

Hidden Histories – New Identities European Art 20 Years After the Iron Curtain

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Atlantis

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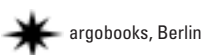
Cover image: Robert Barta, "deposit", 2009 (detail)
Wooden door, leather door, paint, solenoid,
controller, loudspeaker, MP3 player,
dimensions variable
Courtesy: the artist
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tutions and curators from the Caucasus region, and to develop and deepen their knowledge and research of the Caucasus context. There is no pre-programmed residency available in Tbilisi and very rare opportunities for curators and theoreticians to work in and about Georgia and the Caucasus. The residency program emphasizes a collaborative process with institutions, organizations and cultural producers from the Caucasus region, intended to strengthen and extend the artistic foundation of the area and to encourage and stimulate the exchange of knowledge and the production of significant cultural projects over a long period of time. (geoair.blogspot.com www.archidrome.blogspot.com/ georgianartistsarchidrome.blogspot.com)

Georgia's Ministry of Culture started to support the Georgian art scene a few years ago. With its financial support Georgia has been represented at the Venice Biennale since 2007, while "Artisterium" – International Contemporary Art Exhibition and Art Events – was first held in 2008 in Tbilisi. (www.artisterium.org)

Several curators are interested in the Georgian art scene, supporting it and contributing to its development. Since 2004 Daniel Bauman has worked in collaboration with and support of AIRL, a Georgian institution that organizes international art projects under the rubric "Tbilisi". Additionally, between 1998 and 2008 AIRL provided the only exchange program in Georgia within the IAAB framework of the Christoph Merian Stiftung, Basel. (www.tbilisiz.com). The Goethe-Institut and British Council in Georgia also strongly support exchanges between contemporary artists from within and outside Georgia.

One should also stress that the situation described above is illustrative only of Tbilisi – in other regions it is much worse. There is interest from the younger generation, but the chance to develop it is still not provided. Two examples mentioned above – Art Villa Garikula and ARTELI RATCHA – are organized and run by artists based in Tbilisi and function as residencies only during the summer. We can say that Georgia is experiencing a very long transitional period. The generation that is interested in contemporary art discourse – present and future artists, curators or critics – mostly live and study abroad. We all hope that cultural policymakers in Georgia will soon recognize that there may well be a permanent need for the development of contemporary art and artistic initiatives, and that institutional provision is required in that situation.

We are under permanent construction :) ●

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1 www.uoc.edu/artnodes/espai/eng/art/groys1002/groys1002.html (accessed April 2, 2010)

One should admit, however, that there have been several attempts to change the historically determined situation: MAF (media art farm) was a school that existed from 2000 to 2006, bringing together and educating students in new media (photo, video, etc.). MAF also organized two international contemporary art exhibitions, called "APPENDIX".

Art Villa Garikula – or simply Garikula – invites, hosts and promotes contemporary art and culture festivals and meetings in Garikula, Akhalkalaki, in the Kaspian region of Georgia. Garikula supports residency, exchange and educational programs, working with vision and passion to transform the Garikula district of Akhalkalaki into a "city of festivals" – an art village where visual artists, filmmakers and musicians can work together, promote their art and invite international contributors and audiences from cities and villages. (www.garikula.org)

ARTELI RATCHA (founded by artist Kote Jincharadze) has been active since 2005, successfully organizing and hosting contemporary art workshops in the village of Chkvishi in the Ratcha region of Georgia. The aim of the project – "Artists for Ratcha" – is to plan and organize dialogues, master classes and discussions between Georgian and international artists and a local audience. (arteliratcha.blogspot.com)

GeoAIR has organized and supported international exchange projects since 2003 with the goal of strengthening the Georgian and Caucasian art world, bringing together artists from different cultural backgrounds and finding relevant contexts within which they can work. In 2007 GeoAIR started a project called "Archidrome" Contemporary Art Archive, which serves as a presentation room where regular meetings, discussions and presentations take place. Local as well as foreign artists are invited for presentations and lectures that concern cultural events in the region. Archidrome is about making a place where people can come and see creations, knowledge, experience and ideas that originate or are to be found in the Caucasus. It is intended to be like opening a window that gives you the opportunity to look into the region.

GeoAIR started its residency program in 2010. The program is a self-directed residency that offers primarily curators and cultural producers the opportunity to base themselves in Tbilisi and to use this location as a starting point from which to build networks, meet artists, cultural insti-

Venues of Participatory Art

Marek Adamov



My background is with an NGO – practical work in the fields of art and culture, not in academia. Many of my thoughts result from my observations of life in these fields in Slovakia. Maybe the thoughts are naive and simple. But why make the problem even bigger by using some high, coded language? The questions are simple – and they also have simple answers.

Institution and collective

Stanica, the organization where I work, is a cultural center based in an old train station in Žilina. Since 2003, it has been something in-between a venue/institution and a collective of activists. Why institution? There is the building, a formal management structure and relations among the team, regular programming, planned fundraising, and, of course, a long-term vision and strategic plan. But what, then, is the collective within it? It is mainly the whole enthusiasm and personal engagement of all the team members, both volunteers and professional staff; a horizontal management structure; especially, the permanent search for alternatives, not only in terms of artistic programming, but also in terms of operations, fundraising and management; and it is the permanent search for sense in our activity. Because we are an independent organization, we are able to comment freely and to focus on hot topics from the public and political scenes, as well as carrying out some non-official and even legally inadmissible interventions.

What is missing in the institutions

I will speak about the crisis of institutions mainly in terms

of things that institutions are missing, which is one of the main reasons for the critical state of their operations, especially in Slovakia. The crisis is obvious primarily in governmental or public institutions. However, we also find negative predicaments in NGOs and non-formal collectives, the result more often of external influences, such as problems with financing, political attacks, etc., or even personal reasons like the burn-out syndrome. This is one of the very few levels on which public institutions are stronger than NGOs, on account of their institutionalized structure, funding and formal relations. But an enormously bloated bureaucracy is killing any creative ideas and especially the will to do something. Nowadays, with the EU funds, things are only getting worse.

Roles of NGOs and institutions

I am not opposed to public institutions in culture – not at all. But I am happy to ask what the different roles of public institutions and NGOs are; or, rather, to ask what their different roles should be. I think public institutions have priority – and the capacity to act seriously – in the field of documentation and archiving, as well as in dissemination and communicating with larger audiences. But the field of laboratory research, creation, experimentation, discovery and critical evaluation, I see as much more lively within NGOs, non-formal collectives and think tanks, and in the hands of independent artists. The very big problem in Slovakia arises when institutions focus in on themselves, and operate only to satisfy their own *raison d'être*, losing contact with the art scene and their audience, as well as losing critical distance.