attempt to evade our fate is a "capture" in a much wider sense. The phrase: "Catch me if you can" represents two moments; the first is the "capture" itself, the possibility of being caught. But implied in this is the second aspect, the flight from the captors, the "escape." It is precisely this struggle to escape from the situation the individual finds himself in and the impossibility of realizing the object of the flight that is the focus of the idea behind the "Onufri" exhibition this year. "Escape" is seen in its wider sense - both as a physical exodus as well as an escape from an isolation within one's surroundings, or an escape from one's own self with the associated constant searching after something, such as the search for an identity.

What is the position of the artist in this big game of "Catch me if you can?"



Rudina Memaga, Untitled, 2003, C-Print

## Update: Toronto

By shaan@ca.inter.net

### NIKE STEALS ARTIST PROJECT!

#### JANE VS. THE GIANT by Shaan Syed

This is a story about how I had the possibly very fruitful opportunity of "selling out" to one of the world's most notoriously exploitative multinational corporations.

A few years ago, I embarked on a public art intervention called The Jane Project. A small banal sketch of a friend, Jane, was taken from my sketchbook, blown up to life size, and hand-printed 1000 times as a poster that was plastered throughout the downtown core of Toronto. Once a week for about two months, I set out on foot or sometimes in a rented pick-up with several buckets of glue and a huge paint roller, to paint the town Jane, so to speak. Boarded up houses, construction sites, bus shelters, street posts... anything that would hold a Jane poster was attacked with my glue-soaked roller until all 1000 posters were gone. Progressively through the initial weeks of the campaign, Jane became a Toronto enigma. She would stare back out at commuters and passers-by more and more each morning after my clandestine tirade with the glue pot. Jane was everywhere in some boarded up window or back alley, anonymously and discredibly staring back out at you while you went about your daily business. She received much media attention and local coverage, and sparked conversations amongst the people who noticed her sly smile every day.

In time, the graffiti started to appear and Jane began to spark a dialogue. Various scrawling appeared on the posters; Jane's an addict; Jane Goodall; Jane surrounded by a scripture from the Old Testament; and my favorite; "art is useless go home". Then she started being ripped down, more often than not only a portion of her face - her mouth, a pigtail or one eye - left dangling or stubbornly glued to whatever she was stuck. Upon hearing that I was the artist behind Jane, acquaintances would tell me stories of trying to salvage a poster from some back-alley for their living room. Her image started to fade, but refused to disappear. Two years later, there are still a few tattered Janes left hanging like ghosts in the city's more remote back allies. Now, whenever I wear my Jane t-shirt, I am inevitably met by a stranger pointing at my shirt and asking in that hesitant but inquisitive tone; "...where...have I seen...that woman...before...?" Jane had lodged herself into an collective but unfamiliar psyche.

Half a year after I plastered the last Jane and my glue pot had long been thrown out, I received a bizarre phone call. A woman from a local advertising agency introduced herself as a customer who was a regular at the restaurant where both (the real) Jane and myself worked. She had tracked me down through the restaurant and wanted to talk to me about an advertising campaign she was in the process of developing. When I asked who her client was, my eyes suddenly widened at her answer. If she could have seen

me on the other end of the line, she would have seen dollar signs appear in my eyes. Her client was Nike. Yes - the shoe people. Nike!? Calling me!? I had to admit, that it made me feel kind of special to be wanted by such a gargantuan corporation. They wanted to talk to ME.

I met with two of the young advertising people in a typically unglamorously toned-down Canadian meeting. There was no boardroom with men in black suits surrounding a huge table. Nothing that indicated I was possibly on my way to doing business with one of the world's largest and most financially successful corporations. These were, after all, only Nike's advertising company of choice in Toronto. As I showed them a pile of drawings gathered up from my studio, I was told that it was Nike's top advertising executives who had initially noticed The Jane Project on the streets of Toronto.

According to these mysterious six-figure-salary branding experts, Jane was considered "a success." The Jane Project had been talked about somewhere around some boardroom table at the highest level of Nike's advertising department. My mind immediately began racing to thoughts of how I could maximize (read \$\$) this opportunity. As they praised me for my media and branding savvy, I listened blankly, playing the naive artist, trying not to blow my cover by blurting out the fact that I actually thought Jane was a failure because of her inevitable slide from glory to eventual oblivion. Jane was not advertising anything, so how could she be a success?

So where did I fit in? Perhaps feeling they had a strong enough hold on a certain consumer demographic, Nike realized that there were yet untapped consumers to be got. Taking advantage of what seemed like a renaissance of young art in Canada, Nike was planning to market a new shoe to an "arty" clientele as opposed to their already established demographic of young kids into sports and hip-hop. They spoke to me of a "Jane-style" ad campaign that would target specific neighbourhoods known for their "artiness" in Canada's three major cities - Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The campaign would show a quick black and white sketch of - "something hip" - on a white poster with no other information. I was given a few examples of possible imagery, one that included a dancing Buddha with the inscription "Boogie-Woogie-Buddha". A few weeks down the road, a similarly drawn image would appear on the streets of these cities with the ever-recognizable Nike swoosh discreetly located in the corner of the poster. A few weeks more, and it would be uncovered through yet another poster that these enigmatic black and white images were indeed advertisements for the new Nike shoe in all its hip and arty glory. The "zeitgeist" for which marketers are all too hungry to capture, would in a matter of a few weeks, be hooked and ready to consume Nike's arty shoe. There was even the possibility of the campaign stretching to major US cities. Perhaps blindly believing I was the "in" to the zeitgeist, Nike would employ me to be the artist to draw and conceptualize the artwork on the posters.

My last political action manifested itself in the form of peacefully laying my body down daily for two weeks in front of massive logging trucks on Vancouver Island in 1994. Since then my political motivations have admittedly diminished. Though I don't generally consider myself a "political artist", my time as a teenage tree-hugging activist does carry itself over into my adult awareness of the political and social machinery in which we all live. While the dollar bills in my eyes shone ever brighter with the prospect of doing business with Nike, I also began to feel a slight but consistent nagging feeling - something like a poking reminder at my side by some tiny angel with a twinkling wand whispering to me that there were other issues here than riches to think about. As I began to tell close friends about my potentially money-making partnership with one of the world's largest multinationals, I also began to realize that I was about to be dealing with one of the world's most exploitative capitalist machines. I knew Nike is an international brand bully, but I needed more to be convinced out of my complacency.



I was handed Naomi Klein's best-selling book; No Logo; Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies in which she devotes whole chapters to the Nike dilemma. As I read about Nike's ethically questionable and morally reprehensible business tactics around the globe, my mind began to spin, the dollar signs in my eyes fading. How could I accept blood money from this company, let alone become just another gear in this huge capitalist machine? I thought surely there must be a way around this. I was a young artist and I desperately needed the money. I was working as a waiter three nights a week. Living in a small studio where the windows were about to fall out, with intermittent heating. Sharing a bathroom with my four neighbours on the same floor. I was saving for grad-school...in London...

Perhaps I could somehow create a poster that would surreptitiously critique or expose Nike in a way that only people who were savvy about visual imagery - the people to whom they were marketing - would clue in. I could agree to do the project under a pseudonym. I could treat my involvement with Nike as top secret and nobody would be the wiser. I could covertly expose Nike's appropriation of an independent artist's project and it might even bring more attention to my own work; "Nike Steals Jane Project!" Perhaps I could turn this around so that only after I had received my



huge pay cheque, Nike would realize what a mistake they had made in giving a real artist the project. I would brazenly undermine the Nike machinery! It would be a huge public relations fiasco – Naomi Klein would laud me in her next book and I would go down as the artist that stood up to Nike!

The interesting question lay in why I was so worried about hiding my involvement with Nike. Aside from Nike's problematic history, there was another issue at stake here too. Wouldn't creating an ad for Nike surely be the first step onto the slippery downward spiral slide into oblivion for any serious artist? Yet how come receiving an invitation from Absolut Vodka to design an ad comes as a sign of prestige and recognition – a sign that as an artist you had reached a certain "level" in your career? What makes Nike any different from Absolut Vodka? One company maintains sweatshops, the other gives people liver cancer and contributes to alcoholism. I guess artists drink more than they buy Nike products? We all know Warhol along with hundreds of other famous and respected artists used their art for advertising at the beginning of their careers and still do. Moby got more people to hear and appreciate his music through selling the rights to virtually every track on his Play album. We spent a year listening to Moby advertising cars. Instead of loosing fans for selling out, he gained millions (pun intended). I was surprised not too long ago to learn that the notoriously stubborn we-will-not-sell-out-punk-rockers Rancid had finally given in and signed with a major record label. I recently opened up the British Modern Painters magazine and flipped past Tracy Emin posing for a Vivienne Westwood advertisement. In London, an advertising mogul propelled a whole group of young artists onto fame and riches just through purchasing and supporting their work. It seems the anti-establishment attitude for which artists were once notorious has dissipated and resurfaced as an open welcoming to the big money and power controllers of the world. How can we expect anything else when there are so many more artists out there now, clamoring for the same piece of the pie? – And what can we expect in a time when the president of the most powerful nation in the world sends his country to war over oil money? Sacrifice – if you want to call it that – for your piece of the pie, I was learning, was almost necessary.

While I wrestled with my desperate need for cash and my better-intentioned moral self, the ad people were pitching their second choice proposal to Nike: a radical street-savvy graffiti-style advertising campaign that employed urban hip-hop imagery to reach the masses. And thank the gods for that. Before I could make up my mind, Nike chose their second choice radical graffiti campaign to flock their ubiquitous shoe. To my relief, I had been let off the hook. After all my worrying, Jane would retain her sanctity and I would be no further to grad school than I was before receiving the Nike phone call. I don't know how effective their campaign was and I don't know the reasons they chose one idea over the other. I certainly didn't notice any more graffiti than usual in Toronto. I'm unaware if the campaign was even given the go-ahead.

Commerce is about building an empire. The Jane Project was about the individual's failure or success to exist within the mass. It was about permanence and impermanence, fame and anonymity. It was an experiment with individual and collective memory asking the question: would people remember her after her image disappeared? Beyond what I set out to do, it became about branding. After seeing a certain number of Janes, she inevitably became a logo – and even a commodity, as demonstrated by the people who would try to peel her off the streets and mount her in their homes. Though I saw this as her grand failure, Nike saw it as her grand success. Two years later, I find myself still trying to fight the nomenclature of "the artist who did that Jane thing."

Jane survived stealthily because her hand-drawn simplicity contrasted so starkly with the hyper-designed bombardment with which she was surrounded on the downtown streets of Toronto. Nike was alert to recognize Jane's "success" as a potential branding machine, but ended up shying away from what perhaps they knew would be a dead-end wrestling match to capture what I like to think of as a critical and doubting consumer. Or maybe I am not giving Nike enough credit and they actually came to the realization that Jane's real success lay in the fact that she was not advertising anything. Whoever had scrawled "go home art is useless" across Jane's smile had emphatically made a very profound comment on the nature of art. Here, Jane's "uselessness" just might have saved her from becoming Nike's commodity.

It is too easy for me to say that I would have rejected the opportunity to make loads of money. Who knows if it would have affected my career. Positively or negatively. On the one hand I could have been in London by now, showing my art work to an entirely new audience and learning from a whole set of new experiences. On the other, I could be known in these parts as the artist that sold his soul to the devil. I was handed the easy way out of what for me was a difficult dilemma. My tree-hugging anti-establishment subversive self must find some happiness that some irony still lies in Nike's appropriation of urban graffiti and hip-hop imagery despite main-stream hip-hop's willingness to endorse Nike. I see urban graffiti and tagging as a covert political statement that deliberately twists, coils, blurs, bends, weaves, loops, re-designs and re-claims a visual language that is so tirelessly and so clearly spelled out to us by companies like Nike, and spits it out clandestinely, leaving it virtually impossible to decipher. A subtle irony probably lost in its "hipness", but an irony to smile at none-the-less.

## Email: Zurich-Berlin

By [update\\_zurich@gmx.net](mailto:update_zurich@gmx.net) and [update\\_berlin@gmx.net](mailto:update_berlin@gmx.net)

**update\_zurich@gmx.net:** I think 2003 was not a great art-year, the Biennial in Venice was more than mediocre and also in Zurich there was not a lot of highlights... My year ended with visiting the exhibitions at Löwenbräu complex and I can tell you, it made me angry! It was not the

commercial galleries, they had a ready-to-eat programme as usual, Kilchmann even had a very good show with youngster Andro Wekua. No, it was Kunsthalle with this incredibly boring exhibition of Rijke/ de Roj! It's not that I wouldn't like sophisticated and slick art, but I really expect more of a Kunsthalle than slick, slicker, the slickest ALL THE TIME. Contemporary art is so rich, there is so many different artistic languages nowadays, but if you go to Kunsthalle Zürich you get the impression that art production is limited to what is suitable for reception halls of banks. And guess what is on now: Eva Rothschild! I mean, you know...!

**update\_berlin@gmx.net:** hm, I got the impression that you are tired of art, but hey: some artists we don't know – young or old – maybe have made their most fantastic artwork last year, and we don't know it yet and maybe we will never get a chance to see it. maybe we missed the best shows, some museums might have had an encouraging energy and made ideas possible, which might turn out revolutionary and last but not least maybe some curator had a good idea as well.

A lot of museums don't take a risk, don't let anyone in and wonder if nothing comes out. This 'calculated risk' is quite strong in the galleryworld in Berlin, but museums should maybe have more courage. and yes, maybe Kunsthalle Zürich is not a real highlight, when they, like so often, are presenting these international working oh so hard class of artists.

One thing really disturbed me most last year: to realise, that more and more artists are producing onliners. you see it, you get it, if possible pretty and without content. It's of course great to see international artist everywhere, because it means good art sometimes. but someone could have more courage and present another kind of art.

**update\_zurich@gmx.net:** I didn't mean to be too negative, as there were also some good shows in Zurich... I mean Daniele Buetti at Helmhaus for example was smashing, it was like being in a David Lynch film, melancholic and poetic. And before was Yves Netzhammer, who set a contemporary standard of what art could be. Strange enough this show was also at Helmhaus; actually this museum, dedicated predominantly to swiss art, was the most innovative institution in Zurich last year... In 2003, for the first time regionalism seemed less provincial than internationalism to me... So I am not at all tired of art, and I will never be...

**update\_berlin@gmx.net:** It's interesting what you say about regionalism when you concern hierarchy in the (art)world.

It just doesn't work in this field for let's say a twenty-something artists to pop up in a gallery and show her/his work. Meeting people in this business is totally connected to recommendations. So if you have a friend who knows a gallerist you want to get in touch with, you have to hang out with her/him and be a friend with. Even artists who actually make critical work about hierarchy are playing the game of behaviour and relation.

What if you are shy, ugly, and full of doubt? Why shouldn't it be possible to send a suggestion to the curator of whatever show? But it's not or at least it almost never works out.

**update\_zurich@gmx.net:** I thought of regionalism as an alternative concept to these exhibitions with international artists that are the same wherever I go! Not that these would be bad artists or exhibitions, it is just so boring to see them all the time! I mean every little shitty institution nowadays wants to be international, but at least for Zurich I can tell you that there are a lot of fantastic artists around but not exhibited in 'relevant' places. It seems to me that things like regionalism, told to be old fashioned and over, are suddenly cutting edge again! The thought of having a worldwide art-popchart maybe came to early. We may be the artists but we are not the world... But hey: What have you heard about the Berlin Biennial? Worth coming over?

**update\_berlin@gmx.net:** I didn't hear anything about the Berlin-biennial, which is both typical for the biennial and for Berlin. But I have the feeling it will be good.

## Update: Zurich-Thun

By [kunstfly@bluemail.ch](mailto:kunstfly@bluemail.ch)

### Kunstfly reporting. Two art evenings

Thun 6th December 2003– The evening began at Bernhard Bischoff's gallery, which housed an adequate group show but inadequate nibbles – not a drop of wine in sight, just a measly bowl of Opal Fruits. Still, we were there for the kunst and on the whole it didn't disappoint. Craig Fisher's 'blood splats' were just the ticket in Switzerland's best bathroom, although his ACME cartoon objects of destruction were difficult to spot in the gallery gloom. Reto Leibundgut's playful sculptures (including a floppy gym horse), held their own in the sewing category, while John Strutton's iconic record cover drawings were coveted by many. But the night was young and we were thirsty – time for the Kunstmuseum regionale.

On what seemed like the coldest night of the year, Kunstmuseum Thun welcomed us into its well-heated interior only to kick us out again to witness its opening event: a performance by Karl Schleich. Were this summer 1982 I could quite happily cope with a man digging cement out of a concrete cylinder and putting it back, but come mid-winter 2003, the whole thing felt like deep-freeze déjà vu. The only moment of tension arrived when we thought he might strip as a parting gesture, but sadly he was fully clothed under the overalls.

After a minor fracas with the gift shop staff – I can only put this down to wearing last season's puffa jacket – I was free to curb-crawl round the kunst. Carefully removing myself from the hoards gathered to hear the yearly speech, I made my way around the slightly less crowded rooms. After five minutes, I began to feel almost as sorry for the curators of this show than those at the Royal Academy. An open exhibition for all artists in the region is in principle a wonderful idea, and should of course be supported, but does not necessarily guarantee a visual treat.

But this was to be a night of performance. I was now ready to attack the

buffet and hovered light-headedly around the coats under the watchful gaze of my friends in the gift shop. Eventually they let us in to their rather nice hallway to sample the wine. With carnivorous gusto a nearby friend lopped off a brot person's arm to the disgust of the people queuing behind. Enter stage left, Heinrich Gartentor, a bantam-weight vision in boxing clobber, ready to skip for kunst. After what seemed like ages of Heinrich being towelled and sponged, he took to the stage to complete his challenge. To cut a long story short, his skipping was rubbish and we left concerned for the welfare of 2004's invited artist.

Zürich 9th January 2004 – With low apathy, the kunst shutters of the city are opened for business with the 2004 Kunst Zürich Aussersihl. These galleries have one thing in common, they're all located in the cool, up and coming Kreis 5 area of the city; Zürich's closet equivalent to the eastend of London. Its a hot bed of galleries, studios and bars, but is better known by and more accustomed to its own local talent of prostitutes, drug dealers and seedy Hell's Angel bars.

Where will the people be, where is the wine, where is the art? With friends in tow I start my rounds with the first port of call being Brigitte Weiss on Müllerstrasse. Picture this – an artist, a curator and a gallerist standing in the midst of the space with just three other people. It's one of those openings where you cannot come and go unmissed. The door opens and heads turn. The mood is quiet and surprisingly empty for such an evening. Slightly embarrassed, I automatically meet and greet the three people I know, I then turn to the gallerist Brigitte who without hesitation introduces me to Ives Maes the artists, and Tom Nys the curator. So here it is, I'm temporarily not the only non-Swiss-German speaking artist hanging out on the Zurich art scene. Tonight we have two young Belgians on show. We stand, do the small talk thing, sip our drinks from the plastic cup and smile. I finally find a break from the conversation and manage to scan the small two-room gallery for kunst. Some two-dozen works on paper, nicely framed and three objects located round the space. The show is called Recyclable Refugee Camp-Project. With no refugee's in sight I try to imagine what the curator did for this one person show, what his involvement was and what was there left for the gallery to do. Feeling slightly puzzled and keen to leave, I announce my departure – time to move on to the next gallery. Goodbyes are exchanged in the usual Swiss way of kissing – everyone gets three kisses – and there's talk of meeting up for some kind of dinner after the openings. Maybe!

Glad of the fresh air, I walk the few hundred yards to the next gallery, Elisabeth Kaufmann. Lights on, few people milling around but nothing crazy. And as it seems, the show is the someone as last month and as I recall, I didn't find it particularly engaging then. Deciding to by pass this starch environment, I continue to Hubert Bächler where there is infinitely more life. I'm soon informed that the artist, Clive A. Brandon is English. I head for the CV and there it is, clear as day, born in Bedfordshire, lives in London but spent some time in Switzerland. I wait for my moment to catch the artist's eye. Finally my chance comes to speak and say that cringing "Hello – you from England? Thankfully Clive is nice and we talk until someone then interrupts us. Its time to leave, I guess he will also be at the dinner.

Another small walk round the corner, down some steps and here we are, Staub gallery. So this is where the people are. Not that many, but more. First, we do the "Hello's" and "Happy New Year's". Probably the last chance to use this line before having to return to "How are you, how are things going?" The next 10 minutes involve the usual milling around, half baked smiles and half looking at the hand out whilst skimming over the small photographs of wooden train huts, the kind to be seen in mountain areas of Switzerland. Not at all amused by these works I wonder around trying to look amazed by a crayon scribble on the wall. Is it a mountain, is it a plane – I have no idea. Its not long before I find myself wanting to move on.

8.30pm and we're not even a third of the way through the gallery list and its reached that point in the evening when hunger beckons – time to make a rash decision. Breaking the rules of the night we decide to visit an opening outside the Aussersihl map before going to the gallery dinner. We head for the car which happens to be parked opposite Art-Magazine: Rolf Müller's work is visible from the street, it looks dreadful. No need to go in, and I don't know anyone inside.

Gallery Laurin has its second opening. Situated behind the former Löwenbräu brewery, home now to the Kunsthalle, Migros Museum and private galleries, this new gallery is a winner. There is something strange about this opening. Different crowd, different atmosphere, it could be a different city. Relaxed and enjoying a drink while watching the video projection from Christoph Oertli we decide its time to eat. The dinner is booked at a new restaurant next door to Walcheturm, an art space who's doors a weirdly closed this night. Looking a little like a wedding party with tables marked out with gallery names, it seems we are a little late for the seating arrangements. With most of the tables full we notice the only three seats free are with Brigitte Weise and co. So, as the night began we find ourselves sitting in the middle of the Belgium boys Ives and Tom. Eating an overpriced and undercooked veggy bake we trade international art knowledge and 'hot gossip' between London-Zürich-Belgium. In doing so, we soon realise that the art world is very small.



Ives Maes and Tom Nys. Foto by Centrik D. Isler, 2004

Unknown artist ad  
28 x 92 mm  
Euro 30

Fuck the rest I'm the best ad  
388 x 284 mm  
Euro 4000

Vanessa ad  
60 x 188 mm  
Euro 200

Alexander ad  
60 x 92 mm  
Euro 75

Jonathan ad  
92 x 92 mm  
Euro 150

Museum ad  
92 x 188 mm  
Euro 400

## Information: Ads

Are you not a correspondent of the network, but still have a message to the artworld? Make yourself heard on this page by placing an ad! You are free to use the space for a text, a statement, a picture, information about a show or just your name, as long as it is about art stuff. No matter if you are an artist, a gallery, a museum, a collection or just a sponsor, you all are welcome.

You can buy space here in different sizes (see graphics). Accepted data for ads are qxd, eps, tiff and jpg files in black and white. The next number of WeAreTheArtists is published with 6000 copies end of July 2004; ads must arrive before July 10 either via email at [wearetheartists@gmx.net](mailto:wearetheartists@gmx.net) or via mail at Künstlerhaus Boswil, Flurstrasse 21, CH 5623 Boswil.

Thomas ad  
188 x 284 mm  
Euro 1700

## Information: WeAreTheArtists

By [kielmayer@gmx.net](mailto:kielmayer@gmx.net)

WeAreTheArtists is a longterm network project, the idea of which is to create a worldwide platform for open discourse about art. The first release of WeAreTheArtists is a free newspaper with a collection of updates, in which local artists write about the art scene in their city or country. Constituting members of WeAreTheArtists are former guests of the artist in residence programme of the Foundation Künstlerhaus Boswil in Switzerland; they became correspondents of the network after their residency.

WeAreTheArtists is a logical consequence of needs and possibilities of artist exchange. The newspaper's contents are updates about things happening in different local art scenes, mail exchanges or internet chats. Artists can write about anything they want, be it a story, a gallery trip, gossip, background information, denunciation, a review, an opinion, a drawing, or just the name of the person they hate most in the art biz. The idea is to create a platform for real and uncensored communication and for another sort of art discourse. Being simple, open and authentic is more important than ever, especially in nowadays' art business that sometimes seems professionalised to death. The authors can stay anonymous if they want, but an email address gives the chance to get in touch with them.

Except from the first number, the last page will be reserved for ads, not only commercial ads are welcome, but also small messages from artists who are not members of WeAreTheArtists (yet).

The newspaper is in English only, as this is the acknowledged global art language. As WeAreTheArtists renounces all unnecessary flourishes in favour of real information, all updates are printed as they arrive on the editor's desk without any lecturing or correction. The reason is on the one hand the costs, on the other the charm of the authentic mother language's influence.

As it is an artist project, it will change according to proposals and contributions of the artists. The first issue of the newspaper is only a start; what direction the project will take and how this network will develop is in the hands of the artists. They are invited to let the network grow and to modify and transform it.

WeAreTheArtists newspaper can be picked up in the following institutions: Akademie Schloss Solitude Stuttgart, The Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art Oslo, ATA Centre for Contemporary Art Sofia, Boymans van Beuningen Rotterdam, Center for Contemporary Arts Praha, Centre for Contemporary Art Warszawa, Contemporary Art Center Istanbul, Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius, De Appel Amsterdam, De Fabriek Eindhoven, DESDE Centre for Contemporary Art Athens, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Dia: Beacon New York, Dia: Chelsea New York, Fondazione Prada Milano, Fri-Art Fribourg, The Fruitmarket Gallery Edinburgh, Galeria e Arteve Figurative Tirana, Glassbox Paris, Hedeh Maastricht, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, ICA London, ICCA Bucarest, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, Kiasma Helsinki, Kunsthalle Bern, Kunsthalle St. Gallen, Kunsthalle Wien, loop - raum für aktuelle kunst Berlin, Kunstfabrik Berlin, Kunst-Werke Berlin, Magasin 3 Konsthall Stockholm, Matt's Gallery London, Mercer Union Contemporary Visual Art Toronto, Migros Museum Zürich, Moca at the Geffen Contemporary Los Angeles, Moderna Museet Stockholm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia Madrid, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Museo Arte Contemporanea Roma, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, National Gallery of Art Tirana, National Museum of Contemporary Art Korea, New Museum of Contemporary Arts New York, Palais de Tokyo Paris, Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art Malmö, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Secession Wien, SEMCA Sydney, Soros Centre for Contemporary Arts Skopje, Soros Foundation Riga, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Total Museum of Contemporary Art Seoul, Transmission Gallery Glasgow, Viarini Milano, Walker Art Centre Minneapolis, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts San Francisco. More institutions may follow, there is no direct mailing list nor subscription

Massive gallery ad  
92 x 284 mm  
Euro 750

Olaf ad  
28 x 188 mm  
Euro 75