

To my neighbors and the people everyday life has me bump into on my street

Dimitrina Sevova

House Art

A mixed-media installation with five documentary video interviews with my neighbors in the house where I live now in Switzerland, who have no professional contact to art. It's an allusion to Art House, and deals with the role of art in the daily life of average people, in which the pathos of art is lost in kitschified objects, mass production, entertainment and memories. The questions raised are about the role and the moral of contemporary art in the everyday life of people around me. One of the arguments often heard in favor of contemporary art is that it is socially engaged and accessible to a broad audience. Similar confusion and misunderstandings, funny and stupid situations are the same as those with my neighbors in Bulgaria. I started working on this project 2004, but since then it has not been completed, although part of the video material and many photos are done, along with a detailed description of the project.

Switzerland
Glattbrugg
Kirchensteig 17

Project Description

Mixed media installation: 5 documentary interviews, each of a length of about 20 minutes, compiled together on DVD format. As part of a looped version (other possible methods of showing them are envisaged), a projection on a good-size TV monitor. One medium-size, not very expensive but very comfortable sofa of unpretentious design, dark blue, black or brown. One synthetic green carpet of medium size. A pair of synthetic, furry animal-shaped slippers of size 46. Plants, natural and artificial – rather the most widespread and most frequently bought, like a weeping fig, decorative palm trees, or ivy, which should fill the space marked by the carpet, crawling also around and on top of the television set, turning the space into something of a jungle, or a piece of green oasis of a clearly defined shape and size in the exhibition space. Among the vegetation, the soothing light of a lamp, i.e., an oversize white paper spherical lantern, mixing in with the radiance of the TV screen. One floor lamp. One coffee table, between the sofa and the TV monitor,

on which some of the books used as provocation or point of reference in the interviews are placed at the disposal of the visitors. One DVD player. A glass cabinet of medium size in which to install a number of small objects, as well as photographs in small decorative frames, representing details of the interiors of the different apartments of the house, the common spaces and the garden.

The most important part of this installation is played by the five documentary interviews with my neighbors. The people with whom my everyday life confronts me continuously, by a strange concurrence of circumstances and coincidence. My neighbors with whom I am forced to form a small community, a social space of varied personal interests and varied possibilities. The interviews will be taken in five of the apartments of the house we live in at “Kirchensteig 17” in Glattbrugg, canton of Zurich, Switzerland.



Martha Rosler

Vanitas, 2004

Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, New Series

I want to make art about the commonplace, art that illumines social life. I want to enlist video to question the mythical explanations of everyday life that take shape as an optimistic rationalism and to explore the relationships between individual consciousness, family life, and the culture of monopoly capitalism. Video itself isn't 'innocent': it is a cultural commodity often celebrating the self and its inventiveness. Yet video lets me construct, using a variety of fictional narrative forms, 'decoys' engaged in a dialectic with commercial TV.

6 – Martha Rosler, *Positions in the Life World*, 1999



8 I put this work of mine under the motto of a quote by the American artist Martha Rosler. Because her art is inspired by the radical reality of everyday life, and draws its strength from and in the feminist struggles and discussions – a good example, a way forward that can be followed. A method and strategy for expressing political and social criticism, a type of resistance in contemporary art. On a personal level I take it as a starting point for

this project, which aims at exploring how the idea of morality in art fits into on the one hand in everyday life of people, and on the other, in critical discursive practices in contemporary art, and how these phenomena relate to private and public spaces.



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My everyday way out of the house and back passes by a public area. During most of the year it serves as a large, convenient and most importantly entirely free-of-charge outdoor parking lot, in order to turn into an amusement park once or twice a year for the benefit of the people of the neighborhood – like at carnival in spring, or during the traditional “Chilbi” fair (rasp that “ch” in Chilbi as in “Loch Ness”) with its all-night disco for a few days at the beginning of the summer. I.e., the place in which officially and by law, at well-defined moments in time all those social phenomena of wild, loud and sometimes destructive popular rejoicing that are otherwise deemed unacceptable are suddenly allowed. In the middle of this space, near the big container for waste separation, there is an advertising board. About two years ago and for an extended period of time one could see an adver-



tising poster for the exhibition of the American artist Duane Hanson at Kunsthhaus Zürich, which lasted from 21 Marc to 13 July 2003. The poster represented an average couple, i.e., a picture of one of his typical hyperrealist sculptural compositions – in this case two figures, a man and a woman. A typical product of a consumer’s culture. The place and the communication code of the visual composition of this advertising of a cultural institution was provoking me every day. Hurrying through their everyday activities, nobody was turning their head to look at the poster and ask questions. The vision fit the surroundings too well. In their faces I could not make out any reaction. For most, this image represented yet another piece of gaudy multicolor paper – a senseless advertising cutting through the grayness of the urban space.

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Duane Hanson
Queenie II
1988
© the artist's estate



After which I allowed myself to peer in curiosity into the windows of the neighboring houses on my street, with the excuse that I am looking for some evidence to substantiate the fact that art is not entirely inaccessible and cast away from the everyday life of people. The loot of museums or collectors???

Intrigued by the advertising of course I went to the museum – surely this is self-evident, as it can be considered part of my professional life as an artist. There, there was a piece exhibited, this sculpture of an average, middle-aged woman working as a cleaning person. With all my due respect for the work of Duane Hanson I tried to imagine, to represent to myself the figure of his ideal collector, outside the big museum spaces, whether private or public. I imagined this massive, disturbing and definitely expensive piece of art placed in the middle of the pedantically installed and simply designed interior of a postmodern home of the American South.



Family Gyaljong look at and comment a reproduction of the famous pissoir by Marcel Duchamp. After that I showed them the original poster for Thomas Hirschhorn's Paris show "Swiss-Swiss Democracy" (December 2004-January 2005), which had provoked serious discussions among the broader public at the time. I wanted by all means to hear their opinion. They kindly declined.









Family Odoh, looking at Hirschhorn's Swiss-Swiss Democracy poster











Mrs Leuthold, on the question of when she's last visited an art museum







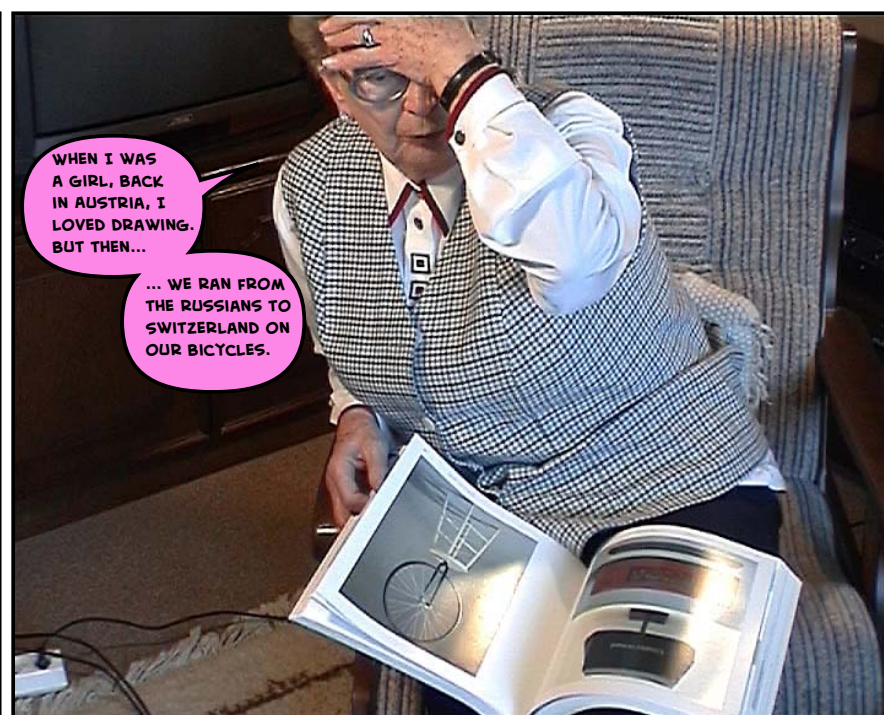
MR AND MRS ODOH, LET'S TALK ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART...



LOOK HERE: THIS IS THOMAS HIRSCHHORN'S POSTER FROM HIS LAST EXHIBITION



FRAU LEUTHOLD, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART...



... WE RAN FROM THE RUSSIANS TO SWITZERLAND ON OUR BICYCLES.



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MR AND MRS GYALJONG, LET'S TALK ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART...



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