

Visiting Artist - Vydavy Sindikat - Mob Mob Mob

Sunday, 25 February 2007

The Sindikat (A Brooklyn-Based Group Experiment) , a group of Russian-born, more or less by choice Coney Island exiled artists readily offer commentary about their probable non-existence as artists if they

matured in their native Soviet-Bloc digs. While Coney Island is certainly off the contemporary art grid the community of Russian ex-pats in southern Brooklyn is the perfect insulation to allow a group of people with creative interests covering architecture, philosophy, print design, and the ever more expansive realms of contemporary art.

Vydavy Sindikat represents an interesting model of the exiled artist. Classically, an artists (not to mention collaborative groups) were often refugees of particular political ideologies or wars in their native countries. The list of Europeans who fled to America during World War II is long and varied from the founders of Black Mountain College on the East Coast to German film director, and subsequent melo-drama master Douglas Sirk and Man Ray on the West Coast. The Cold War exile represented a different sort of ideological defection for creative individuals seeking a more liberal breath to make their work. Those for instance who were committed to life in the Soviet Bloc during this period, but desired to maintain creative endeavours outside of the state control were certainly living in dual universes. Ilya Kabakov is a former Soviet Avant Garde-ist who worked as a book illustrator since the 50's under the former government, stealing away his private time to initially paint. In the mid 1980's as Kabakov realized that there was a certain interest from the rest of the world to understand contemporary art from behind the Iron Curtain he began to develop "total installation" works that involve the community of the area of production, and that seeming destruction of the modernist bubble. As well as these privately funded large scale works, Kabakov began to accept commissions for public works, and moved to West Berlin in order to have the access to materials and the ability to scale his work to the monumental scope that was not possible under the regime. Much less opportunistic than his move seems, Kabakov's interest in the public is out of true desire to be able to open works for dialogue of the monument, simultaneously accepting the very tension of modernism's superior plateau while seeking to use its properties to actually have the public deal with these monumental spaces.

And that brings us up to Vydavy Sindikat, and the present day public. Vydavy Sindikat is very clear in its understanding of the failure of a utopia of monumental public space, but in this they have decided to create parallel universes. In *The Observer* (2005) the Sindikat formulated overnight a way to create a "counter audience" in a public square in Kieve, Ukraine. A protest project for sure was designed to slow the movement in the square and bring vision and pacing to an area, and a group of people that had been vastly overlooked by the hyper paced capital city society. This group was comprised of recently homeless families who had been ousted from their government appointed homes. And as public projects, like real estate, is all about location, the timing was also central to the function as President Uschenko was scheduled to make an address on the square for Ukraine's Independence Day.

Vydavy Sindikat Public Gathering Number 2 (2005)

This reconfiguring by using people en-masse to "thicken the soup" of public space has been activated heavily by technology in recent years. Flash Mobs all across the world bring people together for brief, highly energized periods of time to disrupt and reassess the flow of contemporary life. There is a youthful energy to a lot of these events, as the news of their happening is spread by text messaging, and email. The spontaneity of purpose creates a microcosmic universe where a common identity is briefly held amidst the even larger masses; a dance party, or pillow fight. The Sindikat is creating parallel universes in the form of Public Gatherings (2004-) where an open invitation is made for a gathering, and then a group portrait is made at the beginning of the event. This document is then used in concert with others amassed over time to examine how community is spontaneously formed in the public realm. It seems as though this mode has an exponential model for growth that will accelerate as more people learn about, and break the threshold of participation...Can projects like these slow the fragmentation of society?

Flash Mob - The Louvre, Paris August 28, 2004

Segue Burning Man?

