

Bik Van der Pol

Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol work collectively since 1995 as Bik Van der Pol. They live and work in Rotterdam

They explore the potential of art to produce and transmit knowledge and research methods of how to activate situations as to create a platform for various kinds of communicative activities, thus creating the necessary potential for a dialogue and an ever reforming discourse through which they develop an understanding of situations that surround us.

Their projects engage with functionality, usability and site sensitivity, concerned with interaction at an institutional and intimate, local level. They aim to improve situations, add what is missing, highlight what is in the dark and to open rather than close.

Circulation of knowledge and re-use of existing and left-over spaces, forms and situations are important strategic tools in their work. Not by adding yet another new idea to the cycle of production and consumption, but by revising and re-activating an existing situation. Notions of detachment, such as displacement, reconstruction and copy, allow something to outgrow its original roots, boundaries or limitations, and can be mobilized as instruments to enclose a collection or intellectual domain to critically explore its potential.

With, for example, *The Bookshop Piece* (1996) and *Proposition for Reclaiming a Space* (1997) they re-introduced the discourse on and the practice of art into the very same arena where art is shown. As one of the initiators of the group *Nomads & Residents* they created a platform for presentations by artists, critics, curators, architects, and others (www.nomadsresidents.org).

Their work has been shown widely, for instance in Associates, London; Art In General, New York, Kunsthau Graz, Modelle fur Morgen, European Kunsthalle, Trans(cient) City, Luxemburg, Differentiated Neighborhoods, Belgrade (2007), INSA Art Space, Seoul; Fly Me To The Moon, a project for the New Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Periferic 7, Strategies of Learning, Biennale Iasi, Rumania (2006); Secession, Vienna; Witte de With, Rotterdam (2005).

For this presentation they will focus on works and projects in which they question and research issues dealing with the public realm, for instance *Art is Either Plagiarism or Revolution*, *Ford Boxes* and – for this context particular appropriate - *Teach Me Something*, the project they developed for Periferic 2006 in Iasi.

Teach Me Something focuses on processes of learning and generating knowledge through experience and improvisation, sometimes passed on from one generation to another. These types of processes tend to create situational and often everyday knowledge, embedded in language, culture, or traditions. Critics of cultural imperialism argue that the rise of a global monoculture causes a loss of local knowledge. Rather than a tool to think about what can be shown or even taught to others, or an invitation to explore and reflect on a specific site, Bik Van der Pol choose to interpret the invitation to participate in an international Biennale such as Periferic as a challenge: to ask others to teach us (the artists, the public) what we don't know or what we might have forgotten.

During a visit to the flea market under the Podu Ros (the Red Bridge) in Iasi, Bik Van der Pol observed that a lot of objects on sale would have been throw away in the part of Europe where they live: mobile telephones, hi-fi equipments, old watches, radios, various elements from unknown machines and household material has, apparently, still a purpose.

These objects raise basic questions on value, use-value and the importance of knowledge of improvisation skills. Skills and knowledge that are quickly disappearing in Iasi under pressure of increasing capitalism. The artists asked different people who were said to have specific skills or knowledge, to show and teach these skills. A series of video interviews is presented as part of an installation in the Cultural Palace. How to repair a lamp, how to make an umbrella, how to knit, knowledge in mouse traps, tin ornaments and utensils,

and bookbinder skills are amongst the different explanations archived, in what functions as a – potentially - on-going manual.
Through this project, Bik Van der Pol are focusing on the different degrees of awareness of what is valuable and what is not, what can be transformed into something else, here and there.

For more information on their works and projects, please check www.bikvanderpol.net