



*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.

Zinzow, Germany

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Part 1 Bad Honnef, Germany - November, 2008



Zinzow is a village in the north-east state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in Germany. The village grew around a stately mansion (schloss) in the mid 1800s to accommodate the mansion owners and their caretakers. Today it remains as a small village with a population of about 100 residents.

The Château, 'Schloss Zinzow', exists to this day with the additional buildings of stables, a carriage house, distillery, and a residential house. The exhibition, *Project, potentially no one sees it - Part 2, took place in the attics of the distillery and the residential house.



Mr. & Mrs. Vielhaber, the owners of Schloss Zinzow and the hosts of the exhibition.



Mr. & Mrs. Nowak, our connection to Zinzow and the generous project supporters.

A Trip to Zinzow - Slightly Surreal Journey through Space, Time, and a Flower Dreamworld

Anna Hellner

The silhouettes of houses are painted black against the blue evening sky. I can still feel the sun and wind on my skin. It's June. Summer. A wonderful day. Still, it's been a strange season – not exactly warm, more autumnal than anything, but so clear and intense in its colours, as windy as the day has been.

We leave Berlin Gesundbrunnen station early in the morning on the regional express train to Neustrelitz. The coach section is crowded, so we venture upstairs to the first class. The phrase “Cloud 7” is stamped across the white head rests. We sit down and talk about this and that, art and life. We talk about ways – our own ways – to be happy. Green meadows and fields fly by under a bright blue sky, speckled white with clouds. Everything outside the train flies by, swaying in the wind, glowing in its natural colours. We're flying so fast away from everything related to the big city, flying past glittering lakes, forests brown and green. We stop at tumbledown train stations littered with graffiti and the vestiges of time, fly into the forlorn landscape of the former East Germany.

Ride, drink coffee, change trains, ride, ride again, get off in Neubrandenburg, wait, pay 30 cents for a restaurant bathroom with DDR charm. We're deep in the East now, but still going. A bus ride with background music from the driver's radio. A bus driver who asks us if we come from England; we're speaking English, after all, and seem so exotic and friendly. We drive through the gorgeous Mecklenburg landscape full of poppies and bluebottles, green fields shining red and blue all over. The avenues seem ancient; we glide down them as though gliding towards times long gone. We wait on train station platforms and laugh, talk about life – our lives. I am here on a personal invitation; how else would I have found the path to nowhere? The path to a project called *Project, potentially no one sees it by artists Atalya Laufer and Aki Nagasaka. You only undertake this kind of journey for personal reasons. Many things happen due to personal relationships – encounters. It is a personal relationship that gets us to our final destination. In Friedland,

we are picked up by an acquaintance of the artists, driven further across small streets and country roads. Finally, we're there, we've arrived in Zinzow, a small village of only 100 people.

We stand in front of Zinzow's Schloss, a Neo-Baroque mansion house in the heart of the Landgrabental landscape conservation area in the German federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. We ring the doorbell. I am joyful with curiosity. The landlady opens the door and hands us the key to the adjacent house where Atalya Laufer's piece is located.

In front of us stands a small rundown dwelling, an abandoned garden cottage. We enter, climb a stair, trade our shoes for felt slippers to preserve the floors. We find ourselves in an old attic – attic: a place of childhood, a place for junk. But there's nothing there, nothing but dirt and dust. How many spider webs are hanging over? My chest swells with fear and a curious sense of enchantment. I search for the thing I am supposed to be seeing; I am, after all, expecting art. But I don't find anything, don't see anything. The room is empty. It is an attic land and kingdom, a free space for associations, for the stories in one's head. What does this attic remind me of? The musty smell of the old house tells its own story, but the room seems so whimsical, so enchanted, far away from everything I try to comprehend with my intellect. It's as though I have fled to this place in an unpleasant dream. “This place was not meant to be pleasant”, the artist tells me.

The typical museum slippers – the felt shoes that connect to the floor and emit a funny pitter patter at every step – help me to concentrate my thoughts on art – its spaces, times, conventions. I keep thinking I am stuck to the spot at which I am standing. Everything seems somehow stuck. Then I realise that the artist has coated it all in varnish, which I can still smell. I begin to move more carefully. My movement is directed by red cordons, another museum standard, like the slippers. But what are they condoning off? My eyes scan the room. I see three windows. All are painted green. Framed by ivy, they offer sweeping views of the Prussian landscape beyond. Above, the view is spider web atop spider web and beams of untreated timber. It doesn't take long for goose bumps to sprout. I turn to the floor, look down and empty my head. All at once, I see small things – two notes, one with old markings,

and an old letter in a child's handwriting. What lovely stories an attic holds. But it's also a little sinister. Everything up here is old and unused, everything is dusty. I touch the floor, drag my fingertips through the dirt. But it doesn't move, and my fingers come up clean. Everything is stuck, fixed, captured by the varnish as though it were behind a glass cabinet. Stillness and emptiness. Even time seems to stand still, to be stuck. A timeless place. Where am I? Nowhere, I'm nowhere. And at the same time, I'm floating through the great museums of the world. I'm contemplating art. What is art? – the art historian's favorite question. To be able to hold onto the moment, conserve it, reflect on one's own view, experience the stillness in the wind. I discover the polished broken glass shards and feel the odd smoothness of cigarette butts, of small strewn plastic letters in red, of half a maple leaf. I begin to examine the individual dust particles, to differentiate between the types, to see. Timber beams, dust, trinkets – everything united, coated, stuck. Time itself arrested. The past is palpable, and yet time can't tick forward. Only the imagination cannot be held.

I touch something soft, yuck, maybe a fallen spider web, maybe dust. The artist hasn't been here for a week. "Life" in Zinzow cannot be totally arrested. This is not, after all, an invented room. It is real. – I am happy that the sun is shining. – "Much time, far too much time," is the artist's answer to the question of how much time she spent here. At least three layers of varnish, maybe more, have caused a slight intoxication just a short while ago. Noises. The wind is strong today. The smell of varnish, time, dust, and the past fills the room. The spider webs sway in the wind and the window frames. The floor sinks a little at every step; the boards bend, but not a single particle of dust moves. Everything is fixed, held. We often look for the floor beneath us, our own floor. Glass shards and dirt on this floor. Dirt that isn't really dirt, the floor washed, cleaner than the artist's own bedroom, spruced up for the museum. But in this museum, one is permitted to touch the dirt on display, finger it, handle it. The space is staged like a museum, red cordons cordoning off nothing, cordoning off an old deserted attic. They shine so red in the sunlight. The artist leaves me alone. – Do I want that? – Creepy, magical, and intense, the room yields to me. It tells me about the family that lived here, about the time the artist spent here, about all the work, leisure, and faith, about the attempt to conserve dust like freezing time, filling the room

with her own dimensions. World, where am I? Nowhere, I'm nowhere. And at the same time, I'm so close to myself, to the art and the artist, the family, and the characteristics of a home. I'm present. I'm in museums of all varieties, in an artistic context, in the middle of the discussion over what constitutes art. Lackluster, dirt, varnish, nothing...

The artist returns. – How nice. – We go back to the ground floor. She has inserted glass plates in the door frames to make display cabinets out of the rooms. The frames create pictures before our very eyes. A yellow room, decayed – captured in a documentary photograph. But everything remains as it was when the artist found it. Nothing has been improved, nothing changed; there is no reason to be ashamed. The only things that matter are concentration, demonstration, perception, and the world of one's own mental abilities.

Cut. – We're strolling through the park. One last walk around the outside of the very different stately home, then up the hill along the bright pebble path from castle to brewery, gorgeously renovated and shining in the sun. The property dates from the mid 19th century. A visitor walks by and asks where he can buy schnapps. The artist refers him to the brewery owner's son and adds that the schnapps is highly recommended. Here, too, we ascend a set of stairs to reach the attic, stairs arranged in a perfect symbiosis of old building structure and modern standards. Fine materials are harmoniously arranged in form and colour with the utmost attention to detail. We go through a large empty room, then down three levels and find ourselves in paradise – almost.

A floral paradise, another world, a flowery one, so peaceful, hidden and secretive. The ceiling is covered in dried flowers, grasses, bushes, branches, fruits, boughs, and blossoms that hang from the roof beams. Everything is twirling and swaying in the wind. The small windows are open. The walls are white, the timber beams are dark brown, and the artist, Aki Nagasaka, lies relaxed on the light wood floor. The beams are low. I quickly drop to my knees. There are pillows for visitors. Lie and dream.

I let myself float on my thoughts, carried by the wind to the meadows where these flowers were picked. Time evaporates. I lose all sense of place. So calm

and still like a wonderland, only the rustling of the wind, nature and its fragrance. It smells of wood and flowers, of stillness and paradise. Where are we? The sunlight shines through the windows and brightens the room. I feel brightened, winged. I feel like I'm floating through the room, this Hanging Garden. I smell the individual grasses, colourful blossoms – some as familiar as a rose, others unfamiliar in shape and colour. Each plant hangs head first from the beams, each tied by a single white thread. They are hung chronologically, spanning three months time. The room broadens. My fantasy blooms, flies over meadows and time.

It feels enchanting, dreamy, phantasmagorical to be here, to be. It is the place in which I envisioned myself wanting to be a little while ago when I was still in the other attic in the old small house. The timber beams are thick and heavy, but I still feel totally snug and secure in this attic, surrounded by plants that dance in the wind, whirl and quiver. Every flower is a walk – about 330 in total. How much time? March to June, just like the other artist. One can see the progression of nature, how flowers become fruit. Some plants appear again and again, and yet each one is unique, picked somewhere between here and Berlin, heavily researched. They were actually meant to be labeled but in the end, a visual library seemed more appealing than an archive. Freedom over taxonomy, abandonment of the scientific ordering principle in order to direct attention to the objects themselves, the plants, as opposed to their meaning within a specific system. It is a private space. A private collection. One person's history. It is more like a diary, a poetic retelling of the past, lived time in the form of withered flowers – aesthetic, not florid.

Attics are places of memory. Both these attics are so empty, so filled with quiet and calm, closeness to nature. As a visitor, one becomes part of the installation. The two works are so subtle, so consolidated, the passion of the artists so palpable, their conceptual visions seamlessly translated into a physical reality. These rooms are filled with so much more than light, air, and wind.

We daydream a little while longer, but reality catches up with us. We have to go, it's time to leave. We walk back through the untamed park grounds to that old residential house and make sure it's locked, as though someone

could steal its time and history. We return the key to the the Schloss owner, "the lord of the castle", thank him, and leave the fairy tale country. We walk down the path through the village, past quacking geese, small yellow chicks, and so many blooming flowers. We meet the friendly acquaintance who picked us up before. We quickly eat a warming soup and then set off on the journey home. The city still seems far away. Everything here seems so surreal to me, but to the artists, it has already become familiar. My eyes close as soon as the train starts rolling and the world begins to fly past. Zinzow seems like a dream. Did I dream everything? No, it can't be. The two attics shine in my head as bright as the blue sky over me. I slip smoothly into sleep thinking of the beloved attic of my childhood. I return to consciousness. Dream, reality, perception – what a whimsical summer day it's been. We eat a few cherries out of blue Tupperware, talk about ourselves, about life, about art. We approach the city, reach the city. I am back at home, back in bed. I look out the window at the blue evening sky and think about the day behind me, wonder, fall asleep feeling glad and thankful. What an extraordinary day, a trip to Zinzow, a trip to nowhere – surreal like a movie. "Surreal, but lovely."

Anna Hellner is an art historian and a freelance writer based in Berlin. She is working on her Phd on Photography of Museums.

1. **Lackluster** (English, British also: Lacklustre)

adj: 1. Lacking brilliance or radiance. 2.lacking liveliness, vitality, spirit, or enthusiasm; dull. n.: a lack of Brilliance or vitality.

2. **Lacklaster** (German)

Varnish vice, Lust for Finishing

For “Lacklaster” a 60sq old and soon to be demolished attic was covered with varnish. This writing, as well as the piece it accompanies, attempts to be factual and neutral. It is located within the now, reflecting on the past and the future of the specific location. It uses “gloss over”¹ and “transparency”² as metaphors and plays with the possible interpretations.

‘Lacklustre’ takes place in an attic³ of a typical residential house in Zinzow. It is located a stone’s throw away from a dreamy Château, owned by the Vielhaber family. The Vielhabers now own the old house and will soon turn it into their gardening and tool house. The family who lived here until January this year has moved further away.

I was invited to enter the old ‘deserted’ house and was told I could do “whatever I want” within the space. Full of voyeuristic hopes, I went in, wishing to find something about the people who lived there, about life in Zinzow or life in general. But, as it turned out, I did not. I’ve realised I could not connect to this space in the way I had initially wished. There was nothing I could relate to. But this very disengagement and the odd and perhaps perverse desire to preserve the space as it is, even for a few more days, fascinated me. I recall Derrida in “Archive Fever” talking about the desire – sickness or vice – for the archive, not so much to enter it and use it, as to have it. And so it turned out that I have decided to preserve the space in its current condition. As mentioned, I was hoping something would jump out at me and inspire me. I was not looking for anything in particular and thus I haven’t found anything specific, only this – the hope to find something, the wanting to see and look at and the ability to look for something there.

The glossy varnish aims to reference the glass cases of the traditional mu-

seum, in which objects are aestheticized and robbed of their initial and or practical function. They are treated as symbols for whatever their exhibitors choose to show. Conventionally, the “ethnographic” were labelled in a supposedly minimalist, descriptive and objective fashion. Borrowing from this age old tradition, I aim to present a far away space, that I have no understanding of, in a cool and scientific manner.

Not only have I chosen to exhibit in a private space, but I have also chosen to exhibit this very space itself. I like the comical aspect of turning a place, that is often either hidden or meant for storage, not only into a more presentable space, but into an exhibition space. Not only is this a dialogue between private and public space, but also between the presentable and the non-presentable.

(1) Glossover

an explanation or translation, by means of a marginal or interlinear note, of a technical or unusual expression in a manuscript text.

an artfully misleading interpretation.

to insert glosses on; annotate.

to place (a word) in a gloss.

to give a specious interpretation of; explain away (often fol. by over or away)

to gloss over a serious problem with a pat solution.

(2) Transparency

as used in the humanities and Pilatian theories, when used in a social context, implies openness, communication, and accountability. It is a metaphorical extension of the meaning. A “transparent” object is one that can be seen through. Transparent procedures include open meetings, financial disclosure statements, the freedom of information legislation, budgetary reviews, audits, etc.

(3) Attic

a space found directly below the pitched roof of a house or other building. Known for being awkwardly shaped spaces with exposed rafters and difficult-to-access corners, as they fill the space between the ceiling of the top floor of a building and the slanted roof. While some attics are converted as bedrooms or home offices, most attics remain hard to get to and neglected, and are typically used for storage. Attics can also help control temperature in a house by providing a large mass of unmoving air. Hot air rising from lower floors of a building often gets trapped

in the attic, further compounding their reputation for inhospitability. However in recent years many attics have been insulated to help decrease heating costs.

Glossary

Glossary

1. a list of terms in a special subject, field, or area of usage, with accompanying definitions.

Gloss

1. Brightness or luster of a body proceeding from a smooth surface; polish
2. A specious appearance; superficial quality or show.
3. To give a superficial luster or gloss to; to make smooth and shining; as, to gloss cloth.
4. A foreign, archaic, technical, or other uncommon word requiring explanation.
5. An interpretation, consisting of one or more words, interlinear or marginal; an explanatory note or comment; a running commentary.
6. A false or specious explanation.
7. To render clear and evident by comments; to illustrate; to explain; to annotate.
8. To give a specious appearance to; to render specious and plausible; to palliate by specious explanation.
9. To make comments; to comment; to explain.
10. To make sly remarks, or insinuations.

Lack

- noun: deficiency or absence of something needed, desirable, or customary. something missing or needed.
- verb (used with object): to be without or deficient in..
- to fall short in respect of.
- verb (used without object): to be absent or missing, as something needed or desirable: Three votes are lacking to make a majority.

Luster

- noun: 1. the state or quality of shining by reflecting light; glitter, sparkle, sheen, or gloss: the lustre of satin. 2. a substance, as a coating or polish, used to impart sheen or gloss 3. radiant or luminous brightness; brilliance; radiance 4. radiance of beauty, excellence, merit, distinction, or glory: achievements that add luster to one's name. 5. a shining object, esp. one used for decoration, as a cut-glass pendant or ornament.
- verb (used without object) 6. to be or become lustrous

Dust

- noun: earth or other matter in fine, dry particles. a cloud of finely powdered earth or other matter in the air. any finely powdered substance. the substance to which something, as the dead human body, is ultimately reduced by disintegration or decay; earthly remains. ashes, refuse. (British) a low or humble condition. anything worthless. disturbance; turmoil. the mortal body of a human being. a single particle or grain.
- verb (used with object) to wipe the dust from. to sprinkle with a powder or dust. to strew or sprinkle (powder, or other fine particles. to soil with dust; make dusty.
- verb (used without object) to wipe dust from furniture, woodwork, etc. to become dusty. to apply dust or powder to a plant, one's body.

Dust cover

- noun: a paper jacket for a book; a jacket on which promotional information is usually printed. a large piece of cloth used to cover furniture that is not in use for a long period. a removable plastic protective covering for a piece of equipment

Archive

1. A place or collection containing records, documents, or other materials of historical interest.
2. A repository for stored memories or information

German:

Lack - lacquer, enamel varnish, varnish

Laster - vice

Vielhabers – Lots of (Those who have a lot)

Hanging Garden

Aki Nagasaka

‘Hanging Garden’ will take place in the attic of an old, yet still-operating, distillery. Not only lifted up from the earth but also suspended in the ceiling of the attic, it is an interior garden constructed with a wide variety of natural dry plants. The work refers to historical and collective fantasies and desires, and deals with timeless personal daydreams and wishes.

Historically, humans have always taken great interest in floating or suspended objects in the air, especially those of which were massive. Our collective interest in floating objects most likely stems from our own inability to fly due to the unavoidable downward pull of gravity. The Hanging Garden of Babylon was considered magical; the massive lush garden looked as if it was floating in the sky in the desert, although it was made possible by the highly developed engineering system of the time.

Before the establishment of the modern science, alcohol distillation was exclusively practiced by alchemists, regarded as a magic. The method to change the states of liquids was completely mystical and the distilled liquors were considered ‘water of life’ for immortality, which has been always a human desire.

As a child I had dreamed of creating my own world into which I could slip. This assumed different forms such as a hidden hideout in the tunnel, a tent constructed with umbrellas, a few days of living in the closet, and my own version of ‘Alice in Wonderland’ in my diary. I am still very fascinated with potential spaces and elements that pull me into a world of psychological wandering and wondering.

‘Hanging Garden’ is one form of the projections of all these fantasies and desires. Given in time to look at suspended and slowly self-rotating plants, their shapes and presence are mesmerizing. Suspension of the plants hints at frozen time and the dryness of the plants suggests distilled, passed time. The potential use of the dry plants suggests the notion of future (when there are no plants outside in the winter.) Between the conjunction of the mixed time and the immersion of hypnotic nature, the viewer can potentially slip

time and the immersion of hypnotic nature, the viewer can potentially slip into another world of the fantastic. It is surely a magical space for me where my desire and fond memories of collecting the plants during this spring merge.

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