

Petra Gerschner

On the Stubbornness of Fights

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Germany

Music: jacques et les fatalistes, 2009

Le déserteur (Boris Vian, 1954)

4:36 min

2009

„War is the motor for institutions and order and in its smallest wheelwork even peace creates war. In other words: You have to read peace out of war. War is nothing but the code for peace.“ (Michel Foucault; Society must be defended).

Starting from the presence of military operations in everyday life, „On the Stubbornness of Fights“ shows actions of individual and collective resistance. Images of artistic and political interventions in public space are linked with sequences of organized actions of individual and collective manifestations against war, torture and capitalist globalization.

War is no social destiny but the result of political action. To be at war has to be legitimated and socially accepted. In the song „Le deserteur“ by Boris Vian, the protagonist denies this logic. He personally draws the consequence and neglects the order to succumb to military power relations.

For the video „On the Stubbornness of Fights“, the Viennese musicians „jacques et les fatalistes“ re-interpreted this song, for which Vian was insulted on stage, boycotted and censored by the French radio. The fear of those in power vis-à-vis the power of the song was obviously so strong at the time when the French colonial army had to withdraw from Indochina in order to bloodily fight against the anti-colonial liberation movement in Algeria.

## THE DESERTER

Mr. President

I'm writing you a letter  
that perhaps you will read

If you have the time.

I've just received

my call-up papers

to leave for the front

Before Wednesday night.

Mr. President

I do not want to go

I am not on this earth

to kill wretched people.

It's not to make you mad

I must tell you

my decision is made

I am going to desert.

Since I was born

I have seen my father die

I have seen my brothers leave

and my children cry.  
My mother has suffered so,  
that she is in her grave  
and she laughs at the bombs  
and she laughs at the worms.  
When I was a prisoner  
they stole my wife  
they stole my soul  
and all my dear past.  
Early tomorrow morning  
I will shut my door  
on these dead years  
I will take to the road.

I will beg my way along  
on the roads of France  
from Brittany to Provence  
and I will cry out to the people:  
Refuse to obey  
refuse to do it  
don't go to war  
refuse to go.  
If blood must be given  
go give your own  
you are a good apostle  
Mr. President.  
If you go after me  
warn your police  
that I'll be unarmed  
and that they can shoot.  
*Boris Vian 1954*

Le déserteur  
Monsieur le Président  
Je vous fais une lettre  
Que vous lirez peut-être  
Si vous avez le temps  
Je viens de recevoir  
Mes papiers militaires  
Pour partir à la guerre  
Avant mercredi soir  
Monsieur le Président  
Je ne veux pas la faire  
Je ne suis pas sur terre  
Pour tuer des pauvres gens  
C'est pas pour vous fâcher  
Il faut que je vous dise  
Ma décision est prise  
Je m'en vais déserteur

Depuis que je suis né  
J'ai vu mourir mon père  
J'ai vu partir mes frères  
Et pleurer mes enfants  
Ma mère a tant souffert  
Elle est dedans sa tombe  
Et se moque des bombes  
Et se moque des vers  
Quand j'étais prisonnier  
On m'a volé ma femme  
On m'a volé mon âme  
Et tout mon cher passé  
Demain de bon matin  
Je fermerai ma porte  
Au nez des années mortes  
J'irai sur les chemins

Je mendierai ma vie  
Sur les routes de France  
De Bretagne en Provence  
Et je dirai aux gens:  
Refusez d'obéir  
Refusez de la faire  
N'allez pas à la guerre  
Refusez de partir  
S'il faut donner son sang  
Allez donner le vôtre  
Vous êtes bon apôtre  
Monsieur le Président  
Si vous me poursuivez  
Prévenez vos gendarmes  
Que je n'aurai pas d'armes  
Et qu'ils pourront tirer  
*Boris Vian 1954*

Petra Gerschner is an artist and curator, who did her diploma of fine arts from the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Munich in 1999. Her work includes billboard-projects and interventions in public space, photo and video installations and she participated in exhibitions like *Biennale Cuvée*, Linz 09 (Austria) / *Taipei08 Biennial*, Taipei Museum of Fine Arts (Taiwan) / *Land of Human Rights*, <rotor> association for contemporary art, Graz (Austria), 2008 / *25PEACES Europart*, Vienna, 2006 / *Double Check*, Camera Austria, Graz; *show & hide*, Feld für Kunst, triennial of photography, Hamburg (Germany), 2005 / *IV. Biennale de Cétinié*, Cetinje (Montenegro), 2002 / *International Festival of Photography*, Toronto (Canada) 2001 / *intentional entrances*, Gallery Art Resources Transfer, New York (USA), 1999 / *Der zweite Blick*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (Germany), 1995.

She has been involved in curatorial projects in Munich, Berlin, Vienna,

Calcutta, New York and Washington.

Media images and advertisements occupy and privatize public space. They act as everyday backdrop and space for projection, producing desire and anxiety. Petra Gerschners works *what does memory mean to you? XII* and *problem or solution* (2005 - 2009) explore the medialisation of politics and the ubiquitous presence of advertising, which shape our perspective on reality.

Working with photography, video and installation, Gerschner analyses gender relations, cultural and racist stereotyping; the relations of power that produce social inclusion and exclusion. Through her own re-reading, she questions existing images, highlights common methods and strategies on which these are based, and creates new perceptive possibilities. Gerschner aims at developing fresh perspectives on subversive and collective action, and explores the potential of artistic strategies for intervention.

jacques et les fatalistes

stefan geissler - harmonicas, kazoo, devices, vocals

jakob ortis - guitar, kazoo, vocals

it's hard to say whether "jacques et les fatalistes" is a side-, proto-, post- or whatever project of something, which started in 2004. some say, "ils jouent la chanson brute", but actually they play and sing in french, english, yiddish, german. and in any case "jacques et les fatalistes" is / are jakob ortis and stefan geissler. and what's also important to say is that jakob is not jacques et diderot not their maître, but everything happens with these guys musically without anyone else's participation is nowadays summerized as such.

concerts so far :

09.12.2008 - open space - opening of the show: "structures of radicality"

20.11.2008 - sala loca - hacienda ephemer

10.11.2008 - nachpoltern - fluc

26.09.2008 - kolar psy

16.08.2008 - euroranch - grillage / rhiz

15.06.2008 - central garden

18.08.2007 - standesamt frohnleiten

17.03.2007 - HOUSE(REBUILD.)PARTY - rhiz

06.07.2005 - la petite mort - slavonice/cz (avec marlies schlaeger)

30.12.2004 - fluc - "familienfeier"

21.12.2004 - la suite d'une nuit sensuelle et sans suite ... (fluc)

06.11.2004 - beatzentrale (as "popbiscuit")

05.08.2004 - fluc (container)

28.07.2004 - kein geld

video :

"HI-RES", video by marina gržinić / aina šmid, ljubljana 2006

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