



Photo : Vlad Nanca - Courtesy Vlad Nanca and galeria SABOT

DEMOC(K)RACY #1

DANIEL KNORR - VLAD NANCA -
MIRCEA NICOLAE

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Exhibition
24 June - 14 August 2011

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Opening
Friday 24 June 2011, 6:30pm
at La Criée

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Meeting with Istvan Szakats
Saturday 25 June 2011, 3pm
at La Criée

—
Guided tour
Wednesday 29 June 2011, 5pm
at La Criée

—
Curator
Istvan Szakats, President of Altart
Foundation, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Production of the exhibition
La Criée centre for contemporary
arts, Rennes, France

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Curator's statement

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Democ(k)racy

The Art of War / Small Revolutions

Among so many thinkers concerned with forms of systemic violence, Carl Schmitt noted that the ultimate aim of liberalism is to dissolve the political into the economical. Then Max Weber defined the State as the structure holding the monopoly to violence. Then Antonio Negri legitimated affirmative (violent) action against the State and the Capital during his times with the Red Brigades. All these converging and contradictory views suggest we are at war with ourselves and always have been. But the patterns of war have constantly shifted throughout history: in 1986 US military strategist John Boyd delivered his 13 hours marathon briefing for the first time about these shifts going from physical to intellectual to moral. The war of the future is moral - he claimed, and was hailed the greatest military strategist since Sun Tzu by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.

In the same line of thinking we can perceive the city as a battleground, where Truth is one of the key assets the battle is going for (along with Space or Time). Truth is a political asset, and we keep entire regimes at work to produce, validate, sustain and forward it: the Law, the Church, Science, and of course Art. Colonel Boyd went on saying that future wars will less likely affect our skin and more likely affect our brain or heart, and in this kind of war an intelligent man becomes a good soldier, but it is the Moral Man -being the most self-motivated and long-term committed - who will become the best soldier. This is a double-edged sword though: the moral man can also turn into the worst enemy of its state, and people like Thoreau or Gandhi pulled enough acts of civil disobedience to prove this point.

Civil disobedience emerges because there's a difference between what you aren't allowed to do and what you can't do: it's the classic gap between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Indeed, the recipes of social alchemy turn morality into ethics and ethics into law and this progression would even seem useful at a first glance... but then we'll observe that the legal system is not particularly efficient in making things right for the individual. We solve far more problems on moral or ethical grounds than on legal ones. People aren't especially proud of their laws, and especially not when it comes to delivering them... because the State delivers us the Law through bureaucracy - a major turnoff. We'd generally perceive justice pragmatically and not as an ideal, and let's face it, it just does NOT work. As a consequence a moral man just HAS to venture into civil disobedience every now and then to reach the transitory state of being right - at least in the utilitarian sense - of maximizing good. Remember the last time you broke traffic law.

So why don't we all just shake off the burden of the legal yoke and live in something like a direct democracy? A citizen thrown into a (grand scale) direct democracy could turn into a total citizen and drown all his time in state issue debates. But is State so necessary? Anthropologists came up with dozens of examples of stateless communities and also proved that some of these are post-state societies - that is, they tried and abandoned State as being unsuitable for their needs. The anarchist evergreen «build a new world in the shell of old» also proposes small, self-governing rulerless clusters of social organization in order to render the State obsolete. To note, the terms democracy (power of the people) and anarchy (without rulers) are not contradicting, and there even is an incremental trait of anarchism that warns against doing big revolutions as those turn into unmanageable beasts too easily: Boris Vian wrote that masses are never right while individuals are always right. If so, you'd prefer remaining in-between, pulling a number of small revolutions and creating sustainable little local paradises while remaining truly accountable to persons instead of masses. You'll make happy ten people here, two people there, twenty people there. Much more efficient, much more precise, and much much more sustainable.

Curator's statement

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So let's suppose now you are a moral man up to pulling a small-scale revolution and ready to step up against the State - for whatever State means: you'll notice the State is not a monolith but a battlefield itself, encompassing several self-contradicting processes. This will make picking your weapons a bit complicated, but you'll generally recognize you should be cautious in going to war with your enemy's gear. The State delivers us the Regime of Law through Bureaucracy - the common denominator of the everyday disciplinary techniques we are subjects to - and remember the last time you won against Bureaucracy. It's not the way to go. On the other side of the trench you'll observe civil society delivers its ethical regime through Culture. This is not culture in the humanist sense (eg. painting), it is the WAY we play the social game (e.g. ritualized hospitality, trust, work ethics) - culture in the anthropological sense. You are by large socialized with such a culture, so it could be your natural choice. And if it is, when you go to war, you are a socially engaged cultural contributor intervening directly on the social canvas. Now the posture of the artist as a social mediator is a textbook example of such a contributor. Being capable of assumed and precisely articulated hits artists make up for the sharp-shooters of the (socially engaged) cultural contributor unit. They would work alone or form small, mobile, self-determined action cells performing a series of hits - and these all are features of what we know as guerrilla warfare. And this is where we get back to John Boyd.

Analyzing battles from ancient Greece to modern Germany, Boyd appreciated that the future belongs to guerrilla warfare - harnessing key advantages of efficient contemporary war (local moral support, superior Observation-Oriented-Decision-Action speed, decisional autonomy, etc.). Continuing Boyd's logic cultural contributors (artists included) would seem to be in the privileged position of being the top (guerrilla) unit bringing social change today, as all the above listed tactical advantages sum up on their side. The bad news, as pointed out by Boyd himself, is: it is hard to build grand strategy using local, tactical actions. Thus it will be hard to replace a State with another State by building only on culturally coded social guerrilla. You may think of a Revolution, big and perhaps romantic (remember, Boris Vian warns you against this) or you may try to replace all wheels of the State one by one - until you unnoticeably changed it entirely without ever uttering the word Revolution. Now this is totally unromantic... but the real issue is if it is feasible. This depends on how much myth you believe you can strip away from the State. If you perceive it purely technically (like the Weberian ideal bureaucracy), it seems doable. But even so you will have the problem of the critical mass: you may be able to gather enough people to pull One Big Revolution but not to pull hundreds of small ones. The good news is -quoting Boyd - that as a State, in order to stop guerrilla warfare your only real chance is to eradicate the actual causes that generated the unrest - and hearing this all social activists should feel they've hit jackpot... but the cherry on top is still Boyd's final recommendation on anti-guerrilla warfare: if as the State you cannot eradicate the causes of unrest, you should consider changing sides and join the guerrilla. Too bad this don't happen.

But you still have to engage. Cultural Contributor Vlad Nanca does this by switching the background colors of the Communist and the EU Flag and questioning the Truth behind the Symbol. Then Cultural Contributor Daniel Knorr does this by taking on bureaucracy around democratic elections in Brazil to unveil the way Bureaucracy translates but also masks Power from us. Then Cultural Contributor Mircea Nicolae does this by creating his local interventions - one hundred Small Revolutions rooted in the archimedean point of his Morality. It's your call.

Istvan Szakats

Visuals for the press

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Daniel Knorr
¡Extranjero Ven a Votar!, 2006
Voting box, voting papers, poster, letters,
articles, video - View of the exhibition
¡Extranjero Ven a Votar! at Protokoll Studio,
Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 19 October 2006
© Daniel Knorr



Daniel Knorr
¡Extranjero Ven a Votar!, 2006
Voting box, voting papers, poster, letters,
articles, video - View of a bus-gallery in Brazil
© Daniel Knorr



Daniel Knorr
¡Extranjero Ven a Votar!, 2006
Voting box, voting papers, poster, letters,
articles, video - View of the exhibition
¡Extranjero Ven a Votar! at Protokoll Studio,
Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 19 October 2006
Photo: Protokoll Studio

Visuals for the press

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Vlad Nanca

I do not know what union I want to belong to anymore, 2003

2 silkscreen prints on textile, 90 x 135 cm each

Courtesy Vlad Nanca and galeria SABOT -

Photo : Vlad Nanca



Vlad Nanca

Original Adidas, 2003

Leather stripes on pork's feet, dimension variable

Courtesy Vlad Nanca and galeria SABOT -

Photo : Vlad Nanca



Vlad Nanca

If you give it to me I give it to you, 2007

Installation (detail), dimension variable

Courtesy Vlad Nanca and galeria SABOT -

Photo : Vlad Nanca

Visuals for the press

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Mircea Nicolae
Deserted Glass Factory, 2007
Glass modules arranged in circle on the floor on the second level of a deserted glass factory in Bucharest, Romania
Courtesy Mircea Nicolae



Mircea Nicolae
Parking Lot, 10 October 2008
Parking lot with fictional registration number and fictional authorization number (B03MNE / aut.2440), white paint on asphalt
Courtesy Mircea Nicolae



Mircea Nicolae
Parking Lot, 24 October 2008
Parking lot with fictional registration number and fictional authorization number (B03MNE / aut.2440), white paint on asphalt
Courtesy Mircea Nicolae

Works exhibited

Daniel Knorr

Extranjero Ven a Votar ! (Stranger, come to vote!), 2006
15 framed documents - Courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

Invited to Mexico in 2006, Daniel Knorr proposed to install a voting booth in the Carrillo Gil Museum where foreigners could vote on the occasion of the general elections on July 2, 2006. Before it could take place, the Mexican Ministry of Culture forbid the action formally, claiming that the vote of the foreigners was anticonstitutional - even though Knorr's act was assumedly artistic. Eventually Knorr set up his voting booth in a trolley-bus to and collected around 100 valid votes - but copiously documented his correspondence with the Mexican state authorities on the topic of voting itself.

Voting is a major fetish in any representative democracy, and it always involves an element of alchemy - the transformation of the power of the people into the power of the State. It is only logical that the State (holding the monopoly to violence in Max Weber's definition) would also claim monopoly in the control of voting - the widest systemic form of anti-systemic violence. Alchemists get particularly humourless every time their gig is proven to be a charlatany, and Knorr actually does worse than that: by organizing his own elections he questions the monopoly of State to perform the ritual of voting, and by this he questions the default self-legitimation of Power itself. It is predictable that the State would use its ultimate disciplinary weapon to silence him - Bureaucracy. The documentation of this epic battle unfolds like some Bureaucratic Bayeux Carpet - a memento of the inevitable ruin of Knorr - but also a resurrection in his own terms at each opening.

Vlad Nanca

I do not know what union I want to belong to anymore, 2003
2 silkscreen prints on textile, 90 x 135 cm each - Courtesy Vlad Nanca and galeria SABOT

The piece sets a mark on Romania's confusingly sinuous trail from Communism to the EU by exposing the flags of the two transnational entities - but swapping the background color of the two. The piece transcends the EU - Communism comparison and questions our capacity to tell the difference between two versions of Truth - considering the ease with which the symbols involved in producing these different Truths can be turned into each other. How stable can Truth be if it is generated, validated, sustained and forwarded using symbols so unstable and vulnerable? In this key of reading the piece follows the volatile lifecycle of symbolic resources created by power discourse.

The piece was first displayed in a one-day apartment-exhibition held in the artist's "2020 Home Gallery", in 2003. Reedited as billboard art in Bratislava in 2004, the piece managed to upset Pat Cox - then president of the EP. According to Cox the idea that the EU was comparable with Communist totalitarianism was offending, as "the EU was formed on the free will of free people". Today the European Union flag with a red background is used as a logo by Belgian and French leftist parties that promote Social Europe.

Mircea Nicolae

100, 2007-

Documentation prints of interventions - Production of the intervention in Rennes: La Criée centre for contemporary arts

Mircea Nicolae generates his own affective history by gestures so small and poetic that you cannot describe them with big words. As he lets you in his deeply personal matters you are tamed by the honesty of the introspective fiction he develops. He just surrenders to you his loneliness, love and sensibility and therefore you have to set him free... and the realization of his freedom makes you also recognize his ways to produce / validate Truth and Good as autonomous and self-consistent. And then, when you connect to his morality (the archimedean point that makes Mircea Nicolae John Boyd's future warrior) and temporarily surrender to it, the meltdown of your intellectual frame makes a truly ethical encounter possible. Mircea Nicolae's interventions tackle the issues of public space, power structures and the revolutionary potential of art from a reflexive stance. It is the most effective way to perform small-scale changes into everyday life.

100 is a series of interventions created by the artist, mostly in Bucharest. Initially he planned to do only 100 of interventions but as he drew nearer the end he found it was not easy to stop. "Number 100 became anything, anywhere, anytime - this allowing me to end the series of interventions by continuing it" - he writes on his website. His most recent bet is "to continue to do things 10 more years from now on".

Biography

Daniel Knorr

Born in 1968 in Bucharest, Romania

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

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RECENT SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2011

Limits of Jurisdiction, Färgfabriken, Stockholm, Sweden

Dead Letter Office, Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, Austria

2010

Daniel Knorr - Family Jewels, Kunstverein Arnsberg, Arnsberg, Germany

Urlo, Galleria Fonti, Napoli, Italy

2009

Block, Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand

Daniel Knorr - Led R. Nanirok, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland*

2008

Scherben bringen Glück, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany

The way politics influences art and vice versa, Fondazione March, Padova, Italy

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RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2010

Jahresgaben 2010, Kunstverein München, Munich, Germany

No Ifs, No Buts, Depo, Istanbul, Turkey

Abspann, Kunstverein Arnsberg, Germany

DWELLING-IN-TRAVEL, Art Today Association, Center for Contemporary Art, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Ohne Wenn und Aber - Open Space, Zentrum für Kunstprojekte, Vienna, Austria

XIV Biennale Internazionale di Scultura di Carrara, Carrara, Italy

Les Promesses du passé, Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, France

Early Years, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany

2009

Jahresgaben 2009, Kunstverein München, Munich, Germany

the archeologists, Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal-Unteröwisheim

Viva l'Italia, Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna, Italy

Various Platonsims, Elisa Platteau Galerie & Cie, Brussels, Belgium

Try to make a simple gesture, no matter how small!, Trafo House of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Hungary

OPEN e v+ a 2009 Reading the City, ev+a, Limerick, Ireland

2008

Jahresgaben 2008, Kunstverein München, Munich, Germany

Afterthought, IrmaVepLab, Châtillon-sur-Marne, France

The Library of Babel / In and Out of Place, Zabudowicz Collection, London, UK

U-TURN Quadrennial for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark

Manifesta 7, Comitato Manifesta 7, Bolzano, Italy

5. Berlin Biennale für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Berlin, Germany

2007

Brunnenstrasse 2007, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway

PARCELLA, Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, Germany

Bodycheck, Triennale Kleinplastik Fellbach, Germany

Beneath the Underdog, Gagosian Gallery - Madison Avenue, New York City, USA

* *Daniel Knorr - Led R. Nanirok*, Zurich : JRP|Ringier, 2009

Biography

Vlad Nanca

Born in 1979

Lives and works in Bucharest, Romania

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RECENT SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2010

Works, Sabot Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

The End, LAIKA artspace, Bucharest, Romania

2009

Commemora, Galerie Art Point, Kultur Kontakt
Vienna, Austria

My Space, Universul Palace, Bucharest, Romania

2007

Happy Sunday, Work of the month at the
Contemporary Art Museum, Bucharest, Romania

Galeria Noua Home Gallery, Bucharest, Romania

Boulevard Renault 12, French Institute,
Bucharest, Romania

Dream of Bucharest, Akademie Schloss Solitude,
Stuttgart, Germany

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RECENT GROUP EXHIBITION (selection)

2010

*Raising Dust, Encounters in Relational
Geography*, Calvert 22, London, UK

Police the police - The Young Artists' Biennial,
Stirbei Palace, Bucharest, Romania

Social Cooking Romania, Contemporary Art
Gallery of the National Brukenthal Museum,
Sibiu, Romania

2009

Fleuves, cneai =, Chatou, France

MOYA ANNUALE 09 - Part 1: Young Art Europe,
MOYA - Museum of Young Art, Vienna, Austria

Bad Times / Good Times, Futura, Prague, Czech
Republic

*Land of Human Rights: Being Responsible for
Resources*, Rotor - association for contemporary
art, Graz, Austria

2008

Traces: Contemporary Romanian Art, Selby
Gallery- Ringling College of Art and Design,
Sarasota, USA

3500cm2 - Art Poster Project, Uqbar, Berlin,
Germany

Remix, Galeria Raster, Warsaw, Poland

Biography

Mircea Nicolae

Born in 1980.

Lives and works in Bucharest, Romania

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RECENT SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2011

Mircea Nicolae, 36 Edgewood Gallery, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, USA

2009

Glass Globes, The New Gallery of the Romanian Cultural Institute, Venezia, Italy

2008

Ten demolished houses, galeria 29, Bucharest, Romania

Destination Metelkova, SCCA - Center for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, Slovenia

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RECENT GROUP EXHIBITION (selection)

2010

Ce qui vient, Les Ateliers de Rennes - Biennale d'art contemporain, Rennes, France

21 Shortlisted Artists of the Future Generation Art Prize, PinchukArtCentre, Kiev, Ukraine

Police the police - The Young Artists' Biennial, Bucharest, Romania

2009

Live Economy Lesson, Cesare Pietroiusti, Roma, Italy

2008

Zarea / Made in Republica Moldova / Apartamentul 17, Bucharest, Romania

Interventii 3, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

The world is flat, Orvergaden Institut for Samtidskunst, Copenhagen, Denmark

Post for Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz National Museum for Fine Arts (Sent one fragment from the House of the People in Bucharest, Romania, to Kyrgyzstan by mail, for a mail-art exhibition)

2007

Back to the future, Galeria Noua, Bucharest, Romania

Text :

José Manuel Springer, «The Foreigner Legion has voted in Mexico»,
Cluj - Napoca : Protokoll Gallery, 2006

THE FOREIGN LEGION HAS VOTED IN MEXICO JOSÉ MANUEL SPRINGER

Election Day passed unnoticed by the art world. Or did it? Artists and their public didn't bother to stir things up around the so-called "celebration of democracy". And that's because, although Peje had already secured the presidential position and while he was not the candidate of culture and art, at least he represented the least evil choice; the rest were just simple formalities. However, behind all the election activities lie a lot of inequities, discontent and inertia which, for us, those who have already been through some election episodes, are part of the local folklore.

A year ago, I gave an invitation to a German artist of Romanian origin, Daniel Knorr. I invited him to attend an exhibition entitled *Chocolates* which was to take place – unless the authorities intervened – at the Carrillo Gil, in October. Daniel's works drew my attention from the very beginning, because they challenge many political situations, questions related to security, to cultural identity and even to economic issues. The issue of illegality proposed by the *Chocolates** exhibition, offered the ideal context for an artist like him to put forth a risky proposition.

The celebrity of the artist's name is directly proportional to his ability to raise ideas, concepts and prejudices in an arguable and risky position. And Mexico was no exception. By gathering information about the federal elections before reaching the capital city, it didn't take him long to discover that, in this country, like in any other country of the world, foreigners cannot vote. But he also noticed that many foreigners, including members of religious cults, are forbidden even to express their opinions regarding political issues. The famous 33, which could be the name of a bar for foreigners, is the Constitution article most cited in situations when the presence or the action of a foreign citizen is considered undesirable. Daniel wouldn't pass up the chance of time and place offered by these elections to try, among other things, the flexibility of the system.

The memories of the Atenco events, when three foreign citizens had been harassed and expelled for simply documenting the brutal repression of the peasants, were still fresh. The culture law initiative, which the Representatives Chamber had let pass without giving it too much importance, was also in full fling. And, of course, it was the time of the World Football Championship, with its avalanche of nationalistic messages and, the time of the political campaign with its extremely poor slogans offer – rather advertising than engaged.

Daniel Knorr's work was presented at the Trolebús Gallery, because the authorities from the National Institute of Beaux Arts had decided that the project violated the above mentioned [article] 33 and, obviously, they were more interested in maintaining the legality, the joy of every bureaucratic activity, than in protecting the right to the free expression of ideas.

Stranger, come and vote! is a work which raises the question of the opportunity of every individual to let their opinion be known. Even though, materially speaking, this work very much resembled an official ballot box, it engaged the public in a free and open action. Over an eight hour period, 85 people of foreign origin or having dual citizenship showed up in order to mark a ballot bearing portraits of the five presidential candidates, their logos and campaign slogans. The process of creating the work was rigorously projected by Daniel Knorr, from the design of the ballots and the posters, to the installation of the ballot box inside the Trolebús Gallery, which was offered for this purpose by Ariadna Ramonetti and María Fernanda Sales.

The day of the election process was video-recorded by Adriana Camacho who observed it very closely and was also documented by national and international press reporters. At the end of the day, the following figures were tallied: Andrés Manuel López Obrador – 44 votes; Patricia Mercado – 21; Felipe Calderón – 12; Roberto Madrazo – 2; Campa – 0; 3 invalidated ballots; and one vote for Snoopy. What is the result of these figures? The reading of this work raises the question of a nationalistic exclusivity – when we become very aware that in our days, nations become more permissive due to the free market economy, to the participation in common conflict fronts and to the penetration of the de-territorialized technologies of information.

On the other hand, if one examined the data concerning the participants, one would notice that they were primarily between 30 and 50 years old, representing a level of experience lived inside and outside a cultural community, which makes people feel they belong to a community and/or they are excluded from an inclusive process of consulting opinions. It's obvious that, dealing with a popular area somewhere between the artistic community and the critical opinion, the result of the vote favored the center-left candidates. But the most significant thing about Daniel Knorr's work is the fact that it proves that contemporary art may question and challenge any limits which, in spite of their historical and ideological origins, request a deeper examination. This is the function of art which is absolutely necessary and which cannot be discarded.

The *Chocolates* exhibition will be open starting with November 4 at the Alvar Carrillo Gil Art Museum.

Traducere de Alex Moldovan

Text :

Marcel Janco, «Two or three things I know about Vlad Nancă»,
in *Vlad Naca / WORKS*, Cluj-Napoca : galeria SABOT, 2010

TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT VLAD NANCĂ

Marcel Janco

The work of Vlad Nancă reminds me of a rebus. The first time I came across his work I felt that there was something lying underneath. It was not as easy as it seemed, though. Like a rebus, it all looks like a nice scenario where everything happens to be in the right place without a specific reason. Only after one goes beyond appearances, important issues emerge. The set was not as nice as we would have thought; this refined game – yes, we have to play along – asks for a specific attitude in order to reveal how complex our everyday life can be.

LET'S PLAY WITH MEMORY

The first work I saw was *Dacia - 30 Years of Social History* (2003) at the 3rd Prague Biennale. The artist created a looped slide show with Renault 12 Dacia cars, which were the most common cars in Romania years ago. Its design was kept unchanged for nearly twenty-five years, a perfect metaphor for the social environment that Nancă focuses on. Erden Kosova writes that “not being courageous enough to vision a future to come, but mistakenly falling back to the prisons of a past, this car started to illustrate allegorically the mental and economic stasis of a whole country (and ideology). Far from small but gradual subversions of a peripheral culture that takes the discourse of the central culture and displaces it playfully, as affirmed in Homi Bhabha's theoretical work, the Dacia came to symbolize ossification and establishment of poverty. Nancă's use of them is perhaps an elegiac farewell to one of the objects that defined his urbanscape from his birth on, but also a progressive attempt to seal off the past.” Nancă's work reveals how multi-layered daily life can be. The same attitude comes up again even stronger in *Queue* (2009), exhibited in a private space in Bucharest and then in New York, during Independent. At first glance, the work is just a series of porcelain animal figurines arranged in order of height. For those who did not grow up in a former Communist country, the easiest association that comes to mind is Noah's Ark or simply a kid playing with his mother's objects. In fact, the title reveals the real meaning: those nice porcelain animals are in line to get food, clothes or milk, like most of the citizens living in the Soviet Block. A perfect way to understand Nancă's creation is to compare the work with Roman Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times*, which consists of a queue that can be staged at any time (it has been made in 2003 outside the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne and adapted for the 2004 Frieze Art Fair in London.) In Nancă's work, professional actors, who, in Ondák's work nonchalantly feign spontaneously assembling and dispersing queues according to the artist's instructions, are replaced by kitschy domestic objects. The impact of reality does not always need to be staged *realistically*. In this work, irony is the cure for a Past that must be digested. The last work I would like to bring up is *Commemora* (2009) created in collaboration with Maria Heinke. For the final show, concluding his residency at KulturKontakt in Vienna, an Austrian woman, Mrs. Heinke, sat on an armchair on an empty stage, knitting a black scarf. She started working on it in the first day of the exhibition and she continued to knit every day, her effort resulting in a scarf of about 10 meters long, a memorial dedicated to the victims of the 1989 Romanian Revolution. During the bloody days of December 1989, countless news stories were told on television. One of these was of a group of old ladies who had sent knitted socks and gloves to the soldiers guarding the national television building in Bucharest. But Nancă is not content with a warm, simple moral. Three details render the scenario simultaneously complex and funny. The first is the fact that the woman knitting is Austrian and not Romanian. The artist thus passes the difficult task of remembrance to the West: it is the West who must digest

Text :

Marcel Janco, «Two or three things I know about Vlad Nancă»,
in *Vlad Naca / WORKS*, Cluj-Napoca : galeria SABOT, 2010

Romania's past. The second clue to Nancă's guile is the use of a domestic figure: an old woman knitting. Finally, the photograph accompanying the performance and featuring the artist with the 10 meter scarf wrapped around his body is a black and white version of Austrian Erwin Wurm's famous *One Minute Sculptures* and it represents an attempt to demolish any possible interpretation of the work. The moment you look at the old woman like a symbol of a country devastated by a cruel dictatorship, the artist intervenes and turns everything around towards irony. Nancă's attitude recalls the device used in *Life Is Beautiful* (1997), a film that tells the story of a Jewish Italian, Guido Orefice (played by Roberto Benigni, who also directed and co-wrote the film), who must employ his fertile imagination to save his family during their internment in a Nazi concentration camp. With the right frame of mind, even prison food becomes a delicacy.

THE HISTORY OF ART? SOUNDS LIKE FUN

Contemporary art is full of quotations, citations and appropriations from art history. When it comes to Romania, we think of the traces of Piero della Francesca's frescos in Victor Man paintings or Adrian Ghenie's obsession with Dada and Duchamp, not to mention the practice of Ciprian Mureșan, whose reinterpretation of Maurizio Cattelan's *La Nona Ora* (1999), fantastic cover of Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void* (1960), *Leap Into the Void-After Three Seconds* (2004) as well as his version of Brâncuși *Infinite Column* made with McDonalds' trays come to mind. Vlad Nancă is not as prolific because, for him, History is more fertile and vibrant. However, in one work where again, like in a rebus, different layers come together, but this time collocated within the legacy of Romanian visual art. *Hyphen* (2009), created with Nona Inescu, consists of a black and white photograph in which Nancă and Inescu – a man and a woman – stand facing each other, linked by a series of rubber bands that bend their bodies, placed at a certain distance, from the shoulders to the ankles. The tension between the two bodies created by the rubber bands is visible. *Hyphen* is a direct quotation from the eponymous sculptures by Romanian artist Paul Neagu (Bucharest, 1938 - London, 2004). Donald Kuspit writes that "Paul Neagu's hyphen raises an important question: does the hyphen force the union, as it were, or does it merely propose and suggest its possibility? Does it express the wish for togetherness or its reality? Does the hyphen acknowledge an inherent tendency to unity among incommensurate things – but not necessarily its realization does the hyphen convey the actuality and durability of unity? Neagu's hyphen construction is intriguing by reason of its absurdity. On the one hand, it is a convincing unity – a kind of occult balance – of ostensibly incongruous parts: three legs curving toward the ground and ending in clawlike points, support a large rectangle. On the other hand, the discrepancy between the parts is glaring, to the extent that we feel the construction is about to fail apart or lose its balance and collapse – that it is all too tentative. And yet it is stable enough, however much it stands precariously on tiptoe, like a bizarre ballet dancer poised to spring – the elongated third leg, attached to the center of one side of the rectangle, is a kind of leap of faith in itself – and however tense the relationship between its parts." If you look at this specific work it's almost impossible to understand the connection, which makes everything more refined and attractive. On the other hand, the work is tricky because formally it reminds more of a performance between Marina Abramovic and Ulay. But, as with any other work created by Nancă, the easiest way to get into the work is always the wrong one. In fact, the idea of *Hyphen* is here generated by the empty space created by the two bodies; at the same time, the tension reaches breaking point because Nancă and Inescu are a couple and they want to be together. They are not questioning the limits of body and mind like Marina Abramović and Ulay. To confirm this playful element that reveals the

Text :

Marcel Janco, «Two or three things I know about Vlad Nancă»,
in *Vlad Naca / WORKS*, Cluj-Napoca : galeria SABOT, 2010

spirit of the work is the fact that "rubber band" is indeed a very popular game among children everywhere. Therefore, the work tries to mislead the viewer: one would think this is just a quotation from Marina Abramović and Ulay and instead it is from a Romanian historical artist who lived and became famous in London (the fact that the piece was documented in London's Kensington Park is not a coincidence); once you realize the connection with Neagu, the presence of a childish game subverts the previous interpretation and opens up new and unexpected paths for interpretation. In Nancă's work, Romanian art history is intertwined with gender studies without forgetting the fundamentals of his practice: a large dose of playfulness. We may make fun of art history with no obligation to coherence.

NANCĂ'S ULTIMATE SABOTAGE

For his show at Sabot, Nancă turns to reality and this time the reality he addresses is that of the last few years in Romania, characterized by sudden prosperity and exaggerations. Because of the total absence of references from art history, the show resembles a contemporary version of Dürer's *Melencolia*. The space is enriched by a series of objects, each of them with a specific meaning and place (yes, like a rebus!): a large box, a collection of funnels, two pairs of wooden portals, a tripod, a cement bag and a mattress. The artist describes the deliberate assortment of odd things as "'beautiful' works. However un-political I might try to be, I think there is politics in everything and I think there is also a critical discourse in this exhibition." Beauty is nothing without depth. At the same time, Nancă's melancholia (he uses the word "poetic") is an attempt to make something that elevates ordinary domestic life to an aesthetic Olympus: the common becomes precious. While many contemporary artists use such a strategy, Nancă envisions the life of such objects in space and their connection with the artistic genre of melancholia opens up new avenues and new channels for interpretations. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, in his show in Bucharest, the ideas are not concentrated in one object or project, but scattered throughout the space, pasted in different angles and corners, allowing the viewer to wander in search of a meaning. Like a choir, they sing by themselves, but they give their best when singing in unison. There are only two or three things I know about Vlad Nancă, but sure enough, even if there is *something missing* in the show, it will definitely give you *something more*.

Text :

Mircea Nicolae, «A young Beuys», in www.nyartsmagazine.com, Summer 2010



Mircea Nicolae, *Deserted Glass Factory*, 2007. Glass modules arranged in a circle on the floor on the second level of a deserted glass factory in Bucharest. Courtesy of the artist.

One day I left my house and visited a park during a time of my life when things were not going very well. It inspired me and I soon began to do different things in the deserted spaces. I started to visit these places because of the powerful impact that these abandoned places had on my senses.

My project started as a form of therapy and it was extremely important to me as a person. It was also a way of staying in touch with someone I loved. Gradually things changed, people surrounded me, and in the end, my interior monologue dissipated to some extent.

Usually I place the things I do under the name of intervention. One always works on a context that changes in the end, whether this happens in the street, inside a gallery, in front of a public, or within the general art system.

Between July 2008 and July 2009 I had a home gallery in the living room of the apartment where I live with my mother and sister. At the end of the 10 exhibitions that took place, all of the exhibits were given to the public through a raffle or tombola process. Through this gesture, I was trying to criticize two types of behavior (I was bothered by the gallery circuit in Bucharest). One was the evident lack of interest for the exhibited work coming from the people who were present at the openings; the other was preferential socializing, based on the different power relations on the local art scene.

After my home gallery closed, I continued to work on my own and to support the work of other young Romanian artists through my curatorial projects. In 2009, I won a six-month residency at the Romanian Cultural Institute in Venice, which I turned into an exhibition opportunity for young Romanian artists, who were selected via an open call.

The name of the project was *Young Romanian Art*, and it took place between July and November 2009, in the New Gallery of the Romanian Institute in Venice. It was made up of a series of 14 one-week exhibitions that were trying to promote the work of 33 young Romanian artists during the Venice Biennial 2009.

Text :

«Pinchuk's New Generation Art Prize announces winners»,
in www.artreview.com, 13 décembre 2010



Pinchuk's New Generation Art Prize announces winners

Posted by News on December 13, 2010 at 12:00pm

[View News's blog](#)



The New Generation Art Prize, established by Victor Pinchuk and the Pinchuk Foundation, announced on Friday evening that 36 year-old Cinthea Marcelle, a Brazilian artist, was the winner of the main \$100,000 prize, whilst a special prize of \$20,000 was given to Nicolae Mircea. Marcelle's work, on show in the exhibition of the 21 shortlisted artists, featured videos of performative actions involving the landscape.

In *475 Volver* (2009), for example, a bulldozer drives around and around in a loop, creating the infinity symbol, moving earth from one side of the loop to another. In another, *Ponte 193* (2007) a fire engine drives around in a circle, spraying water from its hoses into the centre of the circle continuously. Of the award money, \$40,000 must be spent on the creation of new work, whilst the artist is free to do as they wish with the remainder. Marcelle, who has recently had a baby, announced that she would be using the prize money to experiment, and that it would give her some time to plan new projects. Nicolae Mircea

showed an installation and video that comprised a project entitled *Romanian Kiosk Company*, creating a history of the architecture of kiosks for street vendors alongside the relationship to other architectural styles that emerged in relation to the politics in his home city of Bucharest.

The winner of the Main Prize was selected and announced by the international jury consisting of Daniel Bimbaum (Sweden), Okwui Enwezor (Nigeria), Yuko Hasegawa (Japan), Ivo Mesquita (Brazil), Eckhard Schneider (Germany), Robert Storr (USA) and Ai Weiwei (China), who had to contribute via video conferencing, due to the fact that he was being held by Chinese authorities to stop him from attending the Nobel Prize ceremony. The award ceremony, held in Kiev, Ukraine, was attended by international museum directors from across the globe, as well as the prize's mentor artists Takashi Murakami, Damien Hirst, Andreas Gursky and Jeff Koons. Murakami's *Geisai* project was repeatedly mentioned during the ceremony as an inspiration for Pinchuk's prize. Sir Nicholas Serota, a member of the prize's international board, who was also in attendance, commented that this new, international, open-submission prize was one of the first to recognise that the world has changed, and the need to look across the globe.

Visiting information

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ADDRESS & OPENING HOURS

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fax (+33) (0)2 23 62 25 19
la-criee@ville-rennes.fr - www.criee.org

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FREE ADMISSION

from Tuesday to Friday 12noon-7pm
Saturday and Sunday 2pm-7pm
Closed on Monday and public holidays

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VISITS

INDIVIDUAL

A "visitor document" explaining the exhibition is at your disposal at the art center. Visitor assistants from La Criée are very pleased to answer to your questions and talk about exhibitions.

GROUPS

Groups are welcome to visit La Criée either freely or with our Professional Visitors Service. Only upon reservation - from Tuesday to Friday
Children: from 10am to 12noon
Adults: from 2pm to 6pm

Information and booking :

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