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In Collaboration with gangart.

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Introduction

The project about which I'd like to report appears, at first glance, as if it were just another one of those hands-on art projects [1], the sort which have sprouted abundantly since the beginning of the nineties, even in german-speaking regions. Their means and methods are classic: young people collaborating with artists produce videos and present them eagerly to the public. A second look at these projects reveals a problem, inherent to their very nature. This problem revolves around the question of representation.

When someone is given a voice through engagement or artistic-educational [2] projects, as contended in the USA since the sixties (Give a Voice) -- now known to have been the result of the emancipation movement, with the intention of encouraging the socially disadvantaged and so called less advantaged groups to formulate their own ideas (see Rollig 2001), to become visible -- "representing the unrepresented" according to Martha Rosler (Rosler 1987, 26), then it's essentially a question of representation in all its dimensions.

With the word representation I mean, initially, simply the possibility of symbolizing someone (even yourself) or something. In latin, the word indicates the realm of visibility and means illustrate, imprint.

The most important consideration, an ancient one with regard to representation, is the question of how and why someone was represented in a particular manner -- illustrated, symbolized, exhibited, preserved, the question of utilitarian motives and exclusions; one can also state that visibility creates/should create invisibility, whether accidentally or otherwise. [3] Significantly, it's also a question about the power to make something visible through symbolization.

The question of reproduction, as noted in the subtitle, will be address briefly at the end of this presentation. I would, however, like to note now that even I, by presenting a project in an act of verbal exhibitionism, am recreating and reproducing. Anyone else, whether an active participant or not, would surely have told this story differently. The very existance of this truism, in discourse about each recreation of the given and about the creating-individual's personal power (see Bourdieu 1990), is well known. With the reproduction of processes/results, those thought to be art for example, comes the battery of questions about illustratability, nearly ceaseless and desperate representation, endlessly and directly in the line of fire, as every artist, curator and art-intermediary knows.

I'd now like to talk about the project, followed by four reflective movements.

Part I: The Project

"Abschiebung/Expulsion": Baris Keles

On October 14, 2000, in a presentation called "Decentral Projection", the Viennese wienstation screened four videos. [4] All four were produced by second-generation immigrants, in cooperation with the Viennese artist's group gangart [5] and the artists Anna Kowalska and Simone Bader. The institutional framework and the hosts, in coalition, were called echo, a teenager support society. This group was financed by the Austrian government's Art's Minisitry and, according to the invitation, "educationally supervised by two youth social workers". [6] A video about a Viennese park, created by the same social workers and other youths, served as impetus and inspiration for the production of these four videos. This park was the teenager's favorite meeting place, a fact which disturbed the residents of a neighboring apartment complex. "The Park" video instigated a public discussion in the residential complex, which served to diffuse the residents' animosities.

The four successive videos were created quite differently. In three of them, jointly called "Together with gangart", the youths approached echo or GANGART, wanting to address specific themes. The fourth, in contrast, was inspired by an in-house photography workshop given, by Kowalska and Bader. [7]

The video presented here is about, the seventeen year-old, Baris Keles' expulsion and reentry. [8]

First, briefly, Baris' history:
At thirteen, Baris was taken by his uncle from Turkey to Austria because his family anticipated a better future for him there. He lived in Austria for four years on a tourist's visa, with extensions. He went to school, learned german and made friends. Then his papers expired and he became illegal. During a routine check, he fell into the police's hands, was held in an expulsion holding-cell

and actually expelled shortly thereafter. That was the middle of January 1999.

As Baris frequented echo, where he had both and abundance of friends and was well liked, Bülent Ötzoplu, the director of echo, initiated the machinery to have his expulsion reversed. Several youth and integration centers joined their efforts, two national newspaper editors [9] flew to Turkey ; and eventually, even the widest distributed, heavy right-winged, leading national paper, called 'Kronenzeitung', joined in, in the efforts to reinstate the turkish teenager's rights. The Viennese police "are to be thanked" for Baris becoming one of Kronenzeitung 's headlines. This young man became a media incident and was finally actually allowed to return, although in blatant contravention of the law. His case had been ideal. He's attractive, intelligent, warm-hearted, adaptable and friendly. He's now an apprentice at the brother-in-law's business of a policemen, who during the expulsion secretly gave him his telephone number, saying "in case you get back".

A wonderful inspiring story with a happy ending; an otherwise undocumented case, a precedence?

In the video itself, you get to see Baris only one time, singing a song. Otherwise, there's only talk about him. Even at the video's public premiere, in 'wienstation', Baris was not present. Serdar Celik and Aykut Cetin, the video's producers--who'll be formally introduced in a subsequent section "two directors"--were calm and confident during the discussion which followed. Instead of answering questions about Baris, they thanked gangart for their "professional collaboration". In contrast, gangart 's Simonetta Ferfoglia stated explicitly that the process was in no way thorough and that the video was incomplete.

I was initially a little astonished by her comment, in part because the video is both concise and professional, and because I was very moved by it. The emotional slant could be summarized with "friendship". Even the verbal after-thoughts could be summarized as a nice, politically intelligent oration, one which also made it clear that Baris was only a decoy, proxy for all other similar incidents. [10]

In several discussions after the presentation, Simonetta Ferfoglia und Heinrich Pichler (the second in command at gangart) attempted, with a mixture of anger and astonishment at Baris' virtual disappearance from the video, to recreate how this had happened. For, from the beginning, the four participants, which included Baris, agreed with gangart's mutually developed concept, in which Baris was to be the protagonist. The plan was to allow him to tell his own story, sandwiched between two sub-levels in which interviews, archive material and initially some dramatized scenes were supposed to happen. There were several shoots at which gangart was present. Baris was interviewed a couple of times, just as planned. Eventually, Baris was absent more and more, being increasingly ignored and instructed by the two directors not to attend the shoots. The same fate befell gangart. They were not even told when the two directors intended conduct the principle interviews. The cut was done without supervision because one of the four, Serkan Cetin, is an electro-technician and was allowed by friends at echo to use their new video mixer. The three had taken over the project, which infact could have actually been applauded.

This thing is however politically hotter than even gangart could have imagined: Baris is Kurdish and the two other youths are Turkish.

echo's Bülent Ötzoplu, himself from the old militant Kurdish guard, has for years consciously promoted low-key politics in the youth club, according to Simonetta Ferfoglia, by purposefully not focusing on the horrifying drawn out historical hatreds between the Turks and the Kurds. [11] Although echo is frequented by youths from twenty nations, the majority however are Turkish males, among them, a significant number of sympatisants of the "gray wolves" (i.e. they are members of a fascist organization, comparable to skin-heads in Germany). These three teenagers are "gray wolves". Kurds are their number one enemy. Bülent Ötzoplus' concept at echo actually seems to work. The war thrives, just beyond echo's boundaries.

During his most desperate moment, while being deported, Baris wrote in an open letter: " I'm Kurdish, you see. It's not o.k. for me to go to Turkey now. The Turks and Kurds are fighting with each other right now" (Keles 1999). [12] That's also why he wanted to return to Austria. In the video, the fight, as he called it euphemistically, profoundly overtook him, more subtly than ever, from the perspective of representation.

That's how someone who initially was to be given a voice, after his success story, gets taken advantage of at every turn. He had agreed to participate in the video precisely because he had hoped to finally be able to speak for himself. Only to be silenced by precisely those who, themselves, solely through gangart, had acquired the rights to self-articulation and who are members of a group with a dubious social reputation in Austria. As a social case, Baris' was ideal. Ideal for the turkish youths as well.

As a person who could have represented himself, as someone belonging to a particular culture, one which functions completely different from the Turks' and as a subject, he obviously became

increasingly unmanageable for the two directors. He's only acceptable as a singer -- speaking for himself in song, in the video with a Kurdish song, which discloaks his identity if one understands the words. A curious coincident: even on Turkish television in Austria, which the directors, like their families and friends, naturally consume exclusively, the only mention made of Kurds is through Kurdish song; otherwise, they simply go unrepresented. Songs are great to create atmosphere, sentimentality and poetry. It turns those referenced into stylized imaginary figures. Baris becomes a myth. Differently put: the marginalized are marginalized by other marginalized, by being excluded and idealized. 'The Other' is speachlessly created, by others beeing speaking about him and instead of him. The video makes the viewer waiting for Baris. Seeing him singing is a great moment. The picture is perfect, Baris is Baris is Baris is Baris. [13]

Part II: Four Movements

First Movement: Supplement

Returning to the question of representation, about which Ernesto Laclau (Laclau 1999) wrote, concerning its logic: they are "good" if a perfect transmission of the intentions of that being represented is achieved by the representer.

Completeness/Wholeness always has to be supplemented by the representations -- that which is represented simply can not be present at the location of the representation ; that is, something stands proxy for something else. This is pure symbol theory.

The term supplement is from Derrida. The supplement is an adjunct, he states in his grammar treatist. "It's added or subtly substituted for something. The symbol is always the supplement for the thing itself." (Derrida 1983, 250) This then means "that the

representer's role can't be neutral and that he adds something to the identities being represented". (Laclau 1999, 115) The representation is then essentially always impure, always supplemental and always a remnant. It's the same with language. One proclaims one's own guilty by opening one's mouth; because firstly, one always has to speak for someone; and secondly, one never gets it right, too much and too little simultaneously. [14] It's equally true of the representation. Foucault, in 'The Order of things', states that "naming something transforms human nature, like a representational crease, which serves in itself as the linear consequence of thought, within the framework of partially diverging entities". (Foucault 1974, 374) Among other things, he says that: the question of representation archeologically exposes an epistemology of occidental thought. There can be no adequate representation. The laws of misguidance, of absence [15], of supplement and of cross-reference govern here.

There are only different degrees of understanding and positive suprise: the feeling that the representation, the presentation or the illustration of something, which is always somewhere other than where that which is being represented is, satisfies more or less the expectations nourished by one's fantasies.

That's how the three young video makers expelled Baris, as the subject of his own story, who could have spoken for himself, and inserted themselves instead and their own desires. That was their tainted excess. They used Baris to make their film, a film to which even the Gray-Wolf-Friends, outside of echo, could consent.

gangart was simply disgusted by the manner in which the three youths were taken on. And Baris started accusing gangart, echo and all the supervisors of collusion. Once again, he had become someone else's toy insomeone else's story.

A pertinent question in/with such projects, which function on the slippery ice of Giving a Voice, projects which because of the supplementary nature of representations are always imposing, thusly the question is precisely one of scripting, of directives and of dealing with excess or direction according to the nature and directives of excess. gangart trusted these guys and are now also astonished that even for echo, with or without Baris, the story told in the video is just as useful for advertisement purposes and for working on the message of solidarity through friendship. It's not about Baris or the Kurds. And at the same time it is - but through the eyes of somebody else, selling the story al truely 'authentic'.

Probably, this is precisely the place for a process of politically educational work to be initiated; that is, the often questioning attempts to forcefully change the perspective from which well established notions are viewed. For example, by -- as happened in another of AHA's hands-on projects -- explaining to teenagers what the cool schwastika really means. [16]

But this is precisely where the difficult questions begin:
Where do you let go? Where do you intervene? Where do you impose resistance to existing opinions and postures which invariably manifest themselves in Give-a-voice undertakings and which for political, historical or ethical reasons turn one's stomach. Censorship? What about whatever survives the representational process? How far can one, as director/stager, be held responsible for the consequences? When, for example, one of Clegg&Gutmann's projects ended in a social scandal because of a portrait, used in an artistic audience-participatory event, which one of the residents of a small community found intolerable. [17] Or what about this: someone is confronted by a picture of themselves, which they, for whatever reasons, never sanctioned being drawn, even if I, the uninformed audience, am terribly move by it?

Second Movement: Subversion

I've repeatedly contended, in numerous places and within the framework of artistic-educational projects, that, particularly in the cited Derrida insertion, the subject appears with subversive prowess. Furthermore, I concede that precisely from this process of speaking and being spoken to, one can say that exhibition through self-expression has spawned hope. For, through self-symbolization, the subject encounters his own perspectives, his own desires, his evolving, searching, finding, and erring status, which is precisely his grand opportunity: to avoid being regarded as something completed, finished, totally accessible, and instead, to use AHA's formulation about one of their hands-on projects, as "a junction within a network of the environmental influences, one which is merely a product of default cultural norms" and one which drafts its own "self-image" through confrontational processes. (Haarmann 2000) Perhaps I was a bit naive, for I never intended to see or experience the subject, as such; quite the contrary.

The Turkish youths wrote themselves into their video, most blatantly through their decision to use Turkish instead of Kurdish music, as naturally was the original plan. That is also subversive. Subversion against gangart and Baris. This trio decided and their decisions were precisely the point at which the subject surfaced, according to Laclau. Decisions are based on unanimity, if they are real honest decisions. Laclau imparts, passage is instantaneously achieved through deciding. Derrida adds, it is precisely "the moment of madness, the leap from the experience of indecision to a creative act". "This moment of decisiveness remains uninfluenceable and is immuned to transcendental and impressionable regulatory systems. This is solely the subject's moment". (Laclau 1999, 125f)

The three producers of the documentary video were the protagonist; they were creative; they were the artists. They made an astonishingly touching film without reflectioning their own possition criticaly - as artists might have done. This is commonplace but is it avoidable?

Lots of active-involvement projects thrive from the belief that having a representation accepted, of that which should be represented, is a way of keeping it pure. This is no doubt delusion, as subjects always construct themselves through representational processes and relationships; thusly, from the outset, never depicting autonomous entities. (see Lummerding 1997, 25) In other words, one never encounters the source, only ever new links from stories, relationships and representations. The myth of nonintervention, of native sources, of intimate contact has long since become obsolete, but thrives nonetheless. "Interactions have always been (based, E.S.) on representational processes and, accordingly, have always been media adapted, encoded and interpreted symbolically." (Lummerding 1997, 25) Through the media adaptation, encoding, and symbolic rendering pollution is inevitable. Hands-on projects are particularly susceptible to pollution because they are complicated representational undertakings.

Third Movement: Reflection

So, there is no purity. All presentationally-decisive endeavors, as unanimity-driven subject-creating undertakings, are inherently impure and "always have remnants", as Foucault adds. (Foucault 174, 45) Accordingly, they are always subversive, but self-subversive as well. For the record, Baris experienced this: his interview was filmed several times, at his request, because the pictures on the screen did not comply with and could not be brought into

compliance with his impressions of his self-image.

All of this should be borne in mind, when one dares to tread the slippery spheres of representation. Something which one has to bare in mind is the inextricable question of power. Especially the question of who gets to mount the individual frames of a story, who gets to direct the entire representation. Whoever has the legal rights, also has--as we all know--the power. (vgl. Dziersk, 1996) If one chooses to think of power as not innately negative, but instead, as Foucault did, as something positive which "houses the productivity which actually creates social reality" (Fink-Eitel 1989, 82); then, one can perhaps once again relieve one's self from being morally disgusted and consider the structure and, thusly, understand that it is impossible without power. Someone will tell the story. Even if this is done by many individuals, the story won't be any less polluted. In the final analysis, according to Foucault, subjectivity is "a product of power, if subjectification is analogous to subjugation". (Fink-Eitel 1989, 78)

What's left?
I would suggest: reflecting. [18]
That is, one has to be constantly aware of the impossible status of this issue and plan to fail, as well. One has to incessantly consider the mechanisms of power, considering the position from which the message and representation emerges. Everything is ceaselessly debatable, even the opportunities for representational defacement. Although gangart worked hard on this part, it was not possible for them to make the two directors of the video step back and lock at what they were doing.

Fourth Movement: Continued discourse as plot or exuding from the inside

I announced at the beginning that I'd come back, at the end, to the question of reproduction, one which, like the others, I can only touch on. Because this discussion also has to be extended, my suggestion -- which is not preeminent -- is not to terminate the discussion, structually speaking. The discussion has to be sustained; one has to repeatedly initiate open inquiry about desire. Even that is infact trappings from the distant past. Trappings which are nonetheless not from yesterday. In fact, you can not show the video without commentary, as gangart admits. It's unfortunate that echo and the two directors definitely intend to do this. I noticed by my own personal reaction that gangart has no desire to satisfy the "longing for healing, which follows closure" (Muttenthaler, Wonisch 1999, 300) and which is blatantly revealed through Baris' story. By initiating a discussion through public exposure of the two director's one-sided descriptive representational strategy, they draw attention to the question of representation. They're point at the pointing finger - which is - in a way - reflection. [19]

Comparatively speaking, one can go even further, as was attempted by Anna Kowalska and Simone Bader in their fourth video project, by questioning directly the issue of representation. Their methods were similar to feministic and post-colonialistic theories, which suggested that a "different standpoint, stemming from within, (has to be, E.S.) constructed, concretely, out of elements from a representational system which has to be conquered". (Muttenthaler, Wonisch 1999, 307) Kowalska and Bader were sore thumbs for echo and they were also confronted with formidable animosities during the discussion at the, particularly from the teenage audience. A coincidence? Hardly. They were pouring salt directly into an open wound, doing something about which no one had formally spoken, clearly, they had to be stopped.
But that's another story.

In response to the question, which role had gangart assumed in the video project, Simonetta Ferfoglia and Heinrich Pichler named three significant functions: The had -- all of this belongs innately to the field of working with images -- made the technical and practical tools available. They had supervised [20] the conceptual and realizational processes. But above all, they were the ones who should have meticulously maintained open lines of discussion between the participants about what was made. Both, during the production process, as far as possible or within the limitations of their access, and now, still during the surfaced phase of reproduction; for, their inspiration is gone, as the participants all readily admit.
On that note, both Simonetta Ferfoglia and Heinrich Pichler are also clearly aware of what's being exposed here.

[1] Christian Kravagna (Kravagna 1998, 30) differentiates in the field of art between varieties of Interactivity, which "turn out to be (more than, E.S.) simply an offer of experiences by allowing more than one reaction, reactions which influence the appearance of a work without significantly influencing or altering its structure." Interactive artistic works usually address the individual.
-Collective endeavors, "conception, production and implementation of works or activities by groups, where all participants enjoy equal status"
-and participation, (based on, E.S.) "differentiation between producers and audience, with an interest in audience participation, to whom pertinent input is surrendered, either from the outset about the conception or about the ongoing process". Hands-on projects usually address groups.
[2] Artistically-Educational means projects which either overlap the field of art or are designed to interrelate with art and which in

some manner have educational aspirations or consequences. I used this expression initially in S.-Sturm 1999

[3] see S.-Sturm 2000

[4] http://www.nextroom.at/dezentralekunst

[5] gangart is Simonetta Ferfoglia und Heinrich Pichler. For years, they've had sustained working associations with differing professional and semi-professional projects, which during the earlier years included collaborated (v.a. art and media events) with various artistic disciplines (music, dance, set design) staged in a variety of public and semi-public spaces; more recently, they've concentrated on analytic-artistic intervention in sundry institutions (for example: having designed the Carpet Room in the The Museum for Applied Arts) and on professional productions, like this case.

[6] Irmi Nowotny and Thomas Tesar

[7] 'Strukturelle Gewalt' by Dani Busic and Djonia Oliveira Mendes (in collaboration with Anna Kowalska and Simone Bader)

[8] 'Abschiebung' Baris Keles by Serdar Celik, Aykut Cetin and Serkan Cetin (in collaboration with gangart)

[9] Eva Linsinger (Der Standard) and Patrik Volf (Falter)

[10] "Baris Keles is living once again in Austria. He has been allowed to continue his apprenticeship. An individual's fate has concluded happily but, unfortunately, only one individual's fate. Lots of others are still fighting for their daily existance and having to learn to live with the imminent fear of deportation and a new start in a country which they only know from vacations or their earliest childhood. This film is dedicated to all those people. A socio-political and a legal solution must be found, which eliminates the reiterating production of these individual cases". (videotext)

[11] For information about the historical conflict between the Kurds and Turks (see, for example Janata 1992); Briefly: in the beginning of the nineties there were an estimated 20 million

Kurds, living in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, Iran and Asebajan. Add to this, those who live outside Kurdistan. Especially there still extreme discrimination against the Kurds in Turkey is practiced. Military-Freedom-Fighter Parties, the PKK with Özalan as its leader being the most famous among them, have sprung up in response to their language being outlawed, complete villages being eradicated and radical government-sponsored criminalizations and subjugation programs instigated since the installment of Kemal Attatürk's modernization-government.

[12] Keles, Baris: Warum gerade nach Österreich? (Why Austria?) 1999, non-published manuscript

[13] "Rose is a Rose is a Rose is a Rose", said Gertrud Stein.

[14] Lacan instructs, in his Theorie of the Symbolic Order, that it is not meaning which results just because a creator [Signifikant] produces a representational creation [Signifikat] but, instead, because a creator [Signifikant] inexhaustably refers to a different one, an infinite chain

[15] Modern's epistle is called man, according to Foucault. This is illustrated by the fact that although man is invented by human sciences he can nolonger be properly represented. Foucault used Diego Velasquez picture, Las Meninas, to exemplify this mechanism. Those represented, the very subject of the picture, the royal couple, are only shown as a reflection in a mirror; they are also simultaneously in the same place where the painter himself and anyone viewing the painting is. (see Foucault 1974, 31f and 372)

[16] AHA = Anke Haarmann in her project 'Self-representation HipHop' Hamburg, 1997/98

[17] Clegg&Guttmann in their project 'The Open Public Speakers Platform' Grieskirchen, 1997

[18] As Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote two-hundred years ago: " To reflect, the soul with its ceaseless activity has to stand

motionlessly for a moment, it has to reduce the newest experiences to a unit and by doing so place itself, as an object, in opposition." (Humboldt quote. from Glasersfeld 1992)
[19] see S.-Sturm 1996, 230f
[20] To understand oneself as 'supervisor' - again - includes the danger of seeing oneself not beeing part of the story.

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