

home is where the hurt is

In the first home exhibition we witnessed an ideal private view of the complexities surrounding the notion of 'home' and subjective experiences thereof. The site-specific installations of 'Home is where the heart is' can be defined within positions of transition and location and as fragile escapism. Identity materialized as unstable, multiplicitous, and nomadic. Memory and thought processes about the home itself reflected how experiences are formed and retold.

"The world we live in now seems rhizomic even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation and psychological distance between individuals and groups, on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other." (Arjun Appadurai, Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy, In: Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.) "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory, Columbia University Press, New York 1994)

Global Economy and European Identity:

As consumer practices become more conform there is a simultaneous fragmentation of culture taking place. (Levis jeans and fast cars are desired commodities almost everywhere.) Yet regional cultural differences gain significance in their particular context. This defines the current paradox of the postmodern condition (globalization and fragmentation). Within lie structural injustices and inequalities such as the exploitation of developing countries, rise of structural illegality of economies, prostitution of women and children, feminization of poverty, for example.

The crisis of postmodernity is often reasoned with the decline of European nation-states and the values it represents. Of course this is false since European nation-states have always had weak boundaries. (The tale of European nationalism depends on the myth of cultural homogeneity.)

The historical emergence of Diaspora and with it the conglomerations of religious, 'racial', and ethnic identities force us to re-evaluate positions of power. Nationality, ethnicity, and 'race' are not determined or fixed categories of identity as great migrations have proved. A change of standpoint has taken place and the critique of European ethnocentrism has emerged. Modernity is to be re-conceptualized and the unnamed majority group to be defined. "One's own particularity or identity might be transformed as a result of the principle exposure to otherness." (Paul Gilroy, Diaspora and the Detours of Identity, In: Kathryn Woodward (ed.) "Identity and Difference", London 1997)

This is where the critical deconstruction of whiteness comes in. Whites don't see their whiteness because they see themselves as invisible having no color. (See Toni Morrison "Playing the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination", Harvard University Press 1992) Blackness is always a color whereas being white is the norm or natural. "Among the effects on white people both of race privilege

and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility.” (Ruth Frankenberg, “White Women. Race Matters. The Social Construction of Whiteness”, University of Minnesota Press 1994) Whiteness is difficult to analyze critically as categories of Italian-ness or Jewish-ness for example come in. Although ‘whitened’ identity is a racist and illusionary concept there are certain traits once in confrontation with ‘others’ like black peoples. Such traits of whiteness are- a location of structural advantage (race privilege) and dominant positions and cultural practices within society. (Frankenberg) Here whiteness needs to be situated, de-naturalized, and then refigured.

(Rosi Braidotti, Figurations of Nomadism, In: John Burt Foster, Jr. and Wayne Froman (eds.) “Series in Philosophy and Literature”, Northwestern University Press)

These statements should serve as a backdrop for the forthcoming exhibition, ‘home is where the hurt is’*. The individual verses society under structures that shape and influence home and identity is of interest. (To keep in mind, once again: Identity is the interplay between subjective experience of the world and historical and cultural settings in which shifting subjectivities are formed.) Here the focus is on the historical and cultural settings. These settings, situations, and/or contexts are vital for the formation of the home and identity. The transnational displacement of the individual with a certain culture is defined by outside structures. Experienced tension and alienation result and the home is where hurt is located. This exhibition investigates intolerance, the unknown, and new terrain. Hurt may be felt as a physical or emotional pain and/or discrimination based on one’s social, ethnic, or economic situation.

Here are some questions to think about:

How is identity constructed in terms of nationality, gender, and race and by whom is it of importance? How are you historically and culturally situated? How is it that I became what the world has made of me? What is it about you –the Other- that decides the meaning of me? What accounts for the fact that I can resist the world’s symbolization of myself? What is it about myself that always escapes my understanding? (cf. McLaren 1995)

*The title, ‘home is where the hurt is’, is taken from the essay, “This Wild Darkness”, by Massimiliano Gioni in which the work of Darius Ziura, David Zink Yi and Maria Lustitano are being discussed in relation to displacement and nostalgia during Manifesta 5.