



The Power to Host
June 15 - July 1, 2011

Participating Artists

Dušica Dražić & Deqa Abshir, Global Alien, Li Mu, Alexandra Navratil, Vladimir Nikolić, Marinella Senatore and Slavs and Tatars
+ the hospitality shelf

Opening Reception

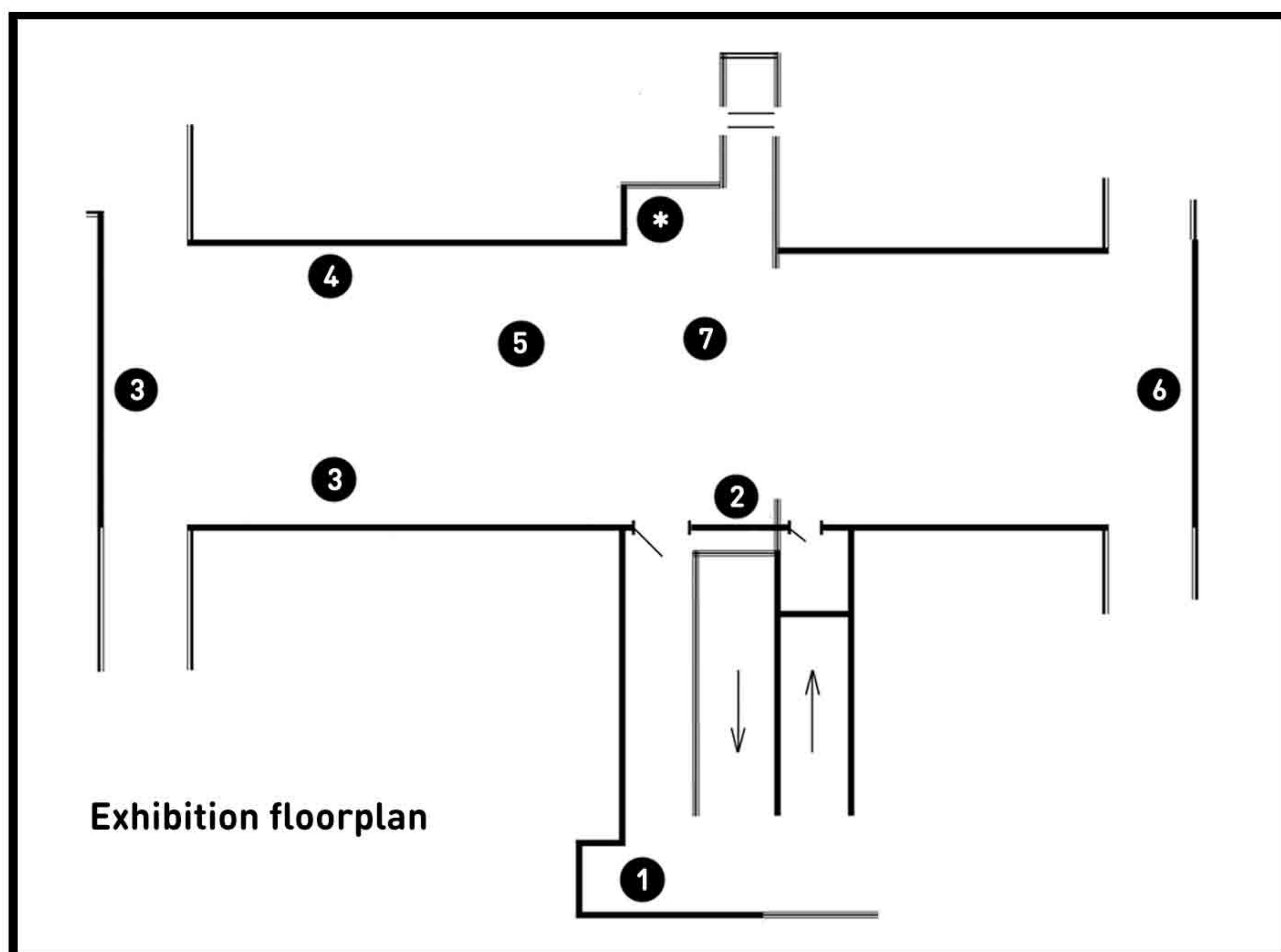
Wednesday, June 15, 6 - 9pm

Exhibition walk-through and discussion with Maja Ćirić

Wednesday, June 15, 6 - 7pm

Gallery Hours

Wednesday - Saturday, 12 - 6pm



- 1** Li Mu
My Questions: an Interview with Suonan Danye in Labu Temple, 2010
 Video
 25 min.
- 2** Global Alien
The American Dream – Performances, 2011
 Photo Documentation, 4 photographs
 30 x 31 ½ inches each

The American Dream – Performances, 2011
 1 Global Alien Suit (blue costume, T-shirt, cap)
- 3** Dušica Dražić & Deqa Abshir
The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, 2011
 24 C-print photographs, documentation of the making-process and prepress for silkscreen print
 8 patches of silkscreened cotton fabric handmade and used for *The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*
 Variable dimensions
- 4** Vladimir Nikolić
Performance, 2009
 Video
 8:51 min.

Painting, 2009
 Video
 13:32 min.

Installation, 2009
 Video
 11:11 min.
- 5** Slavs and Tatars
Hymns of No Resistance: Stuck in Ossetia with You, 2009
 Printed canvas and sheet music/lyrics
 16 ½ x 13 ½ in. each page
- 6** Marinellá Senatore
Variations, 2011
 HD video on DVD, stereo, color
 21 min.
 Courtesy Galleria Umberto di Marino
- 7** Alexandra Navratil
Untitled, 2009
 Black and white prints
 6 ½ x 6 ½ feet
- *** Hospitality shelf

The Power to Host, is curated by Maja Ćirić, recipient of ISCP's 2011 Curator Award, which offers the opportunity for a curator or curatorial collective to present a new group exhibition. This award was established in 2009 for participants in selected curatorial studies programs, as a response to the lack of opportunities for emerging curators to present institutional exhibitions in New York City.

Addressing the possibility for the international circulation of ideas in the art world, *The Power to Host* navigates between two different but complementary interpretations of hospitality. Cosmopolitanism, according to Kant, is founded on the term 'hospitality' as humanism on the move. For Derrida, to be hospitable it is first necessary that one must have the power to host or some kind of control over the people who are being hosted. This means that guests can be under control: to the closing of boundaries, to nationalism, and even to the exclusion of particular groups. This is Derrida's possible conception of hospitality, in which our most well-intentioned conceptions of hospitality render the 'other others'.

One look at the ISCP's alumni geographic map informs us of 'blind spots'—underrepresentation of the residents from most African countries, Middle East, Central Asia and some South American countries. This exhibition is an attempt to create a dialogue with the residents of ISCP and some collectives, who are either from these underrepresented but fertile territories or who claim to create situations in reference to these territories, beyond the limits of hospitality. The aim of the exhibition is to make both of the above-mentioned positions relative.

Global Alien and Slavs and Tatars, two participating collectives in this exhibition, deconstruct in a humorous way the nation-state by pointing to arts' capacity to overcome geopolitical borders and produce new cultural space. While Alexandra Navratil deconstructs power through imagined political and economic spaces, Dušica Dražić has collaborated with an artist from Kenya to create a Technicolor Dreamcoat, a trans-religious symbol that appears in Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Another way of hosting the others—inhabitants of the Lower East Side in New York—is examined by Marinella Senatore whose latest video looks at systems of aggregation and the possibility to exist and think in a collective way. A Tibetan monk hosts the artist Li Mu in a concerned conversation about his art world career as well as his private life, providing inspiring insight. Vladimir Nikolic examines the 'rule of commentators' on which the normative art system lies.

This exhibition points to the fact that those who have the possibility to be hosted at ISCP in Brooklyn, with ideal working conditions and access to a professional network, often share an unstable position with artists from those countries who have more difficulties entering the 'power field'. A 'power' hospitality shelf with catalogues and portfolios submitted directly from some of the countries that are absent from the ISCP alumni map will accompany this exhibition.

Deqa Abshir & Dusica Drazic

Artist Deqa Abshir from Kenya, who has limited possibilities to undertake a residency in New York City and Dusica Drazic, an alumna of ISCP, worked together to create *The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Influenced by the biblical fable about a coat which, when worn makes your dreams come true, the artists created their own version, with images based on objects which different individuals, fleeing their countries, had picked up to bring with them. From money, to records and tapes, these objects are a fragile reminder of home. Printed on fabric, stitched together into a coat, the coat itself becomes like a tapestry of highly individual pasts, commemorating an international history of forced migration.

Global Alien

Global Alien is actively working, participating, planning, and organizing exhibitions and events concerning the fragmentary nature, and effects of globalisation. Social issues are dealt with through the prism of cultural practices and artistic methods that bring into play challenging new conditions to site-specific situations. In their exhibitions and performances, the members of Global Alien question the reasons and need for borders, the movements across borders, and the powers behind them that are responsible for the construction of value systems placed upon individual or group identities. On a global scale everybody is an alien to each other. Taking responsibility means accepting this diversity. Therefore Global Alien seeks to examine and invent new methods of communication to overcome borders and meet each other wherever we may be.

Li Mu

The artist, conscious of his feelings induced by his unstable and vulnerable career, examines the bitterness and happiness brought by the process of creation and participation in the art world. In order to get a proper insight, the artist interviews a Tibetan monk with the following questions:

我的问题

My Questions2010

我什么时候才能参加卡塞尔文献展？

When can I participate in Documenta?

要还是不要孩子？

Should I have a child or not?

会有画廊和我签约吗？

Will a gallery sign the contract with me?

对于父母来说，我真的很自私吗？

Am I really selfish to my parents?

我是个没有才气的艺术家吗？

Am I not a talented artist?

我会出家吗？

Will I become a monk?

Alexandra Navratil

The collages made from many black and white photocopies of images of architectural elements from various sources (books, magazines, etc.), represent fictional spaces of political and economic power (forums, conference halls, parliaments) and at the same time recall modernist film set designs from the 1930s when Hollywood used modernist and art deco architecture to represent wealth and luxury on the screen in a time marked by economic crisis. The principles of such spaces are the same, using expensive materials (or their imitations) central perspective and affective symmetries. The collages are mounted on plexiglas and on wood, creating spatial elements within the exhibition space.

Vladimir Nikolić

(...) the artist appears as homo duplex—the one “playing” the naïve artistic subject and the one mocking his own calling through the acousmatic voices. But this double position has a special meaning here, having in mind that the artist literally repeats the expression forms of conceptual art (land-art, video-performance) that should have integrated the artistic into life practice, by eliminating the mediation of art institutions or, to be more precise, the “rule of commentators” on which the normative art system lies. (...) Art has changed and the context has changed, concludes Q, the forms of expression used in the criticism of institutions have long since been musealized as the relicts from the past and their repetition must produce some new quality in order for them to come to life in the present. (An excerpt from: Dejan Sretenović "The Artist and His Demon", Annual Catalogue of the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, 2009)

Marinella Senatore

... I used cinematic language just in order to provide a platform for the people...at the end you can see just people working together and they neither 'make' a real movie, so the goal of the project is not that at all, it's a process when people can stay together with their differences and their backgrounds and be involved in the way they prefer, in front of the other, in the making something, sharing time, skills, information, to each other according with their story...the video is about systems of aggregation and possibilities to be and thinking in a collective way...

Slavs and Tatars

Hymns of No Resistance features classic and cult pop songs revised to address issues of territorial dispute, language, and geopolitics within greater Eurasia. From an adaptation of Michael Sembello's Flashdance track She's a Maniac becomes She's Armenian, replacing the struggles of an aspiring dancer with those of a diaspora Armenian. Meanwhile, Young Kurds—a retelling of Rod Stewart's Young Turks—tells the story of Massoud and Shirin, a Kurdish couple trying to carve out their own identity. Stuck in Ossetia with You (originally Stuck in the Middle with You by Stealers Wheel) looks at the recent Russian-Georgian conflict, while Let's Call the Whole Thing Off (from the Gershwin original) debates not the pronunciation of produce, but rather the contested names of cities resulting from historical conflicts.

Dear friend,

I hope this email finds you well. Although I do not know if it finds you in Mali, where you are waiting to be accepted in one of the prestigious Curatorial Training Programs, probably in the Western context and preferably with a scholarship, or if you are figuring out how to work in the gap of your intellectual ambitions and your country's cultural policy. Maybe you just got back from a biennale being happy that the focus was on the quality of the artwork, and not on the predictable and expected political positioning reinforced by the works of art? Maybe you are admiring curators who are capable of promoting their independent vision by dealing with both the exhibition and what remains outside of it in a sophisticated and unpretentious way? Or maybe you are annoyed by the buyers of the art world, who are using art only to show how powerful they are, as the latest accessory that can provide them with some added value!

In your last letter you asked me if you should move to Berlin for six months. I might not be the perfect person to provide you with a performative answer. In terms of Berlin, I think there is a decline of the quality in the vision of the art world there, plus I really believe that we can shape our own destiny. This means that we, uncompromised smart people in their 30s living and working on the margins of the art system, at the same time being subjects and witnesses of the social conditions of the art field, have to produce texts and exhibitions as often as we can independently, and that we should not jump into stereotypes of thinking that someone else in Berlin, London or any global city can provide us with security. We both know it rarely does, and frankly I am not sure if security assures smart curatorial decisions.

So, our time and space in terms of the exhibitions should only be shaped by the time and space of our production. It should not be measured by the time spent in one or the other city. What I want to say is that I am not against Berlin or any other city. However, at the last IKT congress, there were more than a couple of curators who, when asked what their goals and latest interests are, said that they are looking for a German venue. I guess their interest lies in the image of a stable and powerful art system in Germany. On the other hand, an artist based in a much more unstable art system wrote to me that he knows that he will become rich and famous once he is dead.

Moreover, I think you should focus on finding as many opportunities for producing shows, and it does not have to be only Berlin. Curatorial choices that you will make should not be subject to any other power field but your own. The best would be if you succeed to be in a dialogue with both the work of art and the context of your action.

Your decisions should not be used to reinforce any dominant position or to threaten it, but they should be based on your own ways of dealing with things within any pre-given structure. You can be in your hometown and nurture the art scene there, with your valuable experience, while applying for shows around the world simultaneously. Also, try to intervene as much as you can in the African art context that would benefit from your experience.

At same time, you have to know the line where democracy stops. This does not mean that you should encourage fungibility in the art world. It does not work as *quid pro quo*. In a couple of words it is:

WORK/ FAITH/WORK/FAITH/A LOT OF WORK AND LOADS OF FAITH

Staying in Berlin for six months could open some doors, but it could also reroute you from where you have to go and that is to shape your own curatorial destiny. Be self confident enough to produce and look for a possibility to produce.

I am on one hand based in Serbia, where as you have seen museums are mostly closed. On the other hand, I am applying myself as much as I can and thinking how to make a small contribution to the art world with fewer distortions. This does not mean that I want to make another discovery show about an under-represented region. It does not mean that I am examining distant countries' imagination of the Western imagination either. This does not mean that it is possible to step out from the art system, hegemonic as it is. This means that I can at least strive to become a curator who will question the system itself. So be focused, not dispersed. And negotiate. A congress here, a biennale there, your entirely independent exhibition in an entirely marginalized and non-compromised venue.

Remember that the only privilege that we have is the fact that we are insiders in the art field. As Hassan Khan has put it in one of his respective interviews, we are the fuel to the system. I add that if we do not want to be absorbed by the system, we will certainly have to keep on modifying the fuel in order to make the machine change. It is far from easy, but sometimes we succeed by creating the field of visibility for good causes only.

With my best wishes,
Maja Ciric



Image credit: Marinella Senatore, *Variations*, 2011

I did not act according to the key words of the funding body. I was not an object of a particular geopolitical ideology in the interest of power concerns. No embassy supported me. I did not compromise my personality, nor manipulate anything. The reason that I am curating this show is because someone else's power field allowed my independent thought to emerge without any barriers. The art system might be more open than we tend to think initially. — Maja Ćirić

Thanks to: David Alaya Alfonso, Elena Bajic, Aleksandra Ćirić, Biljana Ćirić, Elke Falat, Oyinda Faleke, David Goldenberg, ICI NYC, Senewa Kinaya, Bettina Klein, Solvita Kresse, Katarina Lukatela, Tarah Murphy, Marc Schmitz and all the artists involved.

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