

**On  
Use  
Value  
of Art**



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# On Use Value of Art

Rampant greed and profit of the few rich multiplies in spite of the economic crisis while the social ruthlessness of the neoliberal paradigm deepens the social split between the classes within European societies. Privatization of education and elite-formation narrow the chances of young people and make their future uncertain. Social minorities and the subalterns, refugees and migrant workers, have been struck the most by these processes, amongst them a big part the European Roma. Belonging to the poorest social group, they are brutally hit by the effects of social exclusion and hatred that is on the rise<sup>1</sup>, be they migrant workers in Paris, tolerated in Germany<sup>2</sup>, or refugees in Serbia that live in informal settlements and suffer violence from the majority population.

The artworks presented in the exhibition *On Use Value of Art* were developed during the year 2009 in a process of exchange and collaboration between artists and groups of young Roma and other young people from Novi Sad, Belgrade and Leskovac, Serbia, Berlin, Germany and Paris, France<sup>3</sup>. Through methods of collaboration and mutual learning the work processes open questions of social responsibility about the status of young people in today's European societies. The results are images and stories of those that are usually invisible and excluded from talking in public about their desires, feelings and life possibilities. They uncover the models and stereotypes that suffocate them, destroy the prejudices and give information that is being blocked by the mainstream media.

The artists' goal was not to explore social injustice, but to relate him/herself constructively and create useful models of how to work on developing consciousness about our positions and possibilities, emancipation, mutual learning, listening to the other and understanding the situations in which we are. These works do not carry on the exoticization of social groups and the romantic role of the artist being in a position of some omnipotent creator or a naïve researcher to whom everything is allowed. The artist here is a participant in a collaborative creative process, the artist is an activist, political and responsible, someone who above all takes care about his/her associates.

*Ivan Basso* worked with minors that live on the streets of Paris and was confronted with the contradictory laws of minor protection. Basso stands radically on the side of the work process and says that the artists should be assistants to the young people and make them stronger, so they can publish their works, images and videos by themselves. By posing the question about the need to exhibit these works, Basso reminds us of what Brecht said about his “learning plays” (Lehrstücke): These were primarily intended to educate the performers, the public was not necessary.<sup>4</sup>

*André Raatzsch* supports with his work young people from the community of Boyash Roma in Berlin that are a language minority in their school, building with them an affirmative object, a Roma superheroine, which could substitute the dominant characters of comic books heroes and the heroes of popular culture built out of dominant imaginations. Raatzsch, with his partner Emese Benkő, deals with the language and visual archives of Roma culture and presentation of Roma in the Gadge worlds.

*Stephan Kurr*, mixing the documentation of theatre work and interviews with the actors into an animated movie with a complicated story, succeeded to interest the young Roma who grew up in Berlin as children of asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia in telling their stories on stereotypes about masculinity and violence. Expressing themselves through artistic tools they work together on the destigmatization of young Roma men in Berlin.

*Sibylle Hofter*, with a simple idea, “How I See Myself in 20 Years”, set in motion almost an entire city. Leskovac, a workers’ city once known for its great tradition of textile industry, has lost a lot during the years of war and transition. Maybe this is the reason why there was a general atmosphere of mistrust in the purposes of the project. Nevertheless, with Sibylle’s untiring engagement - helped by her impartiality and naivety as a stranger - the project with a group of Roma and Serbian pupils succeeded to involve many local institutions, enterprises and individuals.

*Rena Rädle* and *Vladan Jeremić*, in the autumn of 2009, together with *Sali Kadrijaj*, *Saša Barbul* and *Muha Blackstazy*, formed a production and authors’ team realizing a film on several locations in Belgrade and several towns in the Southern Serbia. The making of the movie with the dislocated inhabitants of the settlement under the Gazela Bridge in Belgrade was an intensive and sometimes difficult undertaking for all involved. The use value of this action lies in the struggle to break the media blockade concerning the fate of the dislocated Roma families.<sup>5</sup>

The works were made to communicate with the widest public, and not exclusively for museums and reservations of contemporary art. They were exhibited in a large number of different places, sometimes on the initiative of the young people, on their own, in their schools, sometimes by organizations or associations. The photographs of Sibylle Hoftler were for the first time exhibited in the Roma Cultural Center in Leskovac, a unique institution in Serbia. Ivan Basso organized an exhibition in a Parisian non-government organization that deals with human rights. The collages "Journey into the World of Our Wishes" were brought by the young artists to their school and exhibited on their own initiative.

Coming to the value of the exhibited artworks, it's above all defined in their use value. Marx described the use value as the qualitative aspect of value opposed to its quantitative aspect, the exchange value<sup>6</sup>. If works are measured according to their exchange value, their price becomes object of speculation and they get detached from both, the producer and recipient. An artist dealing with social themes, depicting misery, investigating injustice or other socio-political issues stays in compliance with the questioned condition if he/she cannot reach a use value with his/her work. If there is no use value in such kind of artistic production it stays a "passive production", a sheer exploitation of circumstances other people suffer from and the consumption of such art becomes a cynical act of fetishism.

The exhibited works/working processes follow a different model of value production. Producer and recipient are not distinguished, the participants in the process are related reciprocally, that means they are producers and recipients/users of the artwork at the same time. It is the qualitative aspect of value that meets the concrete needs of human beings, the value that can change and expand our everyday lives, the value that young people build and represent themselves. *Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremic*

1 See country reports of the European Roma Rights Centre, Budapest, Hungary [http://www.errc.org/Countryrep\\_index.php](http://www.errc.org/Countryrep_index.php)

2 Roma and other refugees in Germany live 15 years and more in the country getting only a status of temporary residency called "Duldung", which is being prolonged on a monthly basis. Due to this status it is almost impossible for them to get regularly employed.

3 Most of the works emerged during the program "Imagine!" that was initiated and organized during 2009 by Biro za kulturu i komunikaciju from Belgrade. The program invited artists to develop and produce collaborative art works with youths belonging to Roma communities in different European cities.

4 "The learning play teaches through the act of performing and not that of perceiving. Basically no spectator is necessary for the learning play, although he may of course be utilized" (Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* Band 7, 1024). Learning plays of Brecht are "Der Ozeanflug" (Radio play), "Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis", "Die Maßnahme", "Der Jasager", "Der Neinsager", "Die Ausnahme und die Regel" (all in Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* Band 2).

5 See for example: "Report from CEE Bankwatch Network follow-up fact-finding mission regarding resettlement of the Gazela informal settlement", Belgrade, 6-8 October 2009

6 See Karl Marx, Section I, *Capital*, "The two factors of a commodity: Use-Value and Value, The substance of Value and the Magnitude of Value"



## Hero You Hero

**Stephan Kurr**

**with Zeljko Novakov, Daniel Zlatar, Zver Amsić and Radosav Šajn**  
**Two channel video installation, DVD, Berlin 2009**

Rade, Klitsho, Dino, Zeljko and other Roma youngsters from Berlin-Wedding meet from time to time to play theater together. They improvise scenes of their daily lives, partly authentic, partly fictitious. I met them through Hamze Bytyci, Roma and professional actor, who has his roots, as well as the young persons, in former Yugoslavia. In November 2009 I accompanied them for a three-day intensive course to a holiday camp next to the lake Müggelsee in the outskirts of Berlin. They developed a play while acting. Their focus was on role models for men and it's contradictions regarding their own reality, a reality torn between its former Roma traditions, and their displacement in a poor German neighborhood, lacking of economical and political future.

The topic of honor killing came up and Rade, Klitsho, Dino and Zeljko decided to go on with it, as they regarded that topic as almost a symptomatic, mirroring their reality reduced on yellow press headlines. While just accompanying their rehearsals, I tried out different formats to give that topic and their work an artistic relevance. I wanted to avoid a voyeuristic view on just youngsters located at the edge of society, but create within the viewer an uncertainty of what is authentic and what is fictitious, whether a topic like "honor killing" is a part of the youngsters reality or just a play with prejudices.

With the support of Amaro Drom e.V. Berlin, RespectABel, a Berlin youth program for democracy and tolerance, against violence and right-wing extremism and „Gewaltige Männer“ an initiative by Südost Europa Kultur e.V. Berlin

With special thanks to Hamze Bytyci, Ingrid Braun - Badi Masut, Michael Gössler and Wolfgang Heine.  
Technical support: Stefan Krüskemper and Theo Thiesmeier  
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“Just ordinary plays about honor killing!” is therefore Marlon Brando’s alias Rade’s first sentence and you may ask yourself if it is just all about an ordinary play. I tried to give a turn by changing perspective: The kids are represented by famous actors; their “heroes”, their role models. They gave them there own voices, by giving an interview on the story, their role, its challenges and their own intentions as actors. “Marlon, what’s special about Rade, why where you interested in that guy, what do you want to show your audience?” I decided to split and combine all the different aspects in a two channel video installation. There are the young peoples faces acting, there are famous actors animated with very simple means, almost slapstick like and there is the sound, almost from the off and its confusing sometimes horrifying statements: “Then we shot her. What else could we have done?” *Text by Stephan Kurr*

Stephan Kurr is born 1st of May 1961 in Nuremberg, Germany. He lives in Berlin. Studied visual arts in Kassel and Nuremberg from 1983 to 1991. Prizes, fellowships and exhibitions – the common artist’s biography – shaped his further professional development, during which specific questions crystallized. Themes like migration, the public space and economy became relevant in the 1990s. His reflections on political topics as well as the conditions of production and the occupational activities of the artist gave the impetus to initiate several artistic exchanges, lately with Turkey, Vietnam and Colombia. Curatorial work as well as writing on art became a major part of his today’s practice. Stephan Kurr has taught at the Art Academy Nuremberg and the Concordia University, Montréal. He is currently working on different larger projects focusing on the artistic participation of school kids and youngsters.







# Self-Positions

**Ivan Basso**

**9 digital prints, 40x60cm, & DVD  
video, 11 mins, Paris 2009**

How to involve myself as an artist in the reality I document? How to engage people to document their situations themselves? What can artistic practices change in real situations and how to analyze their impact? In my artistic practice, the use value of art is a collective reflection about the artist's positions on these questions. Another question is, if it's necessary to show such a production and how?

If the aim is to get an analysis about how artistic practices can change real situations in today's society, we should document the different debates and interactions the workshop-outcomes produce and do research about how the teenagers relate to it: Do they show the pictures? Do they keep doing pictures or videos or theater and how to assist them in their projects?

I'm not sure that all of it needs to be understandable and clear to the public for the process to be effective. Maybe it's not necessary to present ourselves as artists to the people we work with and maybe it would be better to develop such a process without publishing or exhibiting anything for a while and to try to accompany the teenagers to publish it themselves and let the all process become public by itself.

When I first meet Roma teenagers in the streets of Paris, I soon realized that it would take a long time to forge a relationship of confidence with them. At this point, I started to focus on the association "Hors la rue" (HLR), which works with foreign teenagers and Roma kids in particular. Almost none of the youths coming to the HLR association has family in Paris and most live by themselves in the streets or in the camps. Governmental and non-governmental

organizations in Paris all agree that over the last 10 years this phenomenon of unaccompanied minors living by themselves in the streets has increased considerably.

Talking with some educators from the HLR association, I started to find out more details about the specific situations of each teenager and realized that so-called “minor protection” is not really applied to the foreign minors in France. The administrative procedure for obtaining institutional care requires that educators prove the youths are unaccompanied. But how? Why are these youths treated differently than other minors? From the beginning of my project, the HLR association, not wanting to take any risks, and in accordance with their deontology as educators, asked me not to show any pictures in which the teenagers could be recognized.

Considering both the complexity of the situation of the youths and the institutional constraints that derived from working with the HLR association, I made a proposition to the teenagers who wanted to work on the project. We decided to do experimental self-portraits while I followed each teenager wherever he wanted to go in the city. As these portraits render the teenagers anonymous – they look like any other teenagers – this “drift” through the streets of Paris is a way for them to express their situations through their chosen positions, attitudes, compositions with the architecture ...

The Self-Positions images are a reflection on the contradictions of the situations in which those teenagers live. This research questions the limits of the institutional programs and policies in France by transposing legal constraints into an artistic framework.

Since November 2009, the association HLR has exhibited this work in meetings and festivals as well as using it for their own communication. At the same time, I try to stay in contact with the teenagers who participated, to continue research and complete this work, while avoiding the institutional constraints. Three months later, of the nine kids who were involved in the project, three succeeded in getting a place in a boarding school, four are still living by themselves in Paris or went to London and two are in jail. I stay in contact with two of them through internet, via e-mail and videos on Youtube. *Text by Ivan Basso*

Special thanks to Florina Albu a mentor of the project. Florina works for NGOs in France with the Roma community. She joined the team of the association Hors la rue in Paris, France in June 2009.

*Ivan Basso*, born in 1977, lives in Paris (France), works as a photographer and video-maker and has been coordinator of La Générale and Tribudom (artist's collective in Paris). Since 2005, he has worked on documentary projects involving as much sociological and anthropological research as photography, video, conceptual art and performance.





# Ion

**André J. Raatzsch and Emese Benkö**  
**Polyester sculpture, DVD video, text, Berlin 2009**

ION is a life-size human figure of plastics provided over the course of the workshop *What Does Being a Roma mean?* – like an avatar or a role-play character – with features, personality and a back-story.

It represents a fictional Roma female superhero called ION who fits in the range of well-known superheroes like Batman, Superman or Wonder Woman. Through colors and material applied the work evokes the atmosphere of the fantastic world of comics.

The origin-story sounds as recorded spoken voice with background effects shaped like a simple radio play from inside of the sculpture. It contains some important basic information to the person, concerning the circumstances by which she acquired her extraordinary abilities. ION's biography and the radio play are essential in the perception of the sculpture. One gets to know through these that ION's common name is Sladja Danijela and that she was born in a small town on the Serbo-Croatian border in a

mixed family. That she speaks more languages and studied to be an actress. She possesses a mystical book and became a super-heroine at the age of nineteen, as she fell in love and found a key she had needed for a symbol. Her superpower comes from a thunderbolt she has met. The story is open and welcome to be continued by writing and recording new adventures of the main character in any language. *Text by André Jenö Raatzsch and Emese Benkö*

Participants: Samed Aydin, Fahad Bashir, Ines Chahed, Maria Djordjević, Violeta Djordjević, Jaqueline Filipović, Cem Kaya, Sed Kayed, Ricardo Pawlowski, Slavica Redasavijenić, Antonio Struković, Natalia Wutke. Special thanks to: Ina Volmer, Michael Markovicz and UdK Berlin Art in Context Studies

*André Jenö Raatzsch* (born in 1978 in Ilmenau) lives in Berlin 2008- 10 Art in Context Studies at UdK Berlin, Module: Art and social groups, focus Roma; 2007- 11 Doctor of Liberal Arts Studium at Akademie of Fine Arts Budapest, 2006- 07 Research at Academy of Fine Arts Nürnberg at Prof. Georg Winter, 2001-06 Studies Academy of Fine Arts Budapest. Participant of the first Roma Pavilion: Paradise Lost at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

*Emese Benkö* (1977, Tirgu Mures/Romania) is a cultural mediator. As an expert of more languages she experiments multilinguality working on linguistical and literary projects of artistic flavor. Her work focuses on the mediation and research of the Language and Literature of the Hungarian Boyash.



# Gazela

**Temporary Shelter from 100 to 500 Years**

**Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić**

**with Saša Barbul, Sali Kadrijaj and Muha Blackstazy**

**DVD, 26mins, Serbia 2009**

In the autumn 2009 an authors' team was formed to realize a movie on several locations in Serbia. The movie refers to the displacement of over thousand people living in the Roma Mahala at Gazela Bridge near Staro Sajmište in Belgrade. Some of the families were resettled to container camps in the outskirts of Belgrade. Others were returned to the poor south of Serbia they had escaped from, some built new barracks at alternative locations in Belgrade. All the interviewed participants in the movie and locations are authentic, although main protagonist Gypsy/Roma TV from Novi Sad for now exists only as an initiative, without having a public frequency.

The making of the movie with the dislocated inhabitants of the settlement under the Gazela Bridge in Belgrade was an intensive and sometimes difficult undertaking for all involved. Creating a logistic platform for the former inhabitants that allowed them to openly speak about their situation and to find out what happened with the displaced families was an important step to break the existing media blockade on the issue.

The original song for the film was made by Muha, contemporary poet, hip-hop performer and critic of the Roma status in the society. Saša Barbul, young actor and dramatist, Roma activist and journalism student, wrote the script, and Sali Kadrijaj, inhabitant of the a Belevill settlement, which was torn down in April 2009, was the 2nd cameraman. *Text by Vladan Jeremić*

Concept and idea: Saša Barbul, Rena Rädle, Sali Kadrijaj, Vladan Jeremić

Starring: Saša Barbul, Sali Kadrijaj and Muha Blackstazy as Gipsy TV

Script: Saša Barbul, Camera: Rena Rädle, Sali Kadrijaj, Editing: Saša Barbul, Rena Rädle

Soundtrack "Black Plague" by Muha Blackstazy, Music, vocals and background vocals: Jovan Obradović, Muhamed Eljšani, Maksud Huma





Well those who had 200 Euro  
got the containers,



Miserably brother, without water,  
without electricity

# Me in 20 Years!

**Sibylle Hoffer**

**11 photographs, 30x45cm, Leskovac 2009**

The city of Leskovac being under a 216 hours period of non-stop rain, I hardly survived the introduction meeting suffering from a headache amplified by the open gas heating. Yet, the kids were more inspired and wrote and draw how they imagined their future life as adults. I couldn't figure out any difference in appearance between Roma and Serbian children. Nor did I notice a social gap as long as we did not leave the classroom. Reality looked different when it turned out that several Roma kids pictured themselves in medical professions. It took the team tough negotiations to get the permission to stage their photographs in a hospital.

It's hard for me to evaluate what was the experience of the youths and of the people that were involved in one or the other way. I don't know in how far there is an effect on the parents or the public who saw the photographs later on television or at the exhibition. What I can talk about are the facts of the Leskovac workshop and what it meant to me. These individual facts of experience, they open up doors to utopian spaces of collective emancipation and experience. The opening of those doors is not only personal enrichment, but it sketches the potential and the initial point of realization. And from this point on, the photos, the images, they become crucial. They become classical "pieces of art", as they mark this space, stating this specific possibility of aesthetic communication. The photos are kind of "soft skill facts". *Text by Sibylle Hoffer*

"Me in 20 years!?" was realized with youths from Petar Tasić primary school in Leskovac: Aca Ametović, Sanja Amzić, Elen Bajramović, Kristijan Elezović, Luka Mikić, Martina Malicević, Andjela Mišić, Djordje Savić, Andjela Stojanović, Tanja Stamenković, Svetlana Stamenković and Jovana Stanković. Numerous individuals, organizations and companies from Leskovac assisted in fulfilling the youths' wishes to be architect, artist, pilot, doctor, singer, athlete or inspector. The realization of each photo engaged a whole team in getting necessary costumes, requisites, lighting and adequate space. Local assistants were artists Neda Cakić and Ivan Šaćirović.

*Sibylle Hoffer* is a Berlin based visual artist exploring film, text, site-specific sculpture, installation in public space and photography. Curator of various projects, co-founder of Büro Schwimmer, initiator of Schwimmer Image Agency. Her working process usually includes extensive research on extra-cultural fields.





# Journey to the World of Our Wishes

**Dikana Bala, Dalibor Bislimi, Milica Bislimi, Suad Bislimi, Altona Behrami, Sabina Krasnić, Serđjad Krasnić, Nimon Krasnić and Besim Neziraj in collaboration with Rena Rädle**

**9 billboard prints and postcards, various sizes, Belgrade 2008**

In Germany, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a genre “Zigeunerfotografie” (Gypsy photography) emerged that portrayed Roma in a romantic manner according to the stereotypes at the time. Besides the ethnographic photography a huge number of photographs was produced in terms of registration of so called “vagabonds” by police and for the “race research” of the Nazis. Historical photoportraits that were commissioned by Roma merely exist.

I thought a lot about how photographs could be useful as a medium and not reproduce stereotyped images. These photomontages actually show clichés, in the sense that they present predictable wishes of average young girls of boys from Belgrade. From this paradox derives the provocation and the educational and communicative social effect of these pictures.

*Text by Rena Rädle*

The photomontages emerged from a collaboration between a group of Roma children from Krnjaca, a suburb of Belgrade and Rena Rädle in December 2008. The kids projected a scenario in which they would like to present themselves, using the technique of photomontage. Searching for the right “background” to photograph, the girls and boys expressed the wish to visit parts of Belgrade that usually are no-go areas for them - not only because of their age, but because of their being Roma. Together with the artist, they strolled around the Belgrade fortress, the city centre and the representative part of New Belgrade with parks, expensive hotels and shopping malls to take pictures. Afterwards, the best scenarios were chosen and the images edited, most of them doing their first steps at the computer. The effort was forgotten when background and figure were joined and revealed new, surprising views.

Rena Rädle, born 1970, artist, activist and producer, graduated visual communication in Kassel, Germany and lives and works in Belgrade, Serbia. In her artistic practice, which she develops mostly in collaborations, she combines techniques of video, photography and text detecting and analyzing societal conditions. Contemporary art for her is a means of criticism, and a possibility to take active positions in political issues. Since 2002 she works together with Vladan Jeremić as *Rädle&Jeremić* and takes part in international conferences and exhibitions.





besim grom

Opel logo

Ja sam Besim, predstavljam Opel Astru i Opel Klasik

The advertisement features a man in a dark jacket and pants standing between two cars, a silver Opel Astra and a white Opel Klasik. The Opel logo is visible in the top right corner of the ad.

Psychographics of Besim

