OFF-Biennale Budapest

The Flying Kayak
Ádám Albert, Linke Armin, András Cséfalvay, Kitti Gosztola – Bence Pálinkás – Fanni Hegedűs, Richard Ibghy – Marilou Lemmens, Beatrix Szörényi

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This exhibition focuses on the relation between science and art, science and the economy, not just in those cases where artists apply scientific methods, but rather the artistic interpretations and elaborations of scientific and economic results.

How do artists interpret the results of the research concerning abstract (for most of us) astronomy? How has the problem – which most of us have been affected by – such as the spread of invasive species been dealt with by artists, and how does it become a starting point for an independent pedagogical initiative? How does a theme such as the phenomenon of the Alps, which have been considered as an idealized natural landscape, become an artist’s observation, a remarkable example of the ambivalent relationship between man and his surroundings, of the consequences of human expropriation, and the manipulation of powers that intertwine the “untouched” landscape?
At the crossroads, there are the processes of understanding, the manipulation of knowledge, and the potential misuses of all operations. Artists remind us of the relative nature of science, the facts, and the truths as well while they offer their own interpretation models and alternative approaches.

The project title bears reference to Chris Burden's work *The Flying Kayak* (1982), which perfectly illustrates not only the, at times, absurd and humorous – while also poetic and playful – nature of the relationship between science and art, but also the presence of the kind of creative inspiration that is indispensable in both areas of discipline.
At the *Flying Kayak* exhibition, Ádám Albert combines his earlier works with new ones besides the special “materials”, like glass negatives taken of constellations, found at the Astronomical Research Institute. The presentation, the use of the display cabinet found at the site, is also in line with the credo present in the artist’s earlier exhibitions: he questions the relationship of nature and science by using objects that were either the tools of scientific enquiry of earlier decades or remind us of them due to the manipulations of the artist. Ádám Albert’s works are in constant flux between the world of abstraction and realistic representation. Spectators can never be sure whether what they see has anything to do with reality; just like it happens in the case of photo negatives which appear blurred when viewed by outsiders. The visual transmission of new layers of meaning created by the combination of the old and the new and the usage of classic techniques (etching, stained glass design) are peculiar examples of the artistic construction of meaning, in which a special cohesion is formed between scientific and artistic achievements of past eras and contemporary interests and conceptual approaches.
As a photographer and filmmaker Armin Linke combines a range of contemporary image-processing technologies in order to blur the borders between fiction and reality. His artistic practice is concerned with different possibilities of dealing with photographic archives and their respective manifestations, as
well as with the interrelations and transformative powers between urban, architectural or spatial functions and the human beings interacting with these environments.

Armin Linke’s film, Alpi (2011) is the result of seven years of research on contemporary perceptions of the landscape of the Alps, juxtaposing places and situations across all eight bordering nations and spanning the territories of four languages. In the film, the Alps are encountered like an island that is connected to various global transformations. The film shows the Alps as a key location, owing to its delicacy and environmental importance, where one can observe and study the complexity of social, economic, and political relationships. In the Europe of today, the Alps are a hotbed for modernity and its illusions. (Armin Linke)
Galileo’s “Inclined plane experiment for showing the quadratic relationship of time and distance in free fall” marks the beginning of experimental physics. The device measures a steady pulse with bells struck by a rolling ball. The installation is a demonstration, which focuses its attention to the collateral events of the ideal world of experimental science. Facts are constructed in ideal situations, and a new world is being born through their interpolation. But what is nature then, if it is a recollection in the “language of triangles and circles”? There is almost always a sound that is not given enough attention. And how else can we talk about (free)falling?
A Modell from the Past is a found architectural maquette from the eighties. The plan – originally intended for a public building – has never been realised, while the maquette was corroded by time. Szőrényi lifted this object from the past – which has lost its perspective without her intervention – even over the present moment in order to examine it from an imagined future. The scaffolding that holds the maquette in a sort of in-between state, while surrounding it like a shield, covers the building with plexi plates resembling solar collectors. A reality cut out of both time and space, a research centre which has broken away from the past but has not yet reached the future, maybe a floating space station. There are tiny concentric holes visible on the plexis, they are just like talking-windows in institutes where inside and outside are markedly differentiated. Only fractions of sounds get through these holes; understanding the past or perceiving the future seem equally impossible. (Nikolett Erőss)
We have made standard types of instruments spread around the world that transform a plant in the simplest way into a sounding device. We have taken the vegetation of our current residence as the starting point where the presence of locus tree, ailanthus, and Japanese bitter grass is the most striking. These plants could be considered as an invasive species in Budapest, that could be found almost all parts of the world. Originally, they were planted as ornamental and crops, and after leaving them free to grow, they have found a place for themselves in the man-rebuilt, scattered lands.

The preparation of these musical instruments does not require expertise, it is not a product of a professionalized elite culture, and instead of concentrating on how to perform with these instruments, we consider playing music as a community activity, everyone can play them.
An Alert Rabbit Breathing Purified Air is a series of scaled models situated at the intersection of sculpture, diagrammatic thinking and scientific research that reflects on the ontological status granted to animals by the mainstream scientific community. Drawing upon key experiments conducted in laboratories by biologists, ethologists, experimental psychologists, anthropologists and neuroscientists from the 20th century to the present, the work examines the various setups invented by scientists to produce knowledge about the cognitive (dis)abilities of animals.

To develop the project, the artists have researched and identified experiments from the scientific literature that deal with such topics as animal perception, learning, categorization, memory, spatial cognition, numerosity, communication, social behaviour, causal reasoning and metacognition. Using simple materials, including cardboard, paper, wood and acetate, they have transformed diagrams of experiments into scaled architectural models, each examining a specific case study and the questions it addresses to animals.

What do the experimental setups say about our way of doing science and the production of knowledge? What are the implicit assumptions about animals that guide the designs imagined by scientists? To consider these questions, the models produced by the artists emphasise the play between the conceptual and the concrete in the design of testing conditions and show how these setups function not only as practical experiments, but as thought experiments as well.
Inspired by expeditions made by 19th century botanists, climatologists and oceanographers who went out to sea, climbed mountains or made balloon ascents to measure the natural world, The Invisible Ocean consists of four videos that follows the artists as they attempt to capture, and in some way resolve, a reality in flux.

Filmed on Fogo, an island facing the North Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Newfoundland, each video focuses on one of the four basic elements – air, fire, water, and earth. Whether we see the artists on a mountain top filling a plastic bag with wind or capturing waves crashing onto a rocky shore in a glass bowl, the futility of their gestures is pitted against an environment that is excessive, limitless and beyond measure. While these attempts reveal human delusions of grandeur, their execution emphasises the inability of humans to control the situations in which they are immersed.