



# Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

CAROLYN CHRISTOV-BAKARGIEV IS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF DOCUMENTA 13, SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN 2012 IN KASSEL. CHIEF CURATOR AND INTERIM DIRECTOR OF THE CASTELLO DI RIVOLI MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA IN TURIN, ITALY, THROUGH 2009, SHE WAS ALSO ARTISTIC DIRECTOR FOR THE 2008 BIENNALE OF SYDNEY.

1

**Allora & Calzadilla, *Stop, Repair, Prepare: Variations on "Ode to Joy" for a Prepared Piano*** (Haus der Kunst, Munich, and Gladstone Gallery, New York) The "Ode to Joy" from the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth is associated as much with romantic nationalisms and Nazism as with contemporary politics. (It is the European Union's anthem.) For Allora & Calzadilla's *Stop, Repair, Prepare*, six pianists traded shifts playing the theme over and over—while standing in a hole carved in the middle of the instrument, so they faced the keys backward. The piano was fitted with wheels; while playing it, each musician pushed it around the gallery. Devised in 2008 for Haus der Kunst and curated by Julienne Lorz (I saw it in New York in early 2009), the work explored the fraught relations of art and power, deflating the grandeur of the tune, which lacked two full octaves because of the strings that had been excised.



Allora & Calzadilla, *Stop, Repair, Prepare: Variations on "Ode to Joy" for a Prepared Piano*, 2008. Performance view, Gladstone Gallery, New York, January 23, 2009. Photo: David Regen.

2

**Michelangelo Pistoletto's new bioarchitecture pavilions** (Biella, Italy) The artist's Cittadellarte—at once a community center, university, artists' residency, and collective artwork dedicated to social responsibility and sustainability—opened two new spaces this year in Pistoletto's hometown. Located in old factory buildings that have been upgraded with grass roofs and mud walls so that they are cool even on the muggiest days, they are places to feel good in. They house a bioarchitecture and design office (N.O.V.A. Civitas) and a development office (Prodotti di Svolta) for natural and recycled materials—products of the synergy between science and daily life.

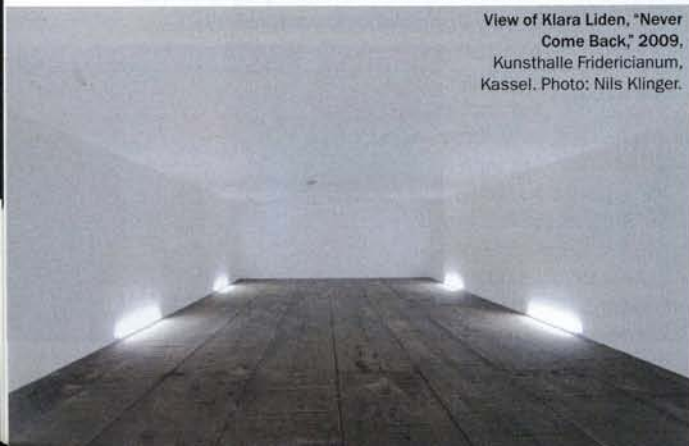


Construction of a roof garden, Cittadellarte Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy.

3

**Klara Liden, "Never Come Back"** (Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel) Liden's confrontational work, curated by Rein Wolfs, addressed the experience of the white cube by making that experience almost impossible. The artist built a huge room-within-a-room that nearly filled the main space; outside, it looked "under construction." Its low-ceilinged interior was Sheetrocked, with lights installed near the floor, which was covered in tar paper—a substance more commonly associated with roofs. Outside, on a pile of compressed trash, monitors played two videos: one showing the artist throwing stones into a river at night, the other showing the old US NSA headquarters in Berlin, now empty and covered in graffiti.

View of Klara Liden, "Never Come Back," 2009, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel. Photo: Nils Klinger.

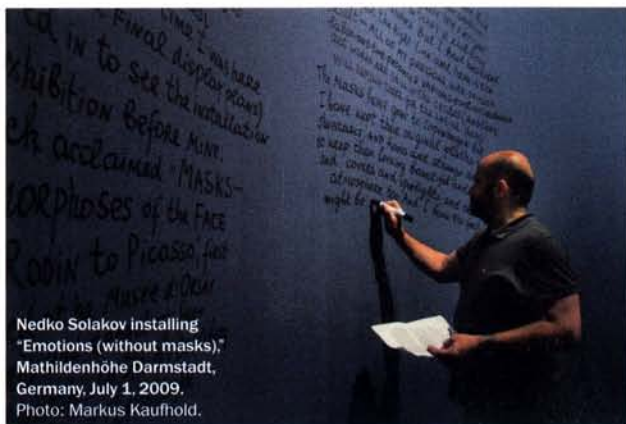


Aleksandr Rodchenko, maquette for a trade union poster, 1924, collage, ink, pencil on paper, 15% x 11".



4

**"Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism"** (Tate Modern, London) Curated by Margarita Tupitsyn and Vicente Todolí, this moving, informative show explored the optimistic and revolutionary works of two of the Russian avant-garde's most influential artists: Aleksandr Rodchenko and Liubov Popova, who challenged the autonomy of the art object by "engineering" everyday life.



Nedko Solakov installing "Emotions (without masks)," Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, Germany, July 1, 2009. Photo: Markus Kaufhold.

**5** Nedko Solakov, "Emotions (without masks)" (Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, Germany) For "Emotions (without masks)," the artist went on strike against the spectacle of hypervisuality and the transactions of immaterial labor. At his retrospective's third venue, he decided (as he recounts in a comic narrative scrawled on the walls) that he was exhausted and that he would not install the artworks according to the detailed layout that curator Ralf Beil had worked out in a scale model of the space. Instead, he left the unopened shipping crates in the galleries, and went ahead with humorous little drawings and poetic gestures that seemed to haunt the leftover display system from the previous exhibition ("Masks: Metamorphoses of the Face from Rodin to Picasso"). Like Bartleby the Scrivener, Solakov offered no excuses—he simply preferred not to!

Tamás Szentjóbý, *Kentaur* (Centaur), 1973–75, still from a black-and-white film in 16 mm transferred to video, 36 minutes.



Work is not economical.

**8** Tamas St.Auby, aka Tamás Szentjóbý, *Kentaur* (Centaur) (Istanbul Biennial) Hungarian poet, musician, and performance and Fluxus artist Szentjóbý once said, "Art is what is forbidden"—literally, in the case of his radical film *Kentaur* (Centaur), 1973–75, which was banned upon completion. The film, a thirty-six-minute montage, is about the politics of work in authoritarian regimes: Documentary footage of workers' daily lives is overlaid by a sound track of the artist's poetic, philosophical reflections on alienation in labor. The original negative was lost, but a digitally restored copy premiered in Istanbul, where it functioned as a long, meditative pause.

Lara Favaretto, *Momentary Monument*, 2009, jute sacks, sand. Installation view, Trento, Italy.



**9** Lara Favaretto, *Momentary Monument* (Galleria Civica di Trento, Italy) Favaretto's ephemeral installation consisted of thirty-six thousand sandbags piled up around a statue of Dante Alighieri—erected in 1896 to stress the town's Italianness in the face of Austro-Hungarian encroachment—in Trento's main square. Favaretto's apparition (part of an exhibition curated by Andrea Viliani to mark a newly experimental direction for Galleria Civica) suggested trenches and World War I, and evoked withdrawal as a form and culture as a contested terrain. The walls of sandbags were quickly vandalized and partially collapsed.



Renata Lucas, *Venice Suitcase*, 2009, asphalt. Installation view, exterior of Arsenale, Venice. From the 53rd Venice Biennale.

**6** Renata Lucas, *Venice Suitcase* (Venice Biennale) Lucas's *Venice Suitcase*, 2009—a section of asphalt pavement at the main entrance to the Giardini—seemed so normal and familiar that it went unnoticed by many Biennale-goers, but at the same time it had a strong, surreal presence: There is normally no asphalt in a city that has no cars. Yet Venice's canals are slick with oil, so in Lucas's work, part of Daniel Birnbaum's "Making Worlds," we simply found more of the same substance (asphalt is a by-product of crude-oil refinement), here transformed into culture.

**7** Haris Epaminonda, *Zebra* (Sharjah Biennial) In a dark room at the ninth Sharjah Biennial, curated by Isabel Carlos, as a Bach cello prelude played repeatedly, I sat looking more and more closely at the single still image—a zebra being reined in by three men in a jeep—that constitutes Epaminonda's 2006 projection. A splash of color like a paintbrush's mark obscures the zebra's neck. It's actually just a defect, a scratch Epaminonda had found in the original slide, the abstract, collagelike splash heightening the dreamlike scene's drama. The work seemed a reflection on the possibility of reinvesting a single image with meaning, and of seeing narrative, passion, and will in suspended moments in time.



Haris Epaminonda, *Zebra*, 2006, still from a color video, 2 minutes 29 seconds.

**10** Pierre Huyghe, not yet titled (Musée des Arts Populaires, Paris) On Halloween I was invited to a recently closed museum of folk culture for the first of three moments that will mark time in this nearly empty eleven-story building (the others will fall on Valentine's Day and May Day in 2010). As the spectator-specters wandered about, groups of people playing the roles of museum workers—guards, conservators, cleaners, the director—clustered to watch another set of people performing magic tricks, hypnosis sessions, stand-up comedy, and reenactments of the 1980s trials of France's *action directe* terrorist groups. Like participants in a somber ritual, the workers became acclimatized to the point of transforming into second-degree role-players themselves, taking on the characters of the performers they had been observing. The spectators turned into "false spectators," or players playing the role of spectators, without knowing what direction to take. Reverberations and repetitions occurred, the transformations and migrations of roles and identities suggesting the pathologies generated through the troubling experience of becoming multiple and multiplied selves in our "capitalist" tale of the pollution of images. There were moments of excitement, happiness, anticipation, sadness, and a quiet, final sense of peace. □