

INTERSECTING TERRITORIES

online pilot project by Pro Helvetia Cairo

2014 / 2105

www.territorycrossings.com

Contribution Chalet5

NOW WITH YOU!

Six series of one video and 5 photographs

Everyday places and situations, somewhere in the world. Markets, shops, cafes, streets. In these places, there are invisible objects, secret and shrouded. Other items are lovingly placed on display, – on sale – whilst yet others engage in a dialogue with each other or with their surroundings. They begin to speak, telling of their origin, how they are waiting. Between two seated persons, a strange present absence opens itself; unmistakably there in the picture and yet impossible to be more closely defined.

It is difficult to say what it is, the secret of these photographs. It is not a secret at all in the classical sense – everything is open and in plain sight. It might be better described as a magical charge. However, as an attempt to describe it, this term also falls short – the presence of this factor is as intensive as the situation is everyday and inconsequential.

Chalet5's photographs – color, reduced to black and white – are not restricted to formbased statements. Instead, they speak of generally shared human experiences, revolving around the *conditio humana*, the basic conditions of human existence. What elemental experiences are laid down, deposited in the memory of the individual and of the society? Why is it so often the seemingly “simple” things and events that, in retrospect, are recognized as key moments, moments when a course became set?

This means that it is of no significance whether the photographs and videos were created in Cairo, Calcutta or in Switzerland: what they show is not the tourist perspective, not documentary archive material, not a sociopolitical statement. With the sensibility developed throughout countless journeys, through walking and looking, Karin Wälchli and Guido Reichlin intuitively recognize the sensory presence of existential moments that make up all human life, regardless of geography, skin color or social standing.

Out of an archive that has been steadily growing for decades, Chalet5 have put together six series of photographs, with five photographs in each series, which will each be presented on the website at the start of a month, accompanied by a short video. Changing the selection of artworks every month allows the constant emergence of new facets. In December 2014, all of the previously shown 30 photographs and six videos will be made available to view for a second time, all together and in their totality.

Markus Stegmann 2014

CURATORIAL INTROS

Markus Stegmann

The project is an attempt to explore aspects of art and public space in Egypt and Switzerland. The website creates a platform for presentation, exchange and discussion. Users are invited to post their comments, so the website will be a contribution to a public dialogue. The Swiss contribution consists of selected works of Chalet5, collectif_fact and Ariane Koch / Sarina Scheidegger. The photos and videos of Chalet5 (Karin Wälchli and Guido Reichlin) catch the rare moments, when everyday-live reaches a mysterious visual presence. collectif_fact (Annelore Schneider and Claude Piguet) show an animation-video of a public demonstration, which collects paroles and issues from all over the world, while involving the viewer. Ariane Koch / Sarina Scheidegger present "Looking for Fritz": performative walkings through the city of Basel, concerning the relationship between language and perception. Brita Polzer is pointing out some examples of artists interventions in the landscape in Switzerland. Rachel Mader presents the project "Stadt auf Achse" (City on road axis), concerning a social and artistic process between residents and artists. The writer Clemens Umbricht will write new poets in the context of public space. Markus Stegmann, curator of the Swiss contribution, gives in short texts an introduction to the Swiss and to the Egyptian artworks, presented on the website.

Hamdi Attia

This project is an online platform in which selected artists and writers were invited to reflect on aspects of how public space functions in society at large, and on how these aspects are addressed in their own practices. However, public space could be discussed as a physical form or as social or institutional structure. The users of this website are expected to navigate throughout a collective picture of different perspectives, where each participant is given an equal territory in the project's space. Through a web-based project combining interactive and linked texts and images, Nada Shalaby explores the theme of social space and interaction, while Azza Madian, in her text, follows a thread of resistance in pop-music for the past four decades. Ahmed Sabry constructs a fictional space paired with short texts by his colleague Mohamed Abdelkareem, creating an image-based project inspired by his paintings. Artist Huda Lutfi examines gender issues in the graffiti of the revolution, while Wael Ashry, a creative writer, looks at what creates the new 'revolutionary' vocabulary. On other fronts, sociologist Magda Boutros reflects on the tension between activism and the legal establishment after 2011 in her ethnographic work, while artist Youssef Limoud, in his written piece, examines the politics around art, artists, and art institution

About the Project

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Pro Helvetia Cairo is the first of Pro Helvetia representations abroad, set up at 1988 to cover countries in the Arab region in addition to Egypt. Like Pro Helvetia's liaison offices all over the world, Pro Helvetia Cairo aims to promote the dissemination of culture and art from Switzerland by creating conditions that allow arts professionals and cultural practitioners to explore and address other cultures and to achieve creative development.

Pro Helvetia is keen on exploring online platforms and possibilities as a means to promote contemporary art and culture. This comes as a response to the change in the modes of communication in which the digital world has acquired the power to bring people together despite geographic distances. Accordingly, Pro Helvetia has decided to launch a website which is intended to be a host for ongoing online projects. In this and coming editions, the website will continue to tackle different topics that will shed light on the relationship between different creative fields, while drawing attention to the historical, philosophical and social context within which they are produced and received.

The idea behind the *Intersecting Territories* project came when PH began to examine the role of contemporary art in modern societies in general and in a society like the Egyptian one in particular, as well as the relationship between contemporary art and other fields of humanities. Swiss curator and art historian Markus Stegmann and Egyptian visual artist Hamdi Attia will curate *Intersecting Territories*, the initial project of the website, which will last for six months.

Translations by Alison Kirkland