



*Project, potentially no one sees it

Atalya Laufer & Aki Nagasaka

*Project, potentially no one sees it is a collaborative art project by Atalya Laufer and Aki Nagasaka, founded with Sophia Domagala in 2008. The artists travel to particular addresses in various relatively remote destinations in Germany and create new site-specific works.

Bad Honnef, Germany

November 2008



Bad Honnef is a town in the Rhein-Sieg district, North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. It lies on the slopes of the Drachenfels (“Dragons’s Rock”) mountain, part of the famous Siebengebirge (“seven mountains”).

Many federal institutions are located in Bad Honnef, because of the close proximity to Bonn, which was the capital of West Germany from 1949 to 1990 and the official seat of government of united Germany from 1990 to 1999. Since the 1980s Bad Honnef has developed into an important place for conferences in Germany. Bad Honnef has the highest purchasing power of all towns in North Rhine-Westphalia and its’ percentage of millionaires is also one of the highest in the country.

The exhibition space used to be a Russian grocery store.



Maya, Dikla, Ilan and Naomi Tamir, the family of Atalya’s sister and the hosts of the project.

Project. Potentially.

Katalin Hause1

“Project, potentially no one sees it” does not simply follow the logic of balancing affordability and visibility. The artists live in the “center”, and in a way, produce work for this “center”, since their stated purpose is to bridge the distance between the artwork and its audience through texts. Each exhibition within the project culminates in the publishing of a book that presents images and texts by the participating artists as well as their audience. The writer of this text on the Bad Honnef exhibition has never seen the actual exhibition. All information came from what is displayed on the project website, although the text written will be part of the final art object - the published book. The carefully crafted conceptual framework is based on distance, mediation and an effort to communicate. There is no separate title for each manifestation of the project. The first exhibition in the ongoing series took place in Bad Honnef. It contains two installations, separately titled, and it appeared to be separately made. The house, which used to be a shop now belongs to Atalya Laufer’s sister and her family, who live there.

Aki Nagasaka’s work, titled “Bad Honnef / Atalya’s Sister’s House Project” covered the shop windows with the translucent panoramic image of the Laufer sisters’ childhood home, in kibbutz Hazorea in Israel. As the windows were lit from the inside, the German house, the new home, became a sort of projector/projection of the memory of the old home. It opened up a channel of communication between the the community of Bad Honnef and the newcomers, connecting and separating them at the same time.

Atalya Laufer created an installation, “Sing-Along A Ping-Pong”, which turned the shop interior into a makeshift ping-pong table, with Easter eggs for balls, small sculptural shapes turning the spotted ceramic floor into a sketched landscape, a lace curtain with landscape elements cut into it, covered a blocked door. The somewhat haphazardly connected items all had subjective significance, and the resulting whole seems to become a model of shifting borders and permanent state of conflict with regards to the disputed territories in and around Israel.

Moving to the periphery opens up the possibility for the artists to find interesting spaces that would inspire their work. However, focusing the potential audience’s attention to the importance of the remoteness of the exhibition with such emphasis like the title, also creates a conceptual framework that opens up the possibility to move beyond site-specificity, and address issues regarding the interplay between periphery and center.

The idea for Aki Nagasaka’s site-specific installation came from the strong memory of the inhabitants of the house of a far-away place, which, as it happens, was created from the image of the German landscape, as the original settlers were from Germany. The projected image is not entirely in contrast with its surroundings. The resulting interplay between past and present, memories and actual places is fascinating.

Atalya Laufer’s work does not directly refer to its immediate surroundings, it seems, from the photographs, more of a displaced illustration of a conflict that is both faraway and familiar. However, long-term political and military trouble tends to appear just like that to the readers of newspapers. Images tend to become repetitive and empty, in a way as the trauma of living through those events never does. The installation gains depth and meaning as the result of taking place in a small picturesque German town, where the ongoing Middle East conflict is likely to feel like an endless game rather than an actual war. As a result, Laufer’s work is the only one in this exhibition, which makes use of the original project idea - “Project, potentially no one sees it”, and its peripheral location, and in my opinion, it carries the most potential for future projects. It makes the original project similar to the Land Art movement in the 1970s in the US, where Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Gordon Matta-Clark just to mention a few, not only moved their work to the periphery - into the suburb, the desert, the slum - where space and material was not a scarcity. This dislocation also became the content of the work, seamlessly weaving the conceptual examination of the gallery as a site together with the quest for space. The first incarnation of “Project, potentially no one sees it” did not result in such a coherent exhibition, but Laufer’s installation opens up the potential to fully make use of the project’s own conceptual framework: making work on the periphery but for the audience of the center, and making ‘this shift’ the subject matter of the work.

The intended audience of “*Project, potentially no one sees it” is people like me, who not only cannot and will not see the actual work, but also have a tendency to conceptualize about art - asking such questions as how the stated subject of the overall project, periphery and invisibility, comes to play in the actual exhibitions; how site-specificity plays out within the context of the tension between center and periphery; who is “no one” in the title, when the exhibitions take place in remote but still inhabited places. As such a “viewer”, I have become captured by the overarching potential of the larger project, and I am looking forward to seeing what follows.

Bad Honnef / Atalya's Sister's House Project

Aki Nagasaka

This is writing about a piece, not yet existing. I, as the maker, know as much of the piece's outcomes as do the readers of this writing. I strive to utilize my imagination to give an inimitable shape to this piece. It is almost unavoidable for a gap between the pre-conceived form and the actualization of the piece to occur.

The work is a photographic image of a landscape, applied to three windows and a door of an existing empty shop on a relatively busy street in Bad Honnef, which lies in the Rhine region of Germany. The image is a continuous panorama scene from a kibbutz called Hazorea in Israel. It is transparent and in color, and is pasted onto the glass of the windows and the door. The windows and the door will cast double images; the reflection of the landscape across the street, and the pasted image of the landscape. Various colored shadows will be cast onto the street and the interior space's floor throughout a day.

There is a two-story house above the empty shop. The sister of my friend, Atalya, and her family live there. Her name is Dikla, and she lives with her husband, Ilan, and two daughters, Naomi and Maya. Dikla and Ilan are both from Israel. They started their family in Germany, where their two daughters were born. Naomi and Maya are lively, pretty girls who communicate with the mix of German, Hebrew, and a bit of English. The family acquired this building recently, and is renovating it into their home.

Atalya and Dikla grew up in a kibbutz called Hazorea in Israel. They often speak of German landscapes as reminders of their home-kibbutz. The kibbutz was founded by German Jews in 1930's. There was a lot of effort made to create a beautiful landscape reminiscent of their home country. Some plants such as poplar and cedar were brought from Germany to the kibbutz, whose climate differs drastically from that of Germany. The founders of the kibbutz took great care in rooting the German plants in foreign soil. Atalya and Dikla are fond of talking about their memories of

frequently. They are chatty sisters.

My participation seems minute so far, despite my ownership of the piece. I was fascinated by the sisters' stories of the kibbutz because the whole idea of kibbutz was foreign to me and I could not imagine how it is. I wanted to create this piece as a scene from the kibbutz, and through this to become a voyeur of a place that is unknown to me. Atalya and Dikla's strong tie and nostalgia toward their home is something unfamiliar to me, although I myself have lived away from my home country for more than a decade now. I do not know where this difference in relationship to place and repeated reconfirmation of memory originates, but it fixates me. Moreover, the phenomenon of interchange between the original and the reminder (German and the kibbutz landscapes) over the different generations (the founder of the kibbutz, Atalya-Dikla sisters, and Naomi-Maya sisters), caused by migration, is essential to me. I have also migrated; this family's history feels personal to me, as if I am looking at my possible future constellation.

“Sing-along a Ping-a-Pong”

Atalya Laufer

Ping Pong -

A game that evokes sound and movement, a name that invokes specific senses (sound and smell) and suggests an exotic origin. This is perhaps exactly what my work is not about, but it offers a good starting point.

I'm interested in the set formal division, and the required two (at least) opponents. I like the idea that it takes two to Tango in Ping-pong¹. I also find the idea of mimicking an already existing game, inspiring. Ping-Pong, or Table Tennis, is simply a domesticated version of outdoor Tennis. It originated in England as an after-dinner amusement for upper-class Victorians in the 1880s. Everyday objects were used as the equipment (a line of books instead of net, a rounded champagne cork as the ball, and the lid of a cigar box as the bat).

The Basis - The Floor -

For me, the floor looks and acts like a grid. When I first saw the empty space, it struck me as something I wanted to play with and it left a strong impression on me. It reminded me the typical floors I was surrounded by in my childhood. I used to stare at them and find imaginary creatures and worlds there. For many years, I thought they were ugly and cold; I dreamed of wooden floorboards and had carpets. Surprisingly, this encounter was warm and inviting. It recalled 'home'. The floor here serves as infrastructure to build upon, and recalls the grid as a tool for tranformation, the traditional scaling up of paintings as well as minimalist works.

The Net - The Green Line -

The green line is marked by the Ping-Pong net and is placed in the middle of the exhibition space, right in between Aki and Sophia's works. Since I am the connection between the two, in and out of the exhibition space, it was clear to me that this project would be built up upon and communicate with their ideas. I wanted to exchange ideas as artists, as well as friends. Space

allocation was one of the first things we discussed. My work is autonomous, but its surroundings - integral.

The net reminds me of the fence that surrounded the Kibbutz where I grew up. The Kibbutz is supposedly an autonomous community, where the idea of being in or out plays an important role. And, anyway, fences are familiar sites in Israel. Although not so directly related, using a green net as a division line recalls “the green line”. This term is used to refer to the lines established between Israel and its neighbour countries after the 1948 war. Its name is derived from the green ink used to draw the line on the map during the talks in 1949. The Green Line separates Israel not only from Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon but also from territories it later captured in 1967 (West Bank, Gaza, Sinai and the Golan heights). Thus, this line or border is in constant debate and it has great implications... For an 'outsider', 'the green line' as a term can be understood completely differently (environmentally friendly supermarket brand?), but for me it recalls the core of a problematic separation.

The Balls - The Eggs -

The Easter eggs replace the lightweight balls. They were bought in this shop last Christmas from its previous occupier.² The decorated eggs are traditionally used to celebrate Springtime, or Easter. The old tradition is to use dyed or painted chicken eggs and hide them for the kids or otherwise put them in a basket with straw to resemble a bird's nest.

The egg is widely used as a symbol of the start of new life. The egg is seen as a symbol of the grave and life renewed or resurrected by breaking out of it³. I found the transformation into plastic and the decoration of idealised nature (landscape, flowers, rainbow), touching.

In Ping-Pong, the choice of ball colour is made according to the table colour and its surroundings. I like how all the ingredients are carefully considered, but also that what might seem symbolic is fairly simple and pragmatic.⁴

The Rackets - Golden Serviettes -

As a kid, I loved everything with gold! I doubt I understood the moral (not

to be greedy and to think before I act) of two of my favourite stories – ‘King Midas’ and ‘The Goose that laid golden eggs’. The first, about the king who received his coveted gift of producing gold by touch only to realise that this deprived him from the natural world. The second is about the old couple who killed their own fortune by cutting their golden-egg-laying goose open, only to realise its insides were like any other goose. My idea of art may well be mixed with the desire to make things golden by touch.

Asides

Bonsai Trees -

Originating in China, ‘bonsai’ is a Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word 盆栽. ‘In the West’ it is used as an umbrella term for all potted and miniature trees. I am fascinated by the ‘aesthetic of the small’ and the desire to control nature. The cultivation process is seemingly complex and includes particular techniques for shaping, watering, and re-potting in various styles of containers. The resulted dwarfed trees are fairly fragile.

Fimo Mountains -

As a child, I loved making ugly things in Fimo. My sister was older and more talented and thus always made cute animals or beautiful jewellery. Talking to her about my feelings towards the floor, I realised we felt quite similar about it, only she still thinks it is ugly. I invited her and my nieces to make Fimo blobs/mountains, following the random pattern on the floor tiles.

Net Curtain –

To the far right of the exhibition space, there was once a door. Today it is blocked, painted white and treated as a wall. I decided to hang a white net curtain with a white country landscape pattern. By doing so, it is being camouflaged and celebrated at once. I felt the piece could not be completed without 13 clouds, 10 birds, 1 big sun, 2 pine trees, 6 apple trees, 1 other tree, 8 flowers, some bits of grass, 1 lake, a bridge, 2 ducks, 1 path, 1 home and many holes.

1. I have considered the idea of ‘self sufficient’ Ping-Pong (one that is played by oneself) and realised that it is a contradictory term.
2. “Julia” – was a Russian grocery shop (2005-2007).
3. The egg itself is a symbol of resurrection: while being dormant it contains a new life sealed within it. The red supposedly symbolizes the redeeming the world and the blood of Christ.
4. For example, a white ball is easier to see on a green or blue table than it is on a grey table. Stars on the ball indicate the quality of the ball, 3 stars indicates that it is of the highest quality.

Special thanks to

Sophia Domagala, Dikla & Ilan Tamir, Marlene Laufer,
Regina Nowak, Katalin Hausel, Alexander Konrad, Leo
Lipp, Alexander Hassenpflug, Anna Hellner, Viola
Thiele, Jana Dürfelt, Claire Sourgnès.

*Project, potentially no one sees it

Mainzer str. 7 D-12053 Berlin, Germany / T: +49 (0)176 26 256 7

E: projectpotentially@gmail.com / W: www.projectpotentially.com







112





















