

»Idiopolis«
Dialectics between subject and society
Edition 2

December 09 - 14 January 2016

frontviews temporary at
State of Concept

curated by Stephan Klee

Akim, Fabian Knecht, Leon Kahane
and Fabian Bechtle, Marc Bijl,
Stelios Karamanolis, Stella Geppert,
Tula Plumi, Wermke/Leinkauf,
Willem Besselink, Ulf Aminde,
Vincent Grunwald, Yorgos Sapountzis

The categories of “private” and “public” as fundamental definitions for our understanding of society may have become more relevant than ever before. Today the relations between “private” and “public”, respectively between “subject” and “society” shift to a general public, which is basically shaped by the interests of a very few (a post democracy, like pointed out by theorists like Colin Crouch* or Henry A. Giroux**) Furthermore the lines between both categories dissolve evidently since the digital revolution forces an exponential interconnectedness of public respectively corporate interests with all aspects of human life.

Tracing the roots of this political concept, we do not only find the term “dialectic”, but also the distinction between “public” and “private” in Ancient Greece. At the very beginning of the distinction between these two spheres, there was a term that is still very common today: Idiot, or Greek ἰδιώτης, *idiōtēs*. Whereas in most countries today this term denotes a person, who is stupid, insane or at least unable to do something seemingly easy, in Greece it is just a person, who refuses to take an official role in the organisation of the Polis, even if he had the capability to do so. In short: An “idiot” is a private citizen. In being that, he benefits from a public sphere, that allows him to be private, but he does not actively present his political ideals in society.

A big number of idiots is a very plausible fundament for a worldwide establishment of cooperate and political leadership. Relying on satisfied consumers, who do not bother about public concerns it is easy to reconfigure society in any way serving to gain more power, no matter if the elite wants to implement a neoliberal system or an autocracy.

But what about the role of the artist in this set up today? Since modern times he has always had to search the public in his specific cultural sphere: the art world with its special places – heterotopias like the white cube of a museum or gallery. But can there be any other tasks for artistic operations than searching for beauty, personal expression and the production of artworks for the joy of private customers? Are there other reasons for artistic activity? Is there a wider public to address? Are there other messages of art that directly interact with public processes? The exhibition series »Idiopolis« - Dialectics between subject and society follows these questions. It examines the tension between the initial, private impulse of an artist to take action and his final statement to a wider public.

The first edition of »Idiopolis« (ed.1) was set in an abandoned house, placed in Metaxourgeio, a district of Athens in 2013. In that case the categorical framework was very clear: A former private space with all its traces of private living had to be turned into a public space showing artistic interventions. This premise led to a lot of works that provided a very close relation to the specific architecture and setting of that given house in its social environment and history.

Leaving behind architectonical and social conditions of one certain place, the neutral atmosphere of an institutional exhibition place such as State of Concept makes the dynamics inside the dualism “individual subjectivity” - “collective consciousness” easier to comprehend. In the second edition of »Idiopolis« (ed.2) outstanding works from artistic operations worldwide as well as in Athens are on view. The aim is to present an array of positions that operate with different strategies of communication, participation and intervention in society today. From generating alternative communities, to documenting and transforming political “battlegrounds” up to interventions in urban surroundings, there is and has always existed a broad research by artists on the simple question: “How can I interact?”. We hope this exhibition will give some valuable insight views on the topic and open up the reflection about the effectiveness of each strategy.

Therefore we have tried to collect some remarkable examples of artistic statements of the recent years and bring together some active protagonists of the scene. A lot of them come to Athens not only to gather for the exhibition, but also to bring themselves up to date the State of the Art right here, right now. They all seem to share the same conclusion: you have to be an “idiot” today, if you do not take responsibility in public concerns. In this sense “idiot” is simply defined like this: being ignorant because a lack of common empathy.

Stephan Klee, October 2016

* Colin Crouch: Post-Democracy, Oxford Press 2004

** Henry A. Giroux: America at War with Itself, City Lights 2016

Fabian Knecht

A bar-clamp is an object, which connects things by putting pressure on them. Fabian Knecht develops a wall raster with over 40 bar-clamps, that is aligned on the verticals and horizontals and organized as a square. Evoking associations of a labyrinth or a circuit board, the work also emanates manpower or even political force. This leads even to the point, where the reference to Martin Kippenbergers “Ich kann beim besten Willen kein Hakenkreuz entdecken” (With the Best Will in the World I Can’t See a Swastika) from 1984 becomes obvious.

“INTERPRETATION”

(Ich Kann Beim Besten Willen Kein Hakenkreuz Entdecken)
Installation, Bar-Clamps, 2016

Stella Geppert

Central points of her artistic investigations are human beings as communicative, social, and societal creatures, and their behaviour in relation to spatial structures. For her, space is a combination of various factors: actions, spatial structures, and systems of order. She is interested in the movement of space at the moment of its creation: the instant in which relationships re-form and thus recompose space. Her work stresses these moments while simultaneously initiating other forms of behaviour.

The drawing presented at »Idiopolis« (ed. 2) is connected to talk under the installation “Hieroglyphendecke”, which took place with a group of Greeks in the same space. The coal lines on the canvas record unconscious and transient movements of the head of the participants of the talk and provide a visual reflection about communication and personal encounters.

“Head Drawing” / Talk with Panos Dimitropoulos, Elpida Fragkeskidou, Ioli Katsarou and Danai Papadopoulou about “Democracy and Identity. Nationality doesn’t exist” while sitting, 90 min, Athen, December 2016

Canvas, 206 cm x 310 cm, carbon, silicon, paper tub

“Another Kind of Documentation / Never Trust the Picture”

Installation, dimensions variable, ceramic, tripod photo, 2016

Wermke/Leinkauf

The Berlin based artist duo Wermke/Leinkauf works on actions, performances and installations dealing with the hidden possibilities of a city. Using artistic strategies they create temporary irritations, which allow new perspectives on everyday situations. They explore the boundaries of the public sphere to question common standards and constraints. They “open” the city by using not only their bodies, but the material and the tools of urban spaces. Moreover, their works often relate to the Genius Loci and the history of a space.

“Landmarks”

Photographs and installation, 90x60 cm, inkjet prints flags, ongoing series

Marc Bijl

The works of Marc Bijl (1970) in this exhibition refers to the ongoing downfall of the European Project as a concept. The wall and the paintings are a diffuse and blurry version of a map of Europe. ‘Dystopian Love’ is the title of the installation and the abstract paintings and refers to the fact that the European idea was build on a destructed Europe after the Second World War. It then flourished with utopian thoughts, art, economic progress and peace. Since the nineties however (Balkan war, end of Berlin wall) a dismantling of these values is taking place.

“Dystopien Love”

Installation, mixed materials, 2016

Akim

Four pairs of hands improve a mimicry play of common gestures. In their search for synchronicity it becomes obvious, that each of their pair of hands seem to be fix in a certain distance. All four protagonists share the experience of an arrest in handcuffs. The originated kaleidoscope transfers the isolation of subjective experience into a cleansing ritual.

“Bewegungsfreiheit” – Do you really want me to take you away?

Video, 16min , loop, 2016

Fabian Bechtle, Leon Kahane

The used footage documents the official celebration of the adoption of the EU constitution in 2005. It shows the friendly coexistence of supporters and opponents during the ceremony and stands in the context of European Culture of discussion and balancing differences in favour of a common idea. The very hostile atmosphere of the scene seems like a video from the „good old times“ before the finance- and refugee crises took over political discussions. At the beginning of the video it's written: „unfolding the banners and ...“. The artists use the phrase for the title, but change the rather indirect mode of expression to a more ambivalent title: “Unfold The Banners Release The Balloons” It could be a call to celebrate but also a call to protest!

“Unfold The Banners Release The Balloons”
Installation, mixed materials, 2016

Ulf Aminde

In a park, amidst the towers of the banking district of night-time Frankfurt, three persons incidentally meet: a female investment banker, a junkie, and a male prostitute. Together, they embody the social reality and the polarizing clichés of the German banking capital just as well as the problems and conflicts arising within a small family. The three “exemplary figures” begin to talk about morals, responsibility, and guilt, their language as well as their body language proving their indecisiveness and anxiety.

“Schamdruck” - the pressure of pudency
SD video 11:08 min. loop, b/w, sound, 2009
courtesy Galerie Tanja Wagner

Willem Besselink

This sculpture shows the pedestrians' routes across the Kotzia square in Athens during 60 minutes. With help of gravity and the physical quality of the wood the recorded traces condense into a dynamic sculpture.

“Kotzia Diadromes” - Kotzia Routes
Installation, 300 x 150 x 150 cm, wood, 2016

Vincent Grunwald

Banknotes can get introduced to sales machines to pay tickets or other commodities. The mouth where the banknotes get introduced and the device to test the notes for their validity are called acceptors. Testnotes are pseudo-banknotes and being produced by Security Printing Companies, both state or private, supposed to advertise their technological and aesthetic skills. When does a banknote get accepted and when does it return to the owner getting spit out of the mouth of the acceptor?

“Springs of creativity” - Acceptors and testnotes

Series of objects, each piece 15x15 cm, kidclay, colors, testnotes, size variable, 2016

Tula Plumi

The practice of Tula Plumi includes objects, installations and photography. It combines drawing and surface elements along with geometrical patterns and employs industrial and handmade characteristics. The sculptural works aim to create abstract spatial situations or relate to their position and placement in the architectural space. The overall work wishes to explore issues of performativity and behavior through the development of a gestural language, which implies states of possible narrations and reflections of thoughts. It aims to show a hint of theatricality and refer to the echo of an action or a bodily movement. Objects, used or made, endeavor to indicate behavioral interrelations in the context of public or private social sphere.

“Conversational Poses III (inclined thoughts)”

Installation, dimensions variable, spray painted steel, 2015

Yorgos Sapountzis

The exhibited work relates to larger series on fabric works by Yorgos Sapountzis. Creating a fusion of tailoring, image reproduction and spacial intervention, he questions the matter of body under rigid social conditions and cultural reproduction.

“But How Will the History of Bodies End (a)”

Wallobject, 200x150 cm, different materials, 2015

Stelios Karamanolis

Leaving the field of political and historical references, the paintings of Stelios Karamanolis took a turn to a more personal naïve approach. He investigates an inner scenery of fantastic creatures and forms and awakes them to life on raw canvas.

untitled

Painting, 150x150, coloured pencils and acrylic on raw canvas, 2016

untitled

Painting, 30x23, coloured pencils and acrylic on raw canvas, 2016

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