

Vacaciones útiles

a project for Kunstmeile Krems

by Jano Cortijo

The 3 months spent at the Kunstmeile in Krems were a new and unique experience, a season full of firsts for me: my first time in Europe, my first artist studio, my first time ignoring a language. The surroundings and the freedom to concentrate on my work were certainly helpful in drafting, advancing and completing projects, even more than I had originally planned.

A brief report of projects completed while in Krems follows:

Hom(m)ework

What started out as a sketch of photographs or a video documentation, has resulted in a full scale installation around the home environment, particularly that of the kitchen, a chore that is, for some reason, a very female realm of all domestic activities.

Hom(m)ework consists of: a video projection, 5 to 8 photographs (about 50 x 70 cm. each) mounted on the wall, a free standing countertop with drawers holding photographs inside (about 20 to 30, 10 x 15 cm., 13 x 18 cm. and 20 x 25 cm. each) and a video monitor on it.

The video projection shows a set of hirsute arms cooking and doing dishes while the video monitor presents a 'slide show' of grocery and utilities receipts. The bigger photographs show "domestic still lives" of the resulting order and cleanliness around the home after the *homme* has worked through the mess, shown in the smaller photographs.

Included is a selection of images that will serve as template for the final version of the piece.

A Practical Cultural Management Handbook

For this project I visited many galleries and some museums in Vienna and talked to some artists to have a general impression about the local art scene as well as confirm and contrast the results of a similar investigation conducted in Peru. I also managed to conduct some interviews, although not as many as I wished.

All in all, it was a very interesting and rich experience to have a firsthand account of an art scene that was certainly foreign to me. From the location of galleries and art spaces throughout the city, to the profile of museums and galleries and the art they present I was able to figure out how the same structures work, however diversely, in different environments. Most of the presumptions I had before coming here were basically confirmed and it was certainly good to have a first hand experience with art that I had previously seen only in print. Particularly useful and interesting were the Erwin Wurm exhibition at MUMOK, the Elastic Taboos exhibition at Kunsthalle and the Viktor Bucher gallery.

The project will be continued and expanded throughout this year in Madrid and in San Francisco.

Written Portraits

Consciously or unconsciously, portraiture has been a constant in my work. Thinking about past projects I remembered an idea I'd had about drawing portraits with the only apparent craft I have: my handwriting, which has been the subject of several commentaries for as long as I can remember.

Starting from the idea of a "spoken portrait", the kind a victim tells to the police to get a drawn picture of an attacker when there is no photography available, I devised a written version of it using my apparently peculiar calligraphy and drew portraits of my closest friends. I liked the effect of the black letters on a white background creating a rather compact geometric unit and the sentences making undulating lines.

Included is a selection of some of the portraits.

While in Krems I was also able to concentrate on other projects:

* For LiMAC, the Museum for Peruvian Contemporary Art (www.li-mac.org), I translated the information on its web page, finished the details for the next temporary exhibition ("Iodosity" by Jorge Gonzales San Miguel), collaborated with the director in updating the collection and proposed 2 new projects that should be uploaded for the next update (by July or August).

* sub titles: I retook a photographic project I started a while ago, now finishing the narrative aspect of the whole image series, definitely inspired by the Hom(m)ework piece.

* a kind of project: I put together a compilation of unfinished projects, an archive of works-in-progress that is certainly helpful as a source of information for new, old and recycled projects. I'm interested in turning this project in an exhibition and an artist book.

* I provided curatorial assistance to artist Cecilia Jurado for her upcoming New York exhibition "Madame Frankie Stein" and wrote a text for the catalogue. I also translated the story she wrote for the book that will be published in conjunction with the show.