

Manifestations

In July 2008 we visited the Manifesta 7, hosted by four towns in the South Tyrol region of Italy. We were looking for artistic interventions, recreations and transformations of social imaginary significations and of public spaces on the borders between art, politics and research. In short, we were hoping to make interconnections with and find input for our own interdisciplinary activities in the Intervention project.

But what did (and does – the exhibition is open until November 2008) Manifesta manifest? To say that we were frustrated is saying too much, and we would not presume to formulate a general judgment on all the venues and the multitude of artwork displayed, after just a brief and crowded sojourn, interrupted by opening speeches and cocktail parties. Confused is more to the point. We were confused by the obvious and unresolved tensions between the passionately political and clearly articulated statements at the Ex Alumi site in Bolzano, the fairly conventional but meticulously presented works at the old post office in Trento and the experimental sound installations in the old fortress at Fortezza. We were also somewhat bewildered by the local flare of surrounding the venues, displaying an ambiguous pride in Tyrolean identity. But confusion is not a bad state to be in; bewilderment (thaumazein) being the starting-point of all potent thinking.

From our point of view, the by far most interesting of the three sites was the Ex Alumi in Bolzano, being curated by the art collective RAQS (Rarely Asked Questions) media from India, promoting works of architects, lawyers, and other non professional artists – among others the Swedish collective Piratbyrån, famous for their highly contested site *The Pirate Bay*. In the interplay between copyright riots on the net and the devastating consequences, both for the local populations and for the environment, of bauxite mining in India, something of the potential force of a gathering such as Manifesta became visible.

Here, not only but definitely here, the multiple possibilities offered by an intertwining of art, professionalism from different areas, artistic research and mindful curatorship, took shape and became embodied in and through the combination of the space (the old aluminium factory) and the works, creating an intervention into to the political as well as the social imaginary landscape of the summer of 2008.

In the wake of this experience, we would like to present this special issue of *ArtMonitor*, Politics of Magma, as our own modest attempt at a similar kind of intervention into the political and social imaginary settings of Gothenburg, Sweden. It's centre of gravity is Södra Älvstranden, the southern riverbank of the slow, easy-going River Göta Älv, which in turn is at the geographical centre of the big city of Gothenburg, moving at faster, post industrial rhythms, from an industrial identity towards a politically contested, gentrified, future.

The processes of renewal and change taking place in this landscape, the conflicts, the open and hidden agendas, the hopes and deceptions, constitute the main field of creativity and knowledge in this issue. The insights and intentions diverge, as well as the perspectives of research; facts are repeated and

transformed according to differences in intentions and interests, different epistemic and political contexts are invoked all allowing for magmatic intersections in and between architecture, fine art, design, philosophies, activism, sociology and critical theory.

Nevertheless, the contributions share one fundamental value: that popular participation, noisy democracy, artistic work and artistic research have important contributions to make when it comes to urban planning and urban life in the future.

We encourage our readers to build their own versions of the dialogue of different forms of knowledge and to report back.

The Editors

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