

## Hard Realities and the New Materiality – Symposium on Sustainability and Contemporary Art (Budapest, 26 Mar 09)

Maja/ Reuben Fowkes

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Sustainability and Contemporary Art  
Hard Realities and the New Materiality

Central European University Budapest  
2-6pm Thursday  
26 March 2009

Since the last symposium on Sustainability and Contemporary Art held at CEU in February 2008, which took as its subject the Operaist dilemma of 'Exit or Activism?' and examined Paulo Virno's idea of 'exit' as the ultimate form of resistance, the world has witnessed an intensifying fight for resources under the Arctic, the rocketing of food and oil prices, the Russian gas crisis, and the systemic failure of international financial institutions. These 'hard realities' have caused a switch from concerns of immaterial labour to recognition of the 'new materiality' of current circumstances.

This recent turn has been addressed by theorist Slavoj Žižek, who notes that while in the last decades it was 'trendy to talk about the dominant role of intellectual labour in our post-industrial societies, today materiality appears in an almost vengeful way in all its aspects, from a future struggle for ever-diminishing resources (food, water, energy, minerals) to the degradation of the environment.' The 2009 edition of Sustainability and Contemporary Art therefore brings together artists, theorists and environmental activists to investigate the implications of 'hard realities' and 'new materiality' for political action, artistic theory and practice, and sustainable living in the 21st century.

### SPEAKERS

Marina Grzinić: Sustainability and Capital

Marina Grzinić is a philosopher, artist and theoretician. She is Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Institute of Fine Arts, Post Conceptual Art Practices and a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy in Ljubljana. She is a founder of Reartikulacija (Ljubljana) and recently published the book *Re-Politicizing art, Theory, Representation and New Media Technology*.

Tamás St.Auby: The Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984 W.

Tamás St.Auby was born in 1944 and lives in Budapest. In 1968 he founded IPUT (International Parallel Union of Telecommunications). He was censored for his artistic radicalism, promotion of art strikes and questioning of ideology and forced to leave Hungary in the mid-1970s. Since returning from Geneva in 1991, St.Auby has lectured at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts.

Tadzio Müller: It's economic growth, stupid! On climate change, mad-eyed moderates and realistic radicals

Tadzio Müller lives in Berlin, where he is active, after many years of being a counterglobalist summit-groupie, in the emerging climate action movement. Having escaped the clutches of (academic) wage labour, he is currently writing a report about 'green capitalism' for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and otherwise doing odd translation jobs. He is also an editor of *Turbulence - Ideas for Movement*  
[www.turbulence.org.uk](http://www.turbulence.org.uk)

Janek Simon: How to Make a Digital Handwatch at Home

Janek Simon was born in 1977. Studied sociology and psychology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. His artistic activity began around 2001. He is author of interactive installations, videos, objects. Simon takes inspiration from computer games, Internet and the archive (in its multiple meanings).

Sebastjan Leban: Silent Weapon of Extermination

Sebastjan Leban is an artist and theoretician from Ljubljana. His artistic practice involves the collaboration with Stas Kleindienst, the group Trie and the group Reartikulacija. He is one of the editors of the journal *Reartikulacija* and has exhibited in numerous national and international exhibitions, participated in many symposiums and lectures and published texts in several different publications.

Alina Asavei: A Sustainable Aesthetics: Contextual and Ethical Beauty

Alina Asavei is from Romania and currently she is a PhD candidate in

Aesthetics (Department of Philosophy, Central European University, Budapest). She works principally in the areas of social philosophy, cultural studies, art and disability, the politics of aesthetics, forms of artistic engagement during and after totalitarian regimes. She published articles in the domain of Art History, Aesthetics and Social and Cultural History.

#### Alan Watt: Sustainability in the Face of Hard Reality

Alan Watt is a lecturer in environmental philosophy and the development of environmental thought at the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at Central European University.

#### Maja and Reuben Fowkes: The Environmental Impact of Contemporary Art

Maja and Reuben Fowkes are curators and art historians who deal with issues of memory, ecology and translocal exchange. They have curated and written extensively on the issue of contemporary art and sustainability.

[http:// www.translocal.org](http://www.translocal.org)

The programme of the Symposium on Sustainability and Contemporary Art is devised by Maja and Reuben Fowkes (Translocal.org) and co-organised with the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy and the Centre for Arts and Culture at Central European University.

For further information and booking details please see the project website:

[www.translocal.org/sustainability](http://www.translocal.org/sustainability)

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#### Reference:

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