

Disorientations

Interview of Judit Kurtág and Edyta Maşior by Valérie de Saint-Do

*Judit came back yesterday from the groceries and said,
I passed Babylon, the Acropolis, and the Olymp
and I thought it was a joke,
but we leave in Arcadia now.**

They have learned to know each other and have begun to be almost inseparable during the summer trip. Both share multicultural influences as well as a complex and rich academic background: born in Budapest, Judit, who discovered video art in Paris 8 and then studied first in the School of Gobelins (advertisement photography), then in Fine Art School in Bordeaux and got a stipend in artist residency program at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam. She works mainly with video. Born in Poland, Edyta, discovered digital environment through the work of Arnold Dreyblatt in Berlin. After her earlier studies in traditional technics in art, decided to study digital media in Greece. She is currently completing her PhD in Faculty of Intermedia in the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, and she can speak fluent greek. But it is their imaginative and sensitive approach who made the match.

Could both of you tell about your recent works?

Edyta: For a couple of years I've been working on bubbles, balloons, which bring on the surface the question of (in)visible playground. By this subject I work on the illusion of the reality and try to answer to what it means to play playing? For instance, the tennis play scene like in Blow up of Antonioni or like in Open Score of Rauschenberg. I try to find different ways of approaching this what we call reality, through the realm of sound and image. Using video to speak about barely visible structures.

Judit: I've been making mostly videos for a few years and I'm trying to make works which are in between the images and the sound and in their relation to one another. I am interested in one hand, in transposition of different media, and on the other hand, by what could be the way of thinking in the polyphonic form, or rather in the «polyiconic» one, as I'm dealing with images.

Has your work taken a special direction during this summertrip?

Edyta: I wouldn't call it a special direction, but a kind of fulfilling: we really understand each other well, and there are no obstacles for us to work together. And we are searching for the same thing: harmony, in the way you see images and you hear sound. So we influence each other. For example the type of inversion we like, is saying between brackets, «you hear images and you see the sound».

How did you meet first and began to acknowledge your common interests, realize that your works had something complementary?

Edyta: I understood this from the character!

Judit: I understood it through the high and creativ ability of listening of Edyta.

What is the complementary / or parallel side of your works? What are you working on together?

Edyta: Only the work can answer this question!

Judit: We went into the habit of getting up at five in the morning and going to shoot outside... that could be the answer. We go and try things out. For the first time, I'm using my body to perform something, being on the opposite side of the camera. Usually, I'm behind it. I work a lot with musicians and dancers. This was a new experience of the camera, as for me there is a common way of thinking in terms of movements and gestures between those disciplines. Second thing, I noticed that during those walks, while talking we had very similar types of awareness concerning things that we observe. And Edyta has an idiosyncratic way of establishing links between different things (what we call, in France, «passer du coq à l'âne» which means an abrupt change of subject). But weird as it seems at first, it is quite coherent... It reminds me of my grandmother who use to tell a lot of stories about friends of the family and who sometimes, in a middle of those conversation would speak about what Mychkin did (the main character of The Idiot by Dostoevsky). For a long time I thought that he was a friend of family too! This is the kind of disorientation I like while talking with Edyta. I feel quite at home with that.

(To Edyta). Could you explain a little more your project with «τόπογραμ»?

In greek τόπος [topos] means place, gram in polish stands for I play. The working title of the project «τόπογραμ» is about the mechanisms of connections between places, people and the game they play. I propose a graphic score (bringing as an example Allaloo of Adam Walaciński) as a way of notation for collected materials. Train tracks, lines or geometric patterns, our voices are the raw materials for the score. Łukasz Jastrubczak, for example found a clue to approach the group in the project where he made a transposition between musical notes and our phone numbers.

To build our own system of references is the goal.

To Judit: Did your work take a special direction for this project? Does this summertrip influence it?

Judit: The project has influenced me through observing the way of thinking of my colleagues. The way someone develops and unfolds an idea interests me and if I have the opportunity of witnessing this process, it enriches my own perceptual field.

To illustrate this mechanism of constructing a point of view, I tell you the joke of the black sheep.

«An engineer, a physicist, and a mathematician were on a train heading north, and has just crossed the border into Scotland.

The engineer looked out of the window and said, «Look! Scottish sheep are black!»

The physicist said, «No, no. Some Scottish sheep are black.»

The mathematician looked irritated. «There is at least one field, containing at least one sheep, of which at least one side is black.»

(the variants are nice too)

The statistician: «It's not significant. We only know there's one black sheep»

The computer scientist: «Oh, no! A special case!»».

Previously you used the word «disorientation». The project deals a lot with orientation, cartography, still we all felt disorientated at one time or another. Is it something relevant, maybe not as a topic, but as a kind of underlying sense in your work?

Judit: It is quite important. These moments when something known, becomes unknown for a second, I mean uncanniness, this «sliding» in decoding the meaning of what we perceive, but also cognitive dissonance that puts into question our way of thinking are giving opportunities to unexpected approaches to things.

Edyta: Disorientation, dislocation brings you the way to find your own location, your own ways of approaching things.

Judit: I have a story about disorientation. I was about to cross a street in Bordeaux, and there was a woman in advance stage of pregnancy on my left side. Suddenly, I heard the baby crying from her belly! I got terrified. I watched again, bent over. I realized then, that there was a small kid on the other side of hers. It is these kind of disorientation, that I am talking about, when my perception tricks and surprises me.

Will there be a «before» and «after» the trip for you both?

Both: Of course!

Judit Kurtág



* Babylon, Acropolis, Olymp and Arcadia are buildings names. Beetween them, there is a tennis court.