

**BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA**

.....→  
selected works / documentation

## HEY YOU! IT'S US!

FAÇADE PROJECT, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

MIRROR GLASS FILM, NATO WIRE/RAZOR WIRE, SIZE VARIABLE

“Hey you! It's us!” takes the Berlin Wall as a reference and reflects on the current phenomenon of enclosing Europe by building new walls and borders. The artist addresses our fear and puts a mirror in front of it – an uneven surface that reflects light and shadows, our own broken silhouettes. It is not the others but ourselves we are afraid of. “Hey you! It's us!” is Borjana Ventzislavova's answer to “fortress Europe” – let's imagine walls as mirrors and take a good look at ourselves. *(Dessislava Dimova)*



*"Hey you! It's us!", 2016, façade project*

# LOVEJOY

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WALL PROJECT, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

WALL PAPER SIZE VARIABLE, NEON OBJECT ON PLEXIGLAS 70X70CM

In “Lovejoy” named after the comet which is most famous for releasing types of sugar and alcohol in space, Borjana Ventzislavova presents us with a large wallpaper of a snapshot of the universe – millions of tiny stars, clouds, dust, galaxies, bright and colorful, somewhere among them – the greenish light of the comet Lovejoy. What stands out – literally- in the image is not the comet though, which is somehow lost among the heavenly bodies. A neon sign – a disproportionate pentagon - is posed on the image of the skies. Dreams and symbols are mixed up here, just like in the imagination of a young person growing up around 1989. Distant galaxies, omens of progress and other worlds encounter the collapse of ideologies: what becomes of our dreams in a world that seems to have stopped dreaming? (*Dessislava Dimova*)





*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Lovejoy"*

## IS STILL COMING



NEON ON PLEXIGLAS, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

NEON TEXT ON PLEXIGLAS, 120X180CM

Those who know Borjana Ventzislavova's previous work might recognize in this fragmented phrase "The bright future is still coming" (2012) — a neon sign placed on a palm tree seascape. This older work was part of a trilogy "for the future because of the past - specters everywhere", which was dealing with the question of imagination of what was beyond the Iron curtain. In the new neon "Is still coming" the subject of the sentence has disappeared in the black hole of the dream realized. However, something is still coming, a hope that is impossible to erase, but there are no ready answers or prescriptions telling us what it might be. The black surface points to a nothing, that is both dark as Borjana's inspirations from the 90s and alive with new beginnings. *(Dessislava Dimova)*



*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Is still coming"*



*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Is still coming"*

## THANK YOU FOR ALL THE FLOWERS



PHOTOGRAPHY, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA



PIGMENT PRINT ON COTTON PAPER, 5P. 60X90CM AND 1P. 90X90, FRAMED, 5P. POST IT NOTES

Close ups of flowers meet objects that have been symbolic of Borjana's personal experiences and those of her generation. They might seem banal and recognizable as anybody's memories – ice cream, strand of hair, roller skates or the tape of an old audio-cassette. Yet, the way they float on the dark background, like artifacts of a lost civilization sent in space from some distant past, charges them with importance even if we don't know their particular significance. (*Dessislava Dimova*)

On the *post it* notes on the wall one can read quotes from song texts by Bulgarian New/Dark Wave and Punk music bands New Generation and Review.



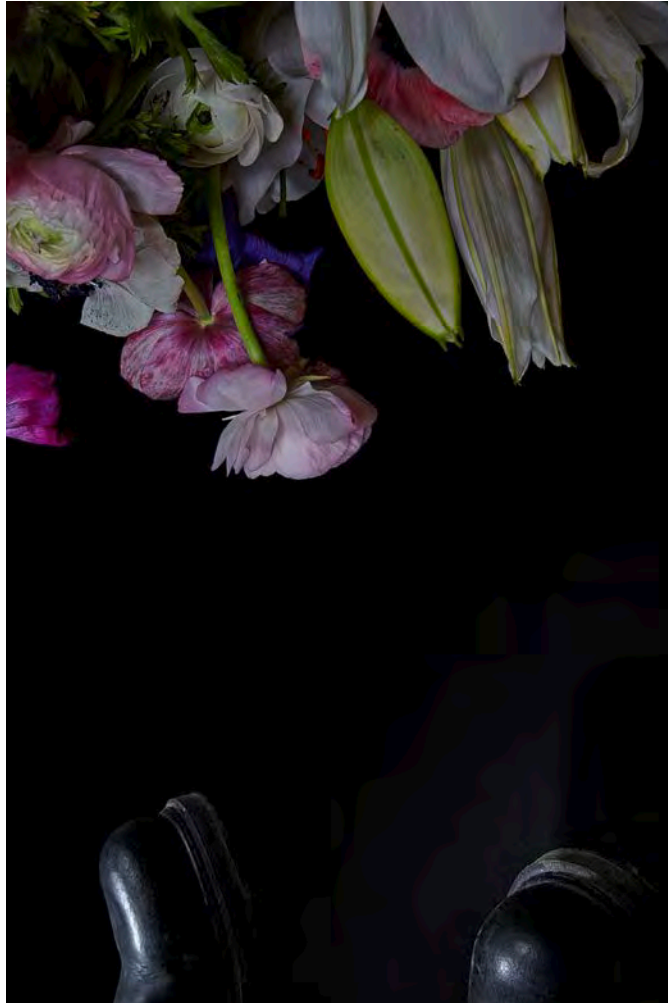


*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Thank you for all the flowers" and "When the child was a child"*



*"Thank you for all the flowers #1", 2016*

WE ARE A SICK PRODUCT  
OF OUR TIME AND  
YOUR LABOR.  
WE LEAD EMPTY LIVES,  
IN AN URBAN SETUP  
OUR PANTS ARE DOWN,  
AND OUR HEADS ARE TOO.  
IN SHAME.



*"Thank you for all the flowers #3,5,6", 2016*

## ALS DAS KIND KIND WAR



NEON TEXT, SILVER, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

NEON TEXT IN SILVER COLOR, L:110CM

Melancholia and a dark mood was the general air of the times on both ends of the Iron curtain. The film that has been most cited as an influence by bright young people in Bulgaria at the time was Wim Wenders' "Wings of Desire" (1987). A direct reference to the film is in the neon sign "Als das Kind Kind war" a quote by Peter Handke's Song of Childhood. *(DD)*



Als das Kind Kind war



## COLORED CONCEPTS

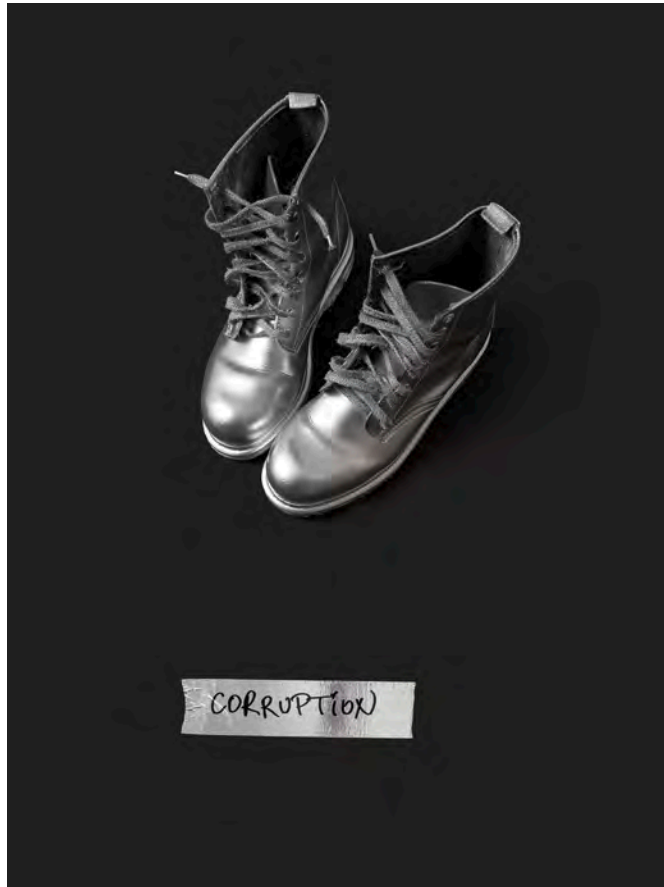
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PHOTOGRAPHY, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

PIGMENT PRINT ON COTTON PAPER, FRAMED, 60X80CM

“Colored Concepts” is a piece that looks like an eclectic collection of memorabilia and plays with the allure and opacity of the silvery reflective surface. Here the objects from the artist’s teenage years have lost their original colors to become generic silver casts, while gaining in mystery. If some of the objects are fairly recognizable (a Walkman for instance) others (like what turns out to be a chicken’s rump) leave us perplexed. The images are paired with the handwritten words describing the concepts that very much defined the epoch: “transition”, “democratization”, “privatization”, “crisis” acquire here unexpectedly personal tones and reveal themselves as dramatic backgrounds for very intimate and unapologetically mundane concerns. *(DD)*



*"colored concepts: (corruption), (californication), (privatization)", 2016*

## WEST MUSIC FOR THE WEST PARK →

MIXED MEDIA INSTALLATION, 2013-2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

→  
HD VIDEO, VINYL BACKDROP, FICUS FLOWERS, PALLETS

The importance of music and the mixing of cultural references and social contexts through songs is addressed with the project “West Music in West Park” (2013-2016). The installation was conceived as a karaoke set, for which the artist has made a selection of songs that are mostly unavailable in karaoke libraries, but represent the soundtrack of her teenage experiences – Bulgarian, Western and Russian alternative rock, new wave, punk or pop, and children's songs. *(DD)*



*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "colored concepts" and "West Music in the West Park"*



*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "colored concepts" and "West Music in the West Park"*



## STUDY OF CAUSALITY

PHOTOGRAPHY AND TEXT, 2016

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

WITH PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIAL FROM THE ARCHIVES OF  
NELY NEDEVA-VOEVA (FOUNDATION DIMITAR VOEV - NOVA GENERACIA),  
NEDELCHO HAZARBASANOV AND NIKOLA MIHOV

C-PRINT ON DIBOND, FRAMED, 100X150CM AND  
B&W TEXT, PIGMENT PRINT ON COTTON PAPER, FRAMED, 40X60CM

The encounter between different times and spaces, between projections and reality, between history and the now is at play in Borjana Ventzislavova's large scale photographic series "Study of Causality". This is also a kind of autobiographical piece. However the artist has avoided pointing the camera towards herself trying instead to understand her past and present through spaces and people. Two moments in time are confronted by the means of photographic collage – the places of the artist's youth in Sofia and the people (and their own working or living environment) whom she has encountered through her work. These are collectors, curators, representatives of institutions...As in most of Borjana Ventzislavova's work, we have a multifaceted mirror here. The two spaces – the one of memory and the one of reality are mirrored. In the text accompanying the work there is another collage – the thoughts of the sitter about the artist's work meet the memories of the artist herself. The work confronts us with an essential question we rarely address – how do artists negotiate a deeply personal practice with the necessities of a professional world and the demand to speak for humanity rather than for themselves? (DD)

*with:* Verena Kaspar-Eisert (curator, Kunst Haus Wien), Boris Kostadinov (independent curator), Josef Ostermayer (the former Austrian Federal Minister for Arts and Culture), Georg Pölzl (Chairman and CEO of the Austrian Post), Stella Rollig, Artistic Director, Lentos Museum Linz, Family Schindler (collectors), Claudia Slanar (curator and lecturer), Elfie Sonnenberger (Chamber of Labour – Culture, Upper Austria and collector)



exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Study of Causality"



#### The artist:

This is the picture that appears in my head when I think about home and about Sofia. Until the age of 12 I didn't have a room of my own. I slept in my parents' room on a rollaway bed. Every morning I opened my eyes the first thing I would see was the library. No matter which cabinet you open, it is always packed with books, except of two special cabinets, which only my father had access to and they had an official "don't touch" status for me. One was filled with antique stamps - my father was an amateur collector and always told me: "There are two Mercedes in here" (He was proud of his collection, but I had no idea what a Mercedes was). The second cabinet was even more interesting, full of tape rolls and cassettes - the music that my parents listened to and probably some professional recordings of my father as well.

One of my favourite things at home - those evenings, when the entire family had squeezed into the kitchen to watch black and white Soviet war films (sometimes they'd run a Charlie Chaplin film - then I joined them as well). Meanwhile I spent most of my time in the other room listening to music, dancing, and singing along in my made up English.

**Katharina and Clemens Schindler - lawyers at Schindler Attorneys and collectors:**

Borjana really gets into the subjects that she addresses in her work. As a result her art - besides being highly aesthetic and simply beautiful - creates awareness for relevant topics ahead of time.



#### The artist:

The first time. You know all of these clichés. First kiss, first love, first boyfriend, first cigarette... and all of those first things, which you learn in school.

I became "Chavdarche", then a "Pioneer", then I was threatened to be moved into a children's pedagogical room (for bad behavior), then, shortly before entering the "Komsomol" - 1989 - the system changed. I got involved in organising the first demonstration for children's rights in Sofia and regularly skipped school to go to demonstrations... for this I could have paid the price of not being accepted to the German High School, after preparing for a whole holy year for the entrance exams

The 38th was a cult school. It gave me a lot: the teachers (some of them were truly crazy, but mostly amazing) and all of my friends - most of them were children of the nomenklatura, they were great kids though! I love this time. Happy childhood!

**Claudia Slanar - curator and lecturer:**

I cannot separate between my personal and my professional interest in Borjana Ventsislavova's work - maybe my personal one is less strategic? Whatever, I have always been fascinated by her ability to let the glitziness/glamour of a utopian dream world collide with the critical and sober analysis of today's precarious living and working conditions - be it those of actors in Los Angeles, artists, or migrant workers in Vienna - without being tacky. She is interested in societies in transition and uses architecture, urban spaces, and even "natural" sites to frame changes intrinsic to this process. She has a clear political stance and an incredible "eye" when portraying people. In her photographs and videos she is able to catch something - a gesture, a pose, a sentence - that not even the portrayed were aware of having/doing/displaying. Strangely, I am thinking now about the idea of fragility that lies in her works, unexpected, subdued, maybe even mixed with melancholy, who knows?

There's at least a playfulness, too, that is not surprising at all if you know her predilection for black dungarees, silver leggings and 80s New Wave music.





#### The artist and other artists:

Flowers from the End of 80s! Kravaj!  
A lifetime injection.

Punkers, Wavers, Metals, Skaters - it doesn't matter.  
Pizza, wine, joint, whatever, flowers, flowers everywhere.  
Countless stories, sense, experience.  
Observing until forgetting, new haircuts.  
Hopelessness, my dear.

I won't go back  
To my childhood memories.  
The way, which remains for us.  
Is waiting in front of us

The video shows us  
countless others clips.  
In the clip of my own life  
I'm the leading part.

That's why I'll bark.  
That's why I'll howl.

WE ARE NEW GENERATION FOREVER AND OUR QUESTIONS ARE TO AN  
ENTIRE NATION FOREVER. or if you ask me:  
TO ENTIRE WORLD FOREVER.

#### Verena Kaspar-Eisert - curator, Kunst Haus Wien:

I showed the group of works entitled "Euro de Lux" (2006) in a group exhibition in 2012. On that occasion I took an in-depth look into Borjana Venzislavova's work. Her art, which broaches topics such as migration, trafficking in women, prostitution, and deals with questions of home and identity, is of utmost political and social relevance. These motifs affect each and every one of us; they touch us because they concern us all. The artist identifies the fault lines of the social system and succeeds in establishing a relation between these fault lines and ourselves by immersing herself into these topics, by becoming an artistic filter, by being a mouthpiece for all those involved. Her photographs and films are highly empathetic and at the same time brutally direct. With her politically and socially motivated art Borjana Venzislavova seeks to obtain understanding from the viewers and hopes that they take individual and social responsibility. Get engaged!



#### The artist:

A true liberation. Not only the movement itself - flying around the city on roller skates was really liberating back then. The people on the street perceived you as a true stranger. It was the way we moved around in Sofia - starting from home on broken paved streets, you were riding alongside traffic to pick up your friend and then we'd all meet at "The Monument" (of the Soviet Army). From there we started skating in groups, to the NDK or the Ramp, which was not quite in the city centre. We held on to the poles of the trolleybus and moved along with it to the next stop. If the street went uphill we'd move along like this for a few stops, unless the driver saw us. We often skated at forbidden places, but that was fun and real excitement. And sometimes the security people started chasing us, but we were much faster on wheels.

Skaters, roller skaters and BMXers were the crazy kids, who everybody knew and tried to hang out with. If one of us was invited to a party, all would show up and then it became a mess - it was always an experience for life.

#### Stella Rollig - Artistic Director, Lentos Museum Linz:

I came across your work in 2010 when we organised the first Linz Triennale for contemporary art in Austria. Your work had been exhibited in the Landesgalerie and I was really struck by the images I saw there. What was it actually? In my memory the photographs had a dreamlike atmosphere - there was an image of people walking through water, they were all wet. It evoked a kind of a catastrophe, something had happened, a flood or a huge thunderstorm. What I admired in these images was that on the one hand they had this dreamlike quality - something very difficult to achieve in staged photographs - and on the other hand they had this political urgency, this edge. It seemed to be an image of our contemporary situation; it seemed to bring the crisis, so to say, into one image. These images stayed with me, and when we researched for "Rabenmütter" we found a photograph that you had made, I think in this case together with other artists. It was the image of a naked baby held in its mother's arms and the baby was branded all over with logos of companies. Again it was so poignant, it was so much to the point: the situation of consumerism in our time - every individual being like in the claws of the big corporations. I consider this a real gift - being able to find and to realize these images.



#### The artist:

The time when I finally had a room of my own - it was amazing - I never was alone on my own before! When I was at home (which was rare) I loved spending most of the time there - listening to my music, reading or sometimes studying for exams... It was where I could have friends come over to my place. And the door was painted and scratched all over - until one day one of my skate friends drew a swastika on it. I made a window out of it but my father still recognized it. The next day the door was painted over in white.

#### Gaudenz Ruf - collector:

Borjana has a sharp eye for the sometimes not so pleasant social and psychological situations of human beings, the conditio humana of nowadays. However, she refrains from crude realism but composes pictures with precise architecture and of a shining clear and distant beauty. It is this contrast that makes her art so attractive.



#### The artist:

Two things... and many more: singing on the stage with "Pim Pam" at the assembly "Flag of Peace" in the first auditorium of the NDK (National Palace of Culture). This was also the place, where my father always took me to buy me LPs from the Balkanton shop.

Later we skated there - inside, outside - it was one of the best spots in Sofia, as the floor was made of marble and skating was a real fun. Trying to escape from the security and jumping from the staircase: the result was a broken hand. The next day I was back with a cast skating and running away from the security again.

And the Kinopanorama! In the winter it was the place to watch all the new films from the west. Sometimes I had tickets to watch my parents, but mostly we would sneak in and watch for free. Up and down, up and down - at which entrance would they let us in for free? On the third floor at one of the doors there was this good guy - we always hoped it was his shift. At the end of the film we would hide between the seats and wait for the next one to start. The Kinopanorama was one of the best things ever - people were waiting for tickets in queues before sunrise - like years later for milk or bread.

#### Boris Kostadinov - independent curator:

The relationship between a curator and an artist is as professional as it is personal. The understanding of the work of an artist goes through the knowledge of his personality in professional circumstances but also in circumstances that are very different - sometimes atypical or even "extreme". This creates a common history, which is equally important as the collaborative art projects.

We have many common stories that consciously or subconsciously affect our work. We met many years ago at a bar. At that time I wrote an article about her exhibition in Sofia. Many times we got drunk together. We have travelled together. We have mutual friends...

All this affects the final product. And perhaps this is the best - if the personal is shown to the audience, the things are always true and authentic.





exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Study of Causality"



*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2016, "Study of Causality"*

# INSPIRATION, MY WORLD'S VIBRATION

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VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY, ONGOING

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

## HD VIDEO, C-PRINTS 40X50CM

For her long term project "Inspiration, my world's vibration" Borjana Ventzislavova is inviting art workers, which praxis influenced her work in any aspects. The protagonists are offered to spend 3'14" in front of her camera by *doing nothing* (their personal definition of *doing nothing*). Every participant is also asked to provide a physical object that is related to their process of creation. Additionally to the video Borjana is showing series of photographs with the borrowed objects.

With the participation of the art workers (selection):  
James Benning, Mara Matuschka, Joseph Ravens and Constanze Ruhm.



*exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2015, Scene From Doing Nothing (James Benning)*





*Scene From Doing Nothing (Mara Mattuschka)*





*Ruhm's Can*



*Benning's 52's Fragments From a Vietnam Era*



# 15 MINUTE REVOLUTIONARY BED STORIES



PERFORMANCE, VIDEO, LIGHTBOX, POLAROIDS 201

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

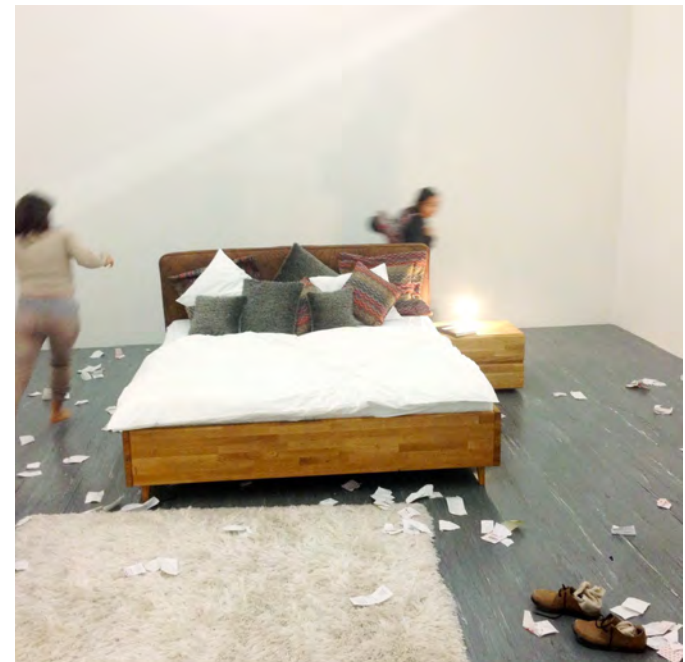
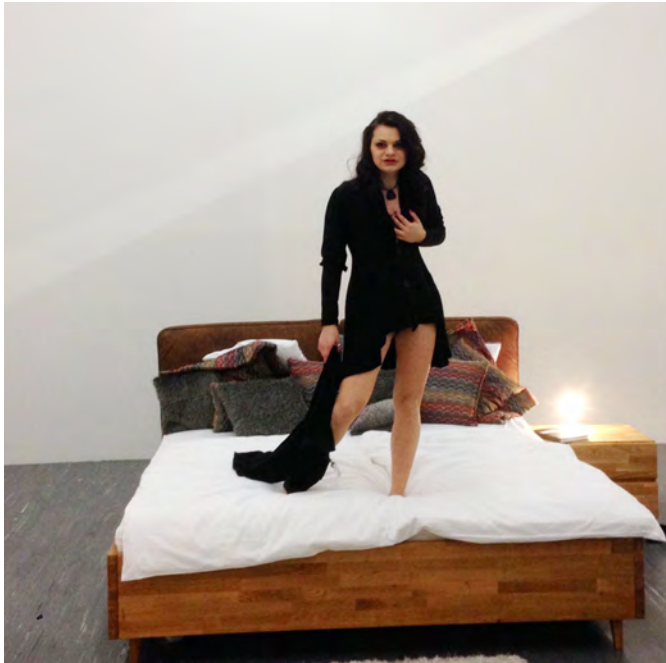
15 Minute Revolutionary Bed Stories offers a bedroom setting as a platform for radical rethinking.

For the performance “15 Minute Revolutionary Bed Stories” from the series “15 Minute Rest” Borjana Ventzislavova placed a typical bedroom setup into the space of 21er Haus - the museum for contemporary art in Vienna.

*What would you change if you had the chance?*

The artist Borjana Ventzislavova invites the audience to spend 15 minutes in a staged bedroom to express ideas and suggestions for a personal or general social and / or political change. Whether realistic or utopian thoughts, actions, with voice or silent - the participants are free to behave actively or passively.





*Perfromance view, 21er Haus - Museum For Contemporary Art Vienna, 2015*

# FOR THE FUTURE BECAUSE OF THE PAST - SPECTERS EVERYWHERE (THE CURTAIN, BEHIND THE CURTAIN, BECAUSE OF THE CURTAIN)

SILVER FOLIE, INTERVENTION, C-PRINTS, NEON 2014

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

In the three-part work "for the future because of the past - specters everywhere" (the curtain, behind the curtain, because the curtain) Borjana Ventzislavova deals with the propaganda of the "East" and the lure of the "West". The silvery curtain reminiscent not by an accident the former "Iron Curtain", which stood for the seemingly insurmountable boundary between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries. It seems to be hiding something seductive: A subject? A longing? The beautiful real life? At the same time, it refers itself as a ready-made Pop Art, a product of the world of consumerism, where the packaging is more important than the actual content. "for the future because of the past - specters everywhere" is that however Behind, revealed gradually. On an almost overly nice kitschy-looking island is shining the neon sign "the bright future is still coming". This is, however - very surprising for the Communist a rallying cry, with which the artist has faced as a teenager in her native Bulgaria. This sentence, which could also be derived from the Meditation Handbook for stressed managers, as well as the doubling and tripling of the motive stand for the relatedness of ideologies that are broken ironically in this work. *Claudia Slanar*





Exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2012









*The bright future is still coming*





Exhibition view, Museum Angerlehner, Wels, 2014

# THAT THING



MULTY-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION, 2013-PRESENT

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
RUF AWARD



27-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH 1-CHANNEL SOUND

“That Thing” is actually long-term and large-scale project of Borjana Ventzislavova. Issues of different cultural spaces, social and political environment in which develops the contemporary art and artistic practices of Bulgarian artists “here” and “there” are particularly important questions for her. This time she came to the idea to make a quite monumental momentary picture of the major players on the “contemporary Bulgarian art scene”. (Catalog Bulgarska Rabota)

With the participation of: Alla Georgieva, Boris Kostadinov, Boryana Rossa, Bozhidar Boyadzhiev, Daniela Radeva, Dessislava Dimova, Houben Tcherkelov, Gredi Assa, Emil Mirazchiev, Galina Dimitrova - Dimova, Gaudenz Ruf, Iara Boubnova, Kalin Serapionov, Kiril Prashkov, Krassimir Terziev, Iliana Koranova, Maria Vassileva, Nedko Solakov, Petko Dourmana, Pravdoliub Ivanov, Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva, Vencislav Zankov, Vessela Nozharova, Valentin Stefanoff & Nina Kovacheva, Vladiya Michailova, Vesselina Sarieva, Yovo Panchev, Zlatin Orlov





# ROLES

PHOTOGRAPHY, TEXT, 2014

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

9P. C-PRINTS, COLOR, 80X120 AND 9P. TEXT, 20X30, B&W

The work shows people around 40, friends of the artist who puts them on a conditional stage: standing on reddish sand and behind them is the Black Sea. These are portraits of a generation, its form of identification, motivation and presence. A generation that has the possibility to choose and remain strongly connected or decided to stay in Bulgaria, a choice that is not easy. In short texts portrayed are asked to answer the question "What role do you play in the context of Bulgaria?" The roles of these authentic protagonists are often related to both: personal and public strategies in the context of conditional stage.

with: Orlin Antonov, Vladimir Benev, Milena Fetvadjeva (The Black Milena), Dr. Vlado Gelev, Nina Nikolova, Milena Popova (The Blond Milena), Neda and Alexander Smolyanov, Martina Staneva - miss Marcolina, dj Valentine









*I am the messiah.  
I came to save Bulgaria.  
Now I'm just an ordinary  
lifeguard on the beach.*

Аз съм Месията.  
Дойдох да спася България.  
Но сега съм просто  
един прост спасител  
на плажа.



# HELP

NEON - SAND - OBJECT, 2015

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

NEON, ALU BOX, 70X70

In a box with mirrored walls is placed real sand from the desert. Its primary essence corresponds to the primary meaning of the word "Help". The word is written in neon, which leads us to thinking about the modern world we live in.

The object is beautiful, but at the same time asking different questions and even slightly disturbing. What causes this call for help? Is it not very often our society similar to conceptual or intellectual desert? Or it is rather a dystopian forecast for the future? A symbol of technology in the emptiness of a post-technological era. *Boris Kostadinov*



## MIND THE GAP



C-PRINT 80X120, LIGHT BOX 50X75

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA



*Mind The Gap* comment the state of permanency of uncertainty. A state in that we are at the same time - "in", "between", "beyond" "inside" and "outside." This photography contains certain dose of paradox. The constant circulation between these conditions could not be fixed by a single image. Placed in front of this paradox Borjana Ventzislavova create a character image – a documentation of something that is impossible to be documented. *Boris Kostadinov*







# 15 MINUTE HUMAN RIGHTS BED STORIES

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PERFORMANCE, VIDEO, LIGHTBOX, POLAROIDS 2014

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

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For the performance "15 Minute Human Rights Bed Stories" from the series "15 Minute Rest" Borjana Ventzislavova placed a typical bedroom setup into the space of the Gallery Bäckerstrasse4 in Vienna. Participants were invited to use the bed for a period of fifteen minutes to express their thoughts on core human rights documents -The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), The European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and The Convention related to the Status of Refugees (CRSR) - or simply use the time to rest. Using whatever form of expression the performance asked those participating to reflect upon and express their relationship to the documents, whether it be through gesture, speech, activity or even inactivity.



*Performance by Jutta Wernicke, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2012*

# 15 MINUTE CONSTITUTIONAL BED STORIES



PERFORMANCE, VIDEO, LIGHTBOX, POLAROIDS 2014

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA



"15 Minutes Constitutional Bed Stories" was a performance in the public area of The Capitol Skyline Hotel at e(merge) art fair in Washington DC. At the performance, visitors were invited to take a 15 minutes rest and/or to read passages from The Declaration of Independence and/or The Constitution of the United States of America in a proper bedroom set. The participants were asked to express the way they respect the freedom documents through their actions, gestures or/and voice.









*Performance by Mera Rubell, e(merge) art fair, Washington DC, 2013*

## IT ISN'T HEALTHY

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**VIDEO, 2013**

**ARTIST**  
**BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA**

**SUPPORTED BY**  
**BMUKK, BULGARIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE "HAUS WITTGENSTEIN"**

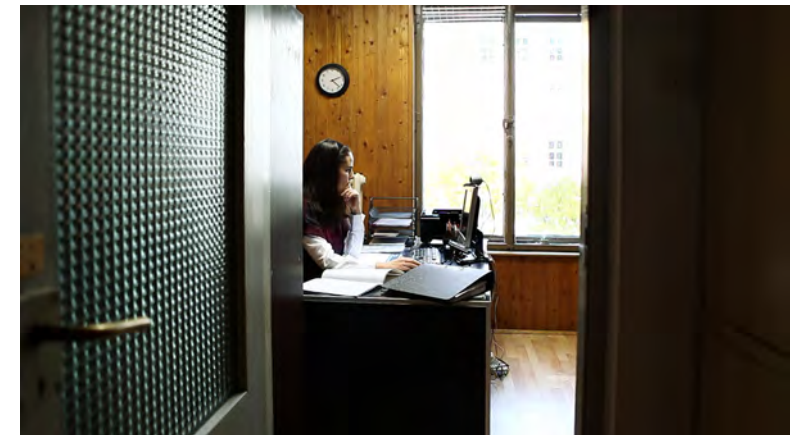
**FILM DISTRIBUTION**  
**SIXPACKFILM VIENNA**



**HD VIDEO, 13MIN, COLOR**

The Wittgenstein House, site of the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Vienna, is the point of departure for an unconventional study of architecture, history and language. Through quotes from Wittgenstein, the institute is detached from its daily routine and confronted with the house's history. In front of it, philosophy comes up against criticism of presentday Bulgarian politics: "EuroTrashCapitalism," somebody remarks — and kicks a football. *Diagonale Catalogue*





# THERE IS NO RHINOCEROS IN THIS ROOM.



PHOTOGRAPHY, 2012

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

C-PRINTS, COLOR, 80X120

*There is no rhinoceros in this room.*, is inspired by the famous dispute between Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell if there is a rhinoceros in the room. In the photography we literally can see a rhinoceros in the real room in Wittgenstein House in Vienna, designed by Wittgenstein and Engelmann. *(Boris Kostadinov)*









## WORKS FOR PUBLIC SPACE



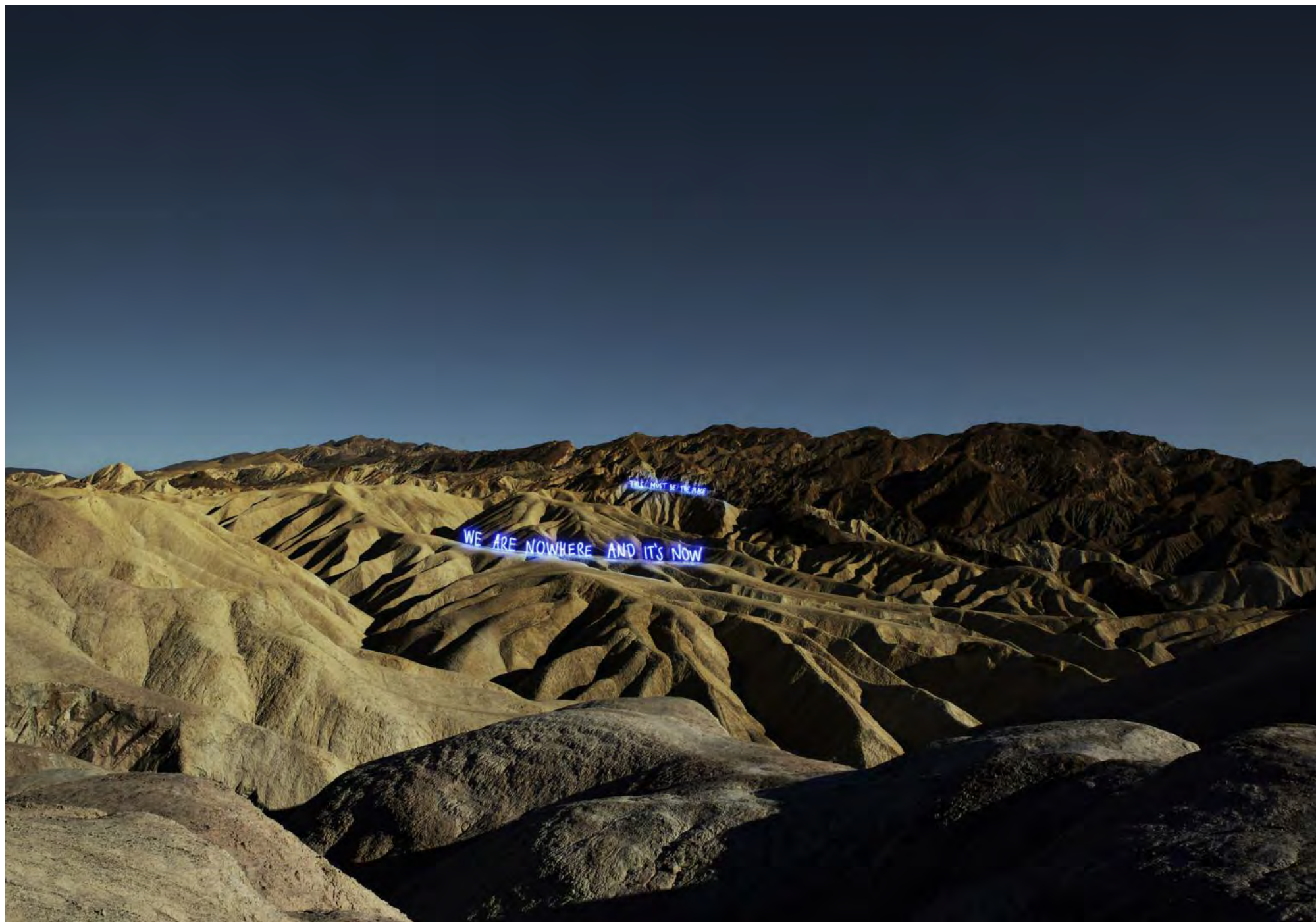
PHOTOGRAPHY, 2012

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA



C-PRINTS, COLOR, 60X90 AND 100X150









It's just me in there AND I'm naked

*The future is taking shape*



# PERMANENT CASTING

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PHOTOGRAPHY, TEXT 2012

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
CEC ARTS LINK, MAK LA / VIENNA

C-PRINTS, COLOR, 30X45, TEXT

The series *Permanent Casting* shows a selected number of actors and actresses from all 42 who participated in the casting session of American Dream Acting. Each work consists of text and two photographs. The two portraits of the casting participants show each person before and after the casting session. The text is a transcription of essential parts or the whole interview.





My name is Pantelis Kodogiannis. I started officially acting about two and a half years ago. I didn't know where to begin or how to start the process. But I came across this book by a fellow Greek called „Dreams Into Action” and written by Milton Katselas who worked with Elia Kazan in New York. Basically the premise of the book is “stop making excuses and do what you want to do in your life because essentially we have only one.” So I read it and Milton inspired me. At the time I was in N.Y., I was a corporate attorney and I had been doing that for five years. I wasn't really happy with that job. Certainly it was very lucrative and had some rewards. But after five years doing it I knew I don't want to do this for the rest of my life. Essentially at the same time I read this book and acting is something that I always wanted to do but I guess I was never brave enough to try. I decided after I read the book. He is right. Milton was right. I had to put my dream into action. I moved to L.A. I started two years ago. He founded a school here called the Beverly Hills Playhouse. I started to take classes there under an acting teacher Chick Vannera who is amazing. Chick showed me how to feel emotions that I never thought could exist before. It has been two wonderful years creatively. I'm still a struggling actor, going from audition to audition. Haven't booked anything big yet but ...



Hi. My name is Kashuna Perfected. That isn't my birth name. My real last name is Little but it doesn't quite describe me anymore. So you are not going to find a Kashuna any better than me. That's why I call myself Kashuna Perfected.

I am a comedian/actress. I'm originally from Rockingham, NC. I moved to Chicago in 2005. A couple of years ago I started working in a medical school in downtown Chicago and within a year I was promoted to supervisor. In November of last year and due to numbers and all that good stuff, I lost my job. I made my way up to director of care services at a medical school. So I lost my job and I gave myself one month to kind of regroup and things. And I had different companies that were wanting to hire me. I was thinking of going back to school. And I had so many great opportunities that I didn't know which one to choose.

I became frustrated because I didn't know which path I wanted to take. I prayed about it and all of a sudden one day and I had an epiphany that boom - you can move to L.A. now



Exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2012

# SELF ACTING



VIDEO, 2012

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
CEC ARTS LINK, MAK LA / VIENNA



HD VIDEO, 7MIN., COLOR

The video *Self Acting* shows in-between moments during the casting process for American Dream Acting. The work conveys the intensity and the harshness of a selection process that makes or breaks careers, which are in turn linked to a film's commercial success, becomes tangible and visible: of 1,127 applications, 65 were selected, and 42 showed up, of which only eight were ultimately invited to the final shoot in the Stahl house.







Exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2012

## AMERICAN DREAM ACTING

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2-CHANNEL VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY, 2012

**ARTIST**

**BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA**

**SUPPORTED BY**

**CEC ARTS LINK, MAK LA / VIENNA**

**C-PRINTS, 8P. 55X155**

**HD 2-CHANNEL VIDEO, 60MIN., COLOR**

Case Study House #22 - mid-century modernist icon built in the Hollywood hills by Pierre Koenig, is the well-known location of numerous photo shoots and film sets and is thus serves as the ideal backdrop for Ventzislavova's concept pieces. The work deal with the desire for, as well as the belief in, the illusion of making the American dream come true – in this case that of an acting career. In episodes spread throughout the day, the artist films and photographs people she has chosen through a casting process, drawing personal stories out of them, which are often tied to structural conditions, migration, assimilation, and foreignness.

with

Monika Hummel, Ken Weaver, Rossen Belomorsky, Michael Angels, Cristina Parovel, Srinivasa Kapavarapu, Kristine Caluya





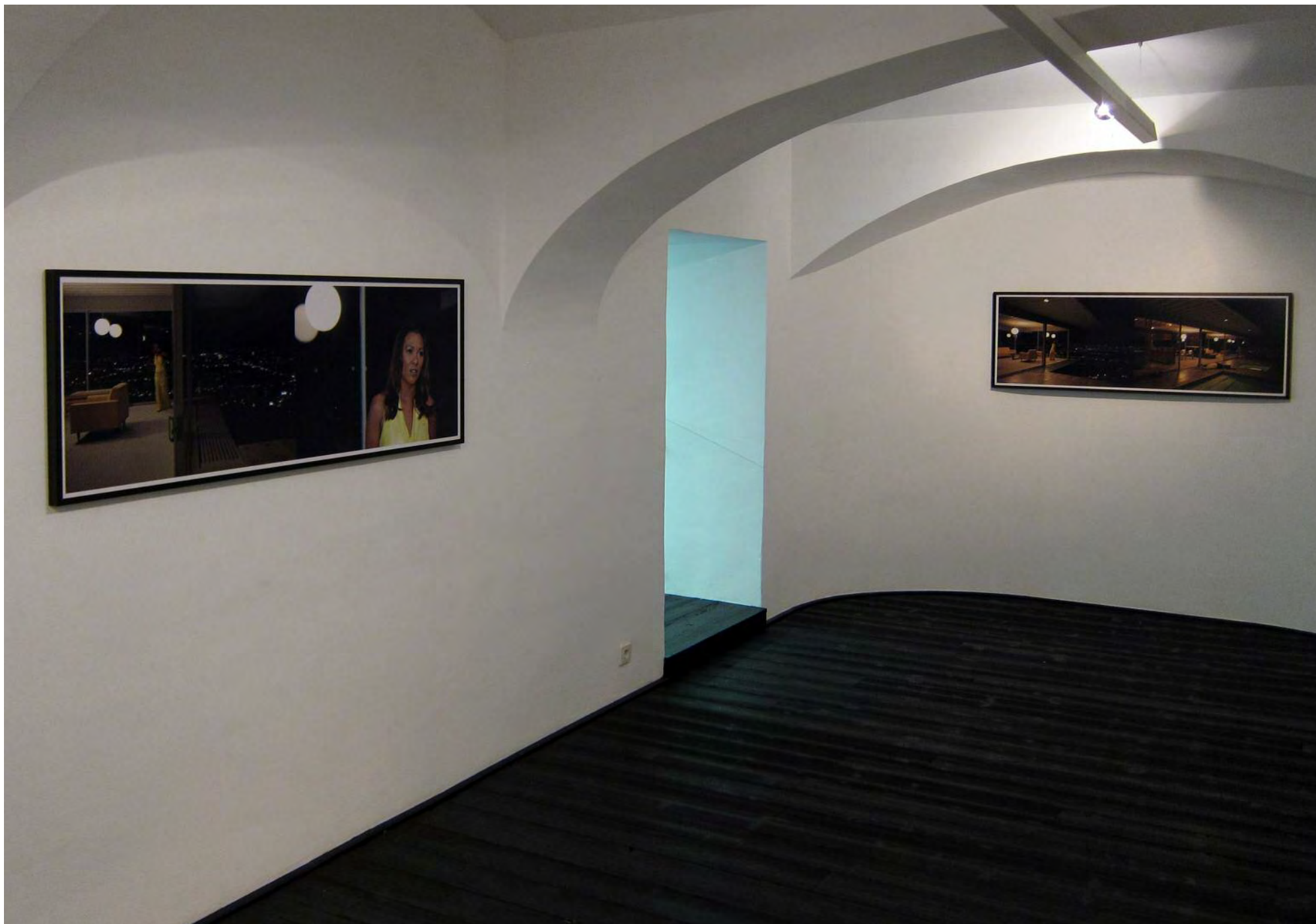












*Exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2012*



*Exhibition view, MAK LA, West Hollywood, 2011*

# I HAVE THE DREAM



PHOTOGRAPHY, NEON TEXT

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

C-PRINT, COLOR, NEON TEXT 150X225







*I have the dream*





Exhibition view, Gallery bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2012

## IT SHAKES EVERYWHERE →

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PHOTOGRAPHY, 2012

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

→  
C-PRINTS, COLOR, 15P. 60X90

In “*It shakes everywhere*”, Ventzislavova looks at the shock of recurring earthquakes, a premonition of catastrophe to come. The instability of nature is used as a metaphor for the volatile real estate and economic situation. Stability is taken as a precarious state that must be maintained. The people in the photographs stand in their pajamas at night, in front of their houses, which are as similar as the people themselves. The tremors cause a brief reversal of the situation: the public space of the street becomes a safe and private place.

with: Ana Clara, Christopher Richmond, CK Lyons, Claudia Slanar, Fabiano, Gabi & Chris, James Bolton, Jena Lee, Krystof Klebicki, Mark Escribano, Mihiri, Peter Fritzenwallner, Santos Vásquez, Seth, Vania & Tanya

















## SELECTED HOMES



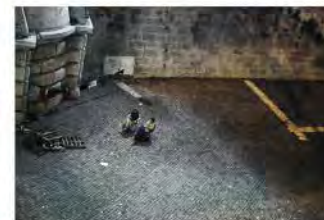
PHOTOGRAPHY, 2007-2011

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

C-PRINTS, COLOR, 30P. 20X30

The photo series "*Selected Homes*" shows differentiated realities by means of various homes and shelters, former classy to trashy detached buildings, social housing to tents. Starting points were mostly very different lifestyles and dreams which probably due to different reasons like financial crisis, climate changes, personal alteration and fails could not be redeemed.







## MIGRATION STANDARDS

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VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY, TEXT 2011

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
BMUKK, DER STANDARD / AUSTRIA

FILM DISTRIBUTION  
SIXPACKFILM VIENNA

C-PRINTS, COLOR, 6P. 60X90  
HD VIDEO, 5MIN., COLOR

The repressive migration policy nowadays is an absurdity. It is contrary to the principles invoked by the EU: peace, democracy, solidarity, justice, respect for human rights and freedom of movement. It divides humanity into the rich, who can move freely, and those who have to remain in place.

„*Migration Standards*“ deals with migrants' demand for recognition of their history, their role and social equality.

The work is implemented through the media of video and photography and shows children and teenagers who are facing a background that is a combination of two different subjects. The text in the work consists from excerpts from the “Democracy Not Integration” and “Ausschluss Basta!” formulations. In the video work the protagonists are reciting the text in form of slogans. Each one of the printed work is visually represented by two images, one with black framed text and one with photography.



**I want to live in a world where no one is illegal,  
without borders and nations,  
where everyone has rights of movement and residence.**



**Migrant culture is a culture of struggle for a better life, rights, autonomy,  
freedom of movement, dignity and self-determination.  
Migration culture is a culture of cosmopolitans.**



The problem is neither the poor nor the migrants. The problem lies in policies that produce poverty and racism. The problem is a society that defines itself through exclusion. Stop pretending immigration is a scandal. Migration is the project of the future.



No to repressive, Eurocentric and short-sighted ways of looking at migration.  
No to racist controls and manhunts.  
No to high-tech fortress Europe.





**Democracy is not a country club. Democracy means that everyone has the right to determine for themselves and with others how they want to live together. If integration means anything, it is that we are all in this together!**



**Freedom, self-determination and dignity apply to everyone. No one has to acquire skills to claim them. We want to live in a society where it is taken for granted that everyone shares the same rights.**



Ich will in einer Welt leben, in der kein Mensch illegal ist,  
weder Grenzen noch Nationen existieren, jenseit das Recht  
auf Bewegungs- und Niederlassungsfreiheit hat.



Die Kultur der MigrantInnen ist eine der Kämpfe um ein besseres Leben,  
Rechte, Autonomie, Bewegungsfreiheit, Würde und Selbstbestimmung.  
Die Kultur der MigrantInnen ist jene von KosmopolitInnen!



Das Problem sind weder die Armen noch die MigrantInnen, das Problem ist eine  
Politik, die Armut und Rassismus produziert. Das Problem ist eine Gesellschaft,  
die sich über Ausgrenzung definiert. Stopp der Skandalisierung von Migration.  
Migration ist das Projekt der Zukunft!

Exhibition view, Gallery Bäckerstrasse4, Vienna, 2011

# IN THE NAME OF

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PHOTOGRAPHY, 2010

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA & MLADEN PENEV

SUPPORTED BY  
THOMAS K. LANG GALLERY / AUSTRIA

C-PRINTS, COLOR, 3P. 90X130, P. 17 42X28

In their work *"In the Name Of"*, Borjana Ventzislavova and Mladen Penev study the phenomenon of submission to various norms and ideals, as represented in the outward appearances and dress codes of representatives of three different cultural and religious groups: Orthodox Jewish men, Western men and women, and Muslim women. The project's focus is on the way these groups represent themselves, and on how we imagine and perceive them.

Do not the mechanisms that assert strict traditional, religious, or totalitarian norms and those of a society that believes itself to be free and democratic while functioning in accordance with the laws of global capitalism lead to similar phenomena of uniformity?

In contradistinction to Western culture, the dress codes by which Orthodox Muslim or Jewish believers abide would seem to be highly standardized and not particularly multifaceted. But are we not similarly subject to a diktat, that of global capitalism and mass consumerism? Have advertising and money taken the place of faith and religion?

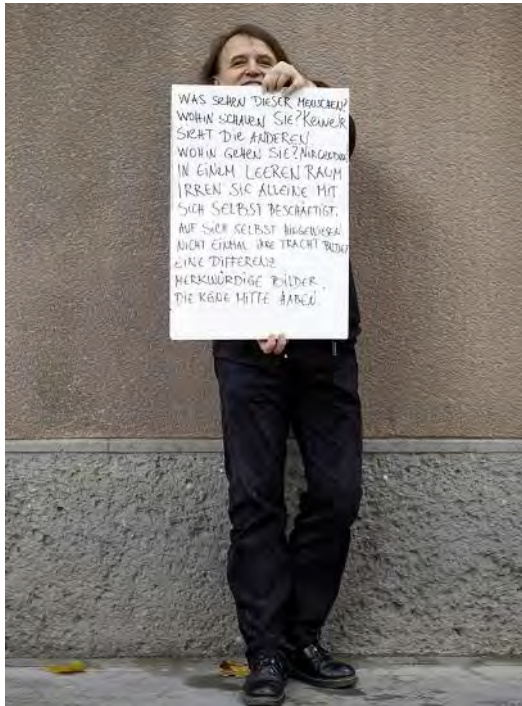
















*Exhibition view, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, 2011*

## TRUE VISION. FALSE STORY. SAME SKY.

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PHOTOGRAPHY, 2010

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

C-PRINTS, COLOR, 4P. 40X50

In the work *“True vision. False story. Same Sky.”* is posed the question of migration and the associated mobility in the search for a new home, and/or even a new homeland. Ventzislavova impressively shows the expectations and hopes that migrants or refugees have as well as the reality which awaits them and which meet in the artist as “the final result”. For the photo series the artist worked with stage sets from Cinecittà in Rome as well as with a picture from the cinema studio in Sofia.  
(Silvie Aignar)







## **ACTION. REACTION. LOOKING FOR SOLUTION.**

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**PHOTOGRAPHY, 2010**

**ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA**

**C-PRINTS, COLOUR, 2P. 80X120**

Two women were asked by the artist to express their associations with pain and disappointment through their body language. The artist was taking pictures during the performance of both protagonists. The two deformed bodies pose the psychological state of the protagonists.



# GHOST CITY



PHOTOGRAPHY, 2010

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
CEC ARTSLINK, KALA ART INSTITUTE / USA

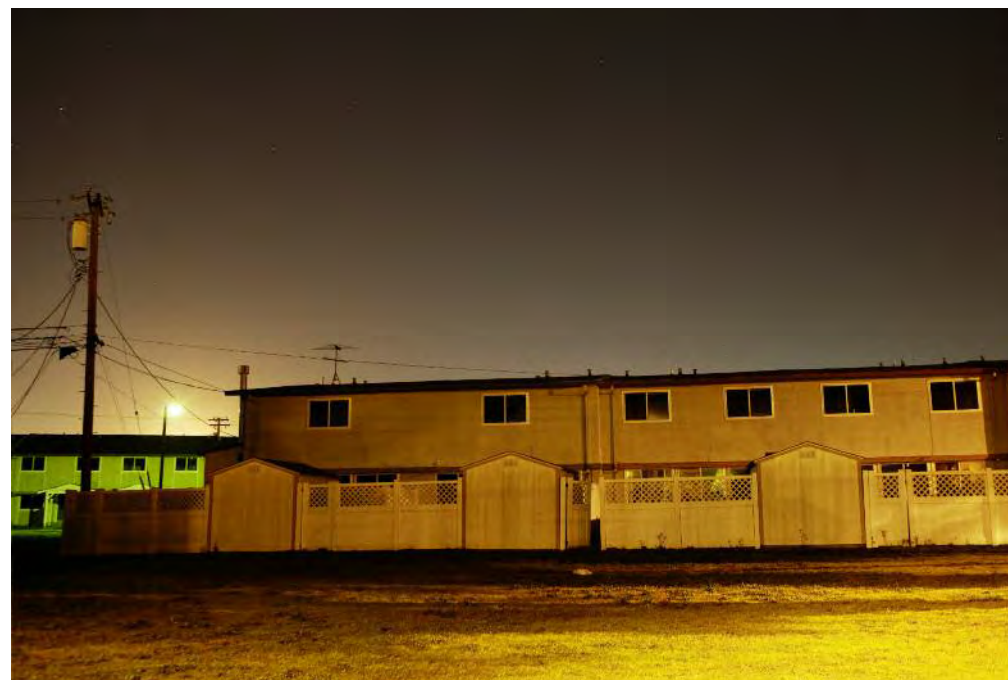


*"Ghost city"* shows a housing complex in the North Housing Parcel of Alameda Naval Base, where all of the houses and buildings look identical. The former military houses area will be part of the future Alameda Point residential complex and will serve needs of the homeless for both housing and services. Many of the homeless people in the area are veterans from the US military operations, with physical disabilities and social problems.









# NAVY BASE TODAY, TOMORROW PARADISE

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PHOTOGRAPHY, 2010

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
CEC ARTSLINK, KALA ART INSTITUTE / USA

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The cold war ended, Clinton administration closed military bases and the department of defense looked for buyers for their decommissioned bases. Developers have turned the abandoned bases into new housing areas and shopping centers. Similar was the story with the Alameda Naval Base closed in 1997. The City of Alameda announced a deal with Navy and the land over to the city would be turned into 1700 housing with a beautiful sea view.

Former military bases are the equivalent of toxic waste disposal sites. Can the bad stuff from the ground really be cleanup and where is it going?

"Navy base today, tomorrow paradise" capture the architecture of the abandoned base next to Alameda in California before to be transformed into a desirable place to live.





# HIGH BLUE MOUNTAINS, RIVERS AND GOLDEN PLAINS

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VIDEO, 2009

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
BMUKK / AUSTRIA, ART AFFAIRS AND DOCUMENTS / BULGARIEN

FILM DISTRIBUTION  
SIXPACKFILM VIENNA

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HDCAM OR DIGIBETA, 11MIN., HDV, COLOR

The project deals specifically with the poetry of Chalga songs, in the 90s and the Beginning of 2000. It reports mainly due to the sexist and pornographic aggressive manner about the political, socioeconomic and cultural reality in Bulgaria.

The work shows 9 young people in different scenes in Sofia city reciting lyrics from Chalga songs. The backgrounds show scenes from neglected urban landscapes and concrete broken streets, paved paths with holes, patches disorderly, muddy ground ... typical circumstances for the ordinary man in the capital city.

The work focused on this part of the younger generation, not necessarily fascinated by the Chalga culture. Those who can't identify and hold responsible the older generation - their parents, their teachers, politicians - for the spreading of this phenomenon to normality in the Society.







# ME AND YOU AND THEM. NO ONE IS SECURE.

PHOTOGRAPHY, 2008

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

Fancy dressed, the actors - from all age and different social backgrounds (woman with child, businessman, group of yuppies, young cool couple, pregnant woman) are staying in the middle of water, with plastic bags in hand. The staged photographs show people from our developed contemporary society in an unusual for them situation, as refugees. People who have lost everything they owned and are trying to escape somewhere in the nowhere. It could be me, you, them - anybody. No one is secure.

The work is questioning migration and is searching for understanding as well, as for social and political responsibility for those processes in the present. It handles the subject of identity and deals with the exchange of roles of representatives from different societies (with national, social and economic differences).

With the participation of: Iordan Harizanov, Marcel Neundorfer, Blagovesta Bakardjieva, Dessislava Goudjunova, Alexandra Harizanova, Maximilian Pramatarov, Ivan Moudov, Rayko Raynoff, Alexander Peev, Alban Muja, Tzviatko Sabev, Borjana Ventzislavova, Ambrol Iglénikov, Valentin Penev, Diana Stoyanova, Mladen Penev, Petja Dimitrova, Carlos Toledo  
Assistance photographie & light: Mladen Penev

Special thanks to Geoff Berner for the song "Traveller's Curse".

















Exhibition view, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, 2009

# WE SHALL OVERSWIM

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MULTY-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION, 2008

**ARTIST**

**BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA**

**SUPPORTED BY**

**BMUKK / AUSTRIA, ISIS ARTS / UK**

## 15-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH 2-CHANNEL SOUND

Can European identity be defined? What parameters and elements dictate our understandings of 'European identity'?

The specific questions on which the work is based are about the subject: 'at home'. What does it mean to 'feel at home'? What or where could be 'at home'? Does a geographical location or national belonging today define 'at home'? Is it possible that identity is affected by nationality in times of global transformation and migration processes? These issues, seen from the perspective of the migrant, are central to this work.

15 stories and 15 languages have been re-distributed so that each one is performed by different person and in a different language than the accordant 'original'.

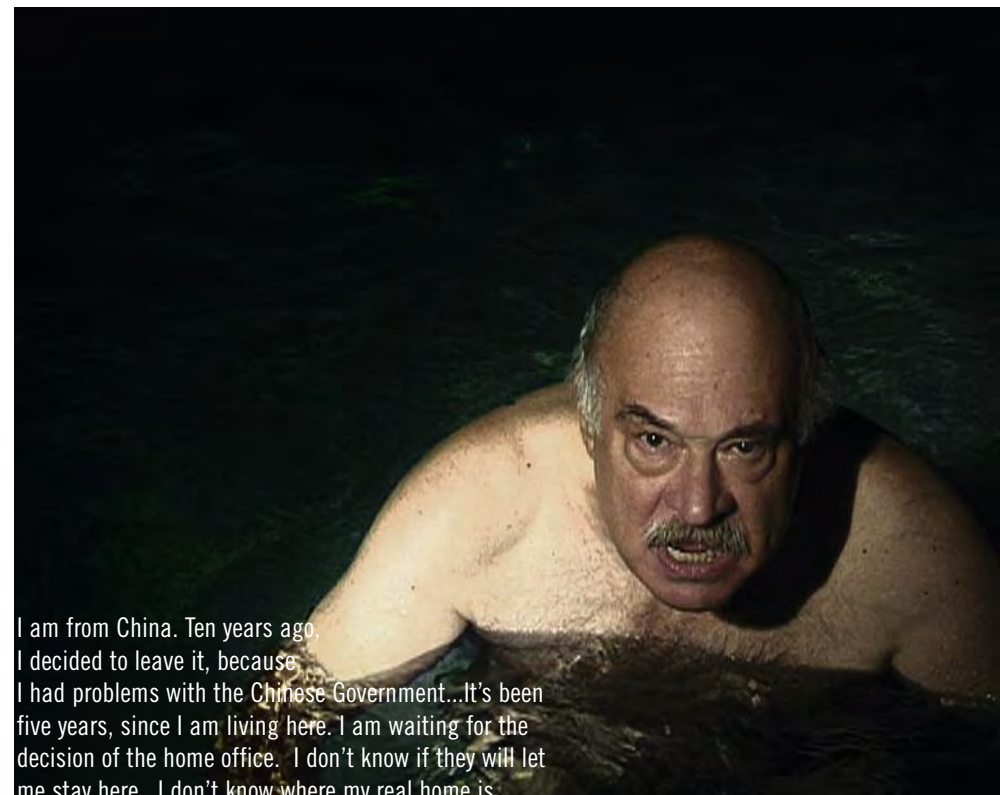
With the participation of: Elli Brumen, Ingunn St. Svavarsdottir, Lucian Peterca, Oleg Mavromatti, Melisa Maida, Zaneta Schmiedale, Alexander Kwale, Gabriele Heller, Rene Beekman, Vulcho Kamarashev, Alessandro Vincentelli, Violeta Januskievica Cecilia Stenbom, Zuzana Hruskova, Gareth Harding



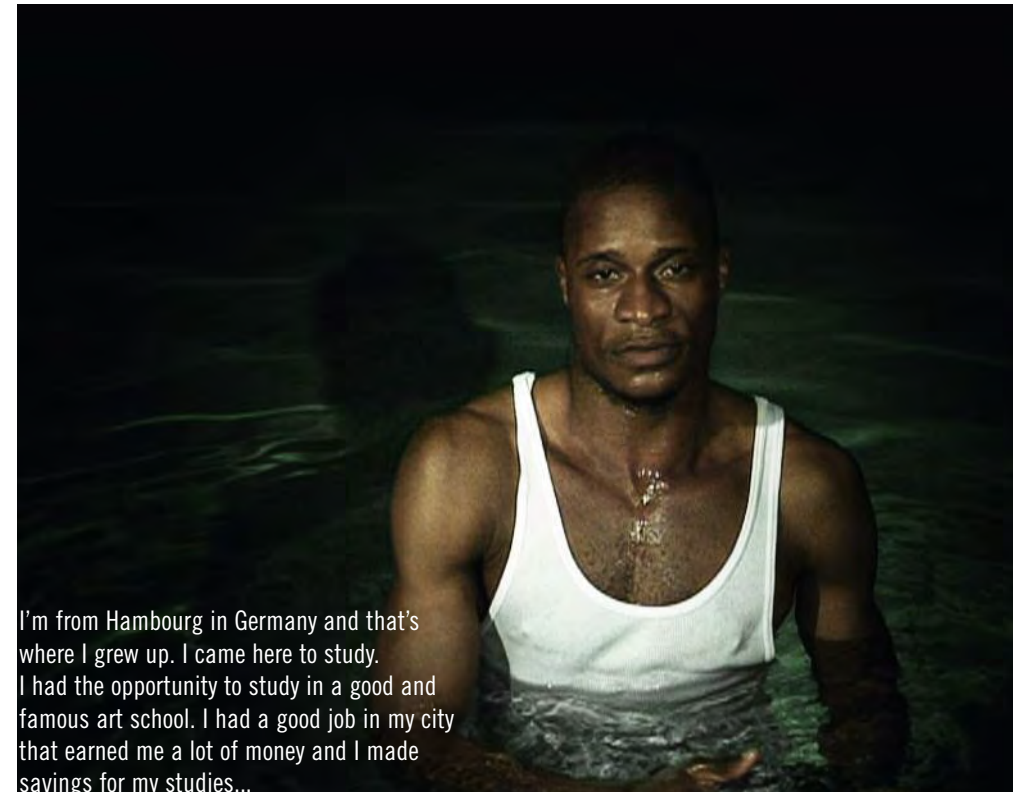


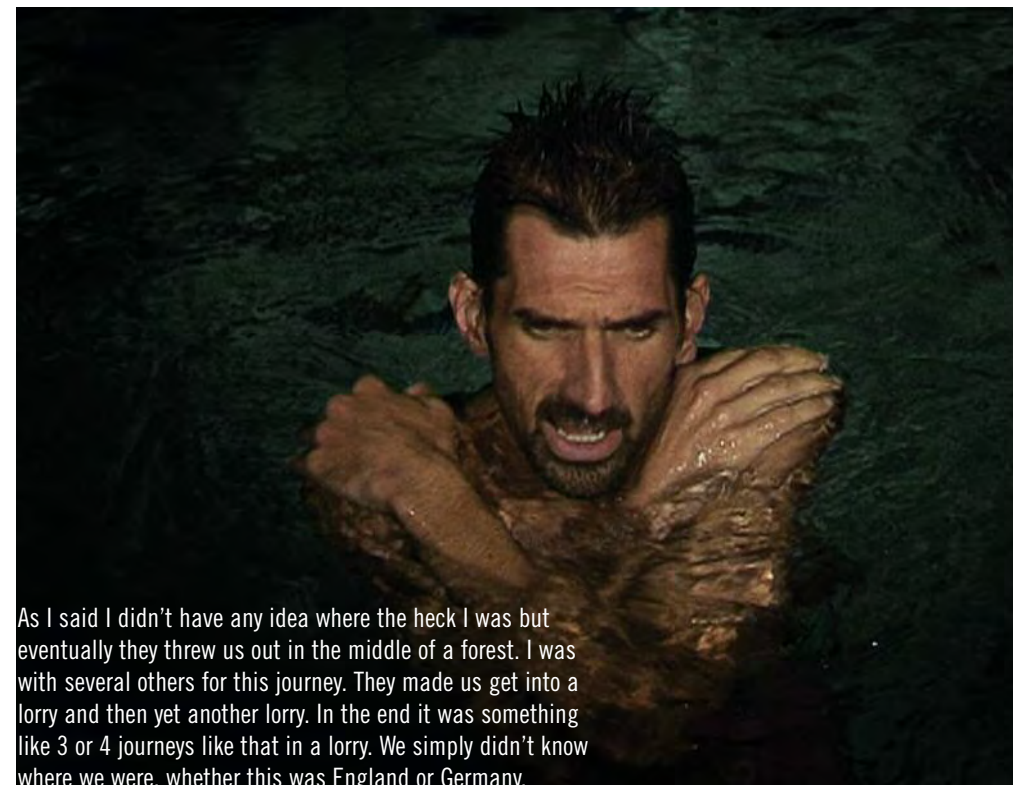
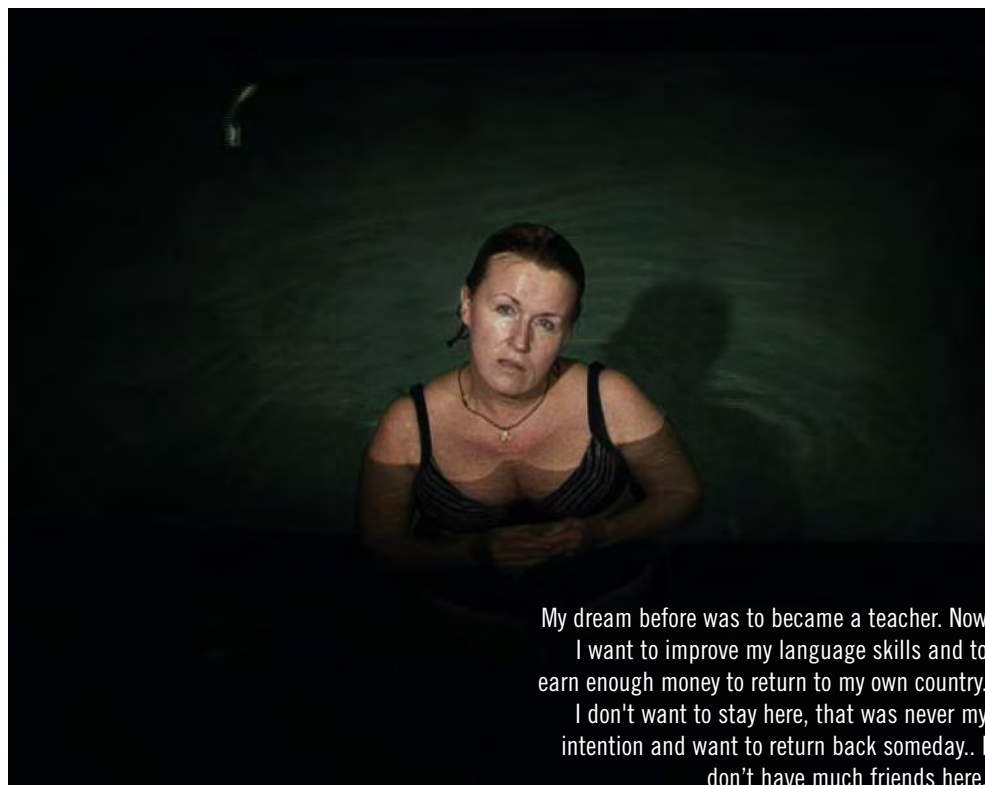


I am from the Moldavia area, in Romania. We walked across Romania, over the Transylvania area. We had a map and we realised where the border was to Hungary, it was west, it was very simple; all the roads are more or less going west. My brother and I jumped on a lorry...



I am from China. Ten years ago, I decided to leave it, because I had problems with the Chinese Government...It's been five years, since I am living here. I am waiting for the decision of the home office. I don't know if they will let me stay here. I don't know where my real home is...









*Exhibition view, Academia Gallery, Sofia, 2009*

# EURO DE LUX.

hiring.offering.extraordinar.live.

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PHOTOGRAPHY, 2006

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

SUPPORTED BY  
BMUKK / AUSTRIA, PRO HELVETIA / BULGARIA

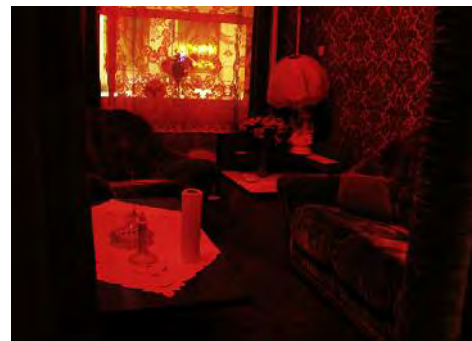
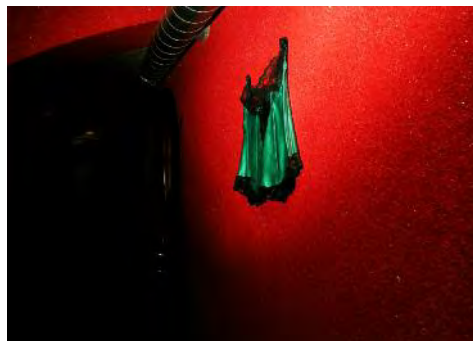
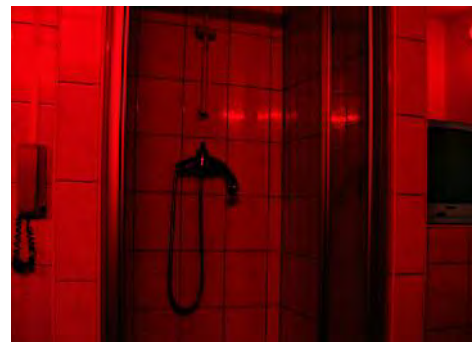
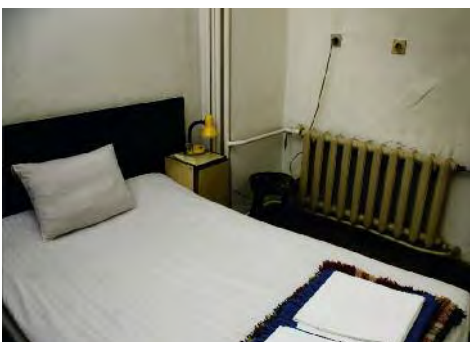
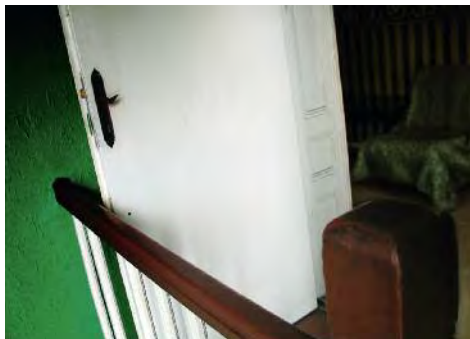
LAMBDA PRINTS, COLOUR,  
4P. 100X70 ON ALU, 20P. 70X50

The photographs show interiors and fragments of the women's working atmosphere in night clubs, bars, brothels, hotel rooms and erotic clubs in Vienna and Sofia.

"EURO DE LUX. hiring. offering.extra-ordinary.live." is a photographic project, developed parallel to the work "It was always dark outside".









Exhibition view, *Ostlicht*, Vienna, 2012

# IT WAS ALWAYS DARK OUTSIDE

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MIXED MEDIA INSTALLATION, 2005

ARTIST  
BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA

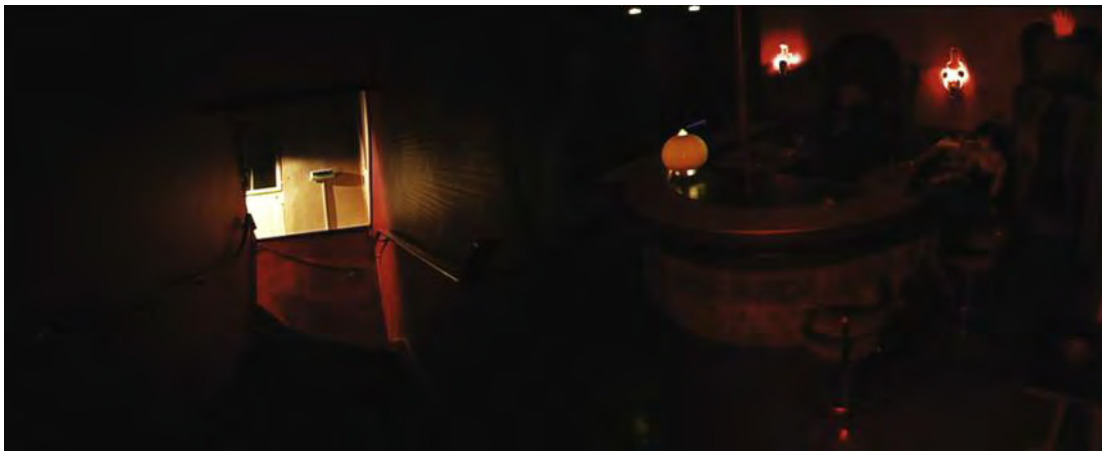
SUPPORTED BY  
BMUKK / AUSTRIA, PRO HELVETIA / BULGARIA

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LAMBDA PRINTS,  
SOUND RECORDS OF INTERVIEWS,  
2-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH SOUND

*„It was always dark outside“* deals with the phenomenon of trafficking in women - with the social aspects and the psychological situation of (women) migrants. The main focus of the work is on women from the east European reform states, which are forced through sexual exploitation, violence and threat to exertion of prostitution in the “old” EU – states.











## FOKUS POKUS €UROMATIK



DOCUMENTARY, 2005/2006

### ARTISTS

BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA & MIROSLAV NICIC

### SUPPORTED BY

BKA - INNOVATIVE FILM AUSTRIA, CITY OF VIENNA

DIGI-BETA, 60 MIN., PAL, COLOR

The film follows the daily life of the workers at the Prater Park during a one year period. Talking with them about money, missed chances, migration, the EU, and today's life in general makes the Viennese Theme Park appear more and more like a metaphor for contemporary society.

A roller coaster ride behind the scenes at the famous Amusement Park.



# TABULA RASA

PHOTOGRAPHY, 2005

ARTISTS

BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA, MIROSLAV NICIC & MLADEN PENEV

*“tabula rasa” interprets in a new way the theory of John Locke or Sigmund Freud, describing that man is born with a clear, blank mind and all of the additional information or moral codes are just supplementary layers learned by the individual experience. The tabula rasa theory says that people have the freedom to define their own identity. Within the framework of the exhibition the work emphasizes the influence of society shaping identity with its values, which are today often identified with the social image. (Mira Keratova)*

*“tabula rasa”* was conceived for public space and was shown at the Billboart Gallery Europe project (on billboards in 12 European cities).

This work deals with the system of values, which defines the individual in contemporary society, and more precisely in the European reform states, where the consumption took a central role very fast and could determined the replacing of the social and human values by the totalitarianism of the brands.





## VIENNA ELSEWHERE

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### 9 SHORT FILMS

#### ARTIST

BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA, CARLOS TOLEDO,  
EVA DERTSCHEI, PETJA DIMITROVA

#### SUPPORTED BY

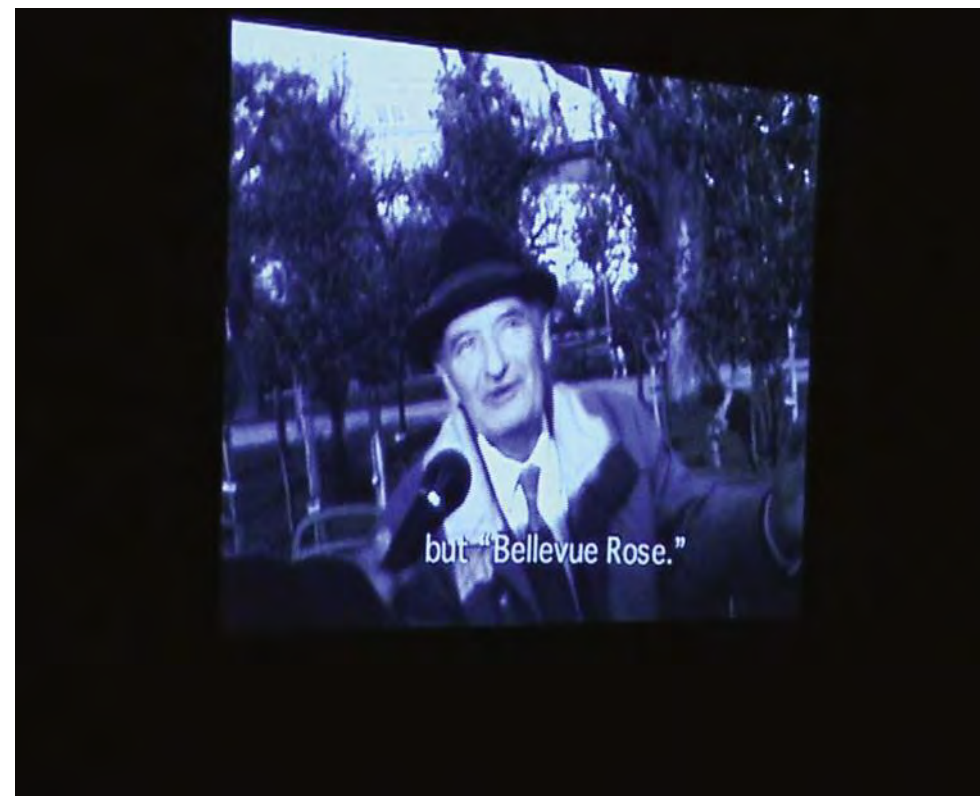
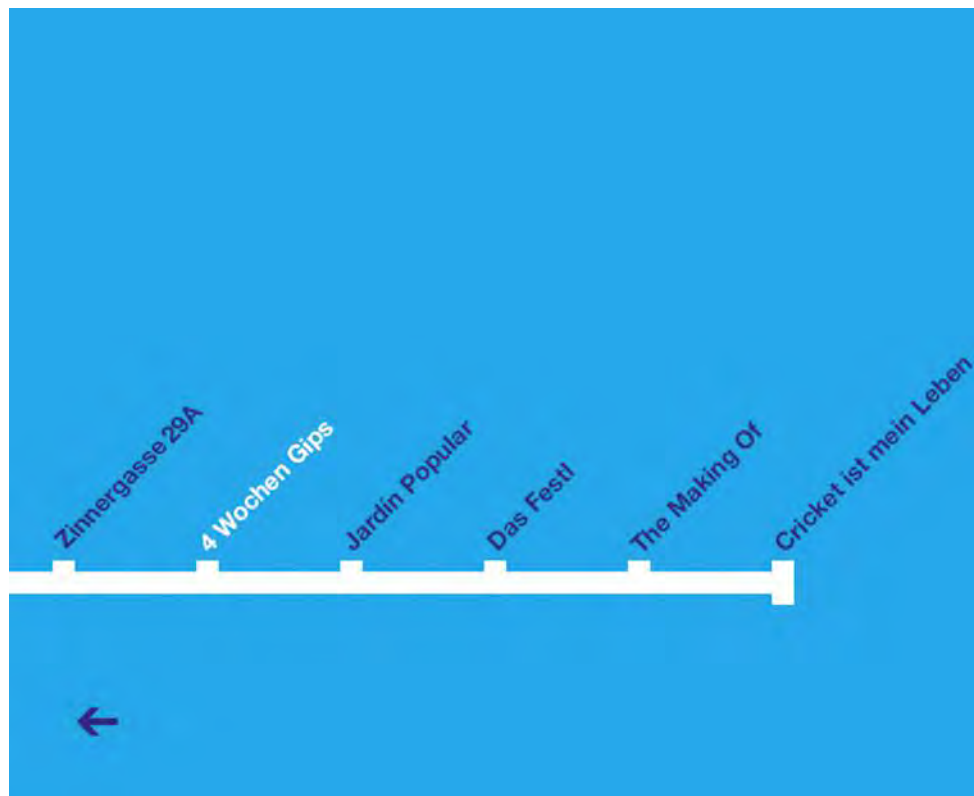
INITIATIVE MINDERHEITEN, BMBWK / AUSTRIA,  
EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

### DVD, 9 SHORT FILMS

Project of dezentrale medien (Eva Dertschei, Petja Dimitrova, Carlos Toledo, Borjana Ventzislavova) and minorities initiation in Austria in cooperation with young people.

“Dezentrale medien” considers itself to be a project group in which the life realities of all the participants are a way of acquiring knowledge and skills. The cooperative work is based on an exchange of various social, aesthetic and technical experience. The goal is the creation of a common space, the articulation of opinions and access to education and social integration according to individual ideas and needs.

From November 2001 till 2002 “dezentrale medien” was concerned with public and semi-public spaces and started working on a number of short films about various places in Vienna. The locations involved describe an important part of the young peoples life in the city. The films can be seen individually or as parts of one film and present a specific picture of Vienna (or elsewhere).





## WISHES FOR FISHES



VIDEO/INSTALLATION, 2002

### ARTISTS

BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA & MIROSLAV NICIC



MINI DV, 8'17", PAL, COLOR

Causality of different situations are emerging from the vacuum of the outside and always changing impulses from the inside. This momentary loop determines our perception and the following consequences. Continuously the same, but then repeating itself in different ways. It doesn't point out any solutions or give us any answers.







# LUIS I THINK!



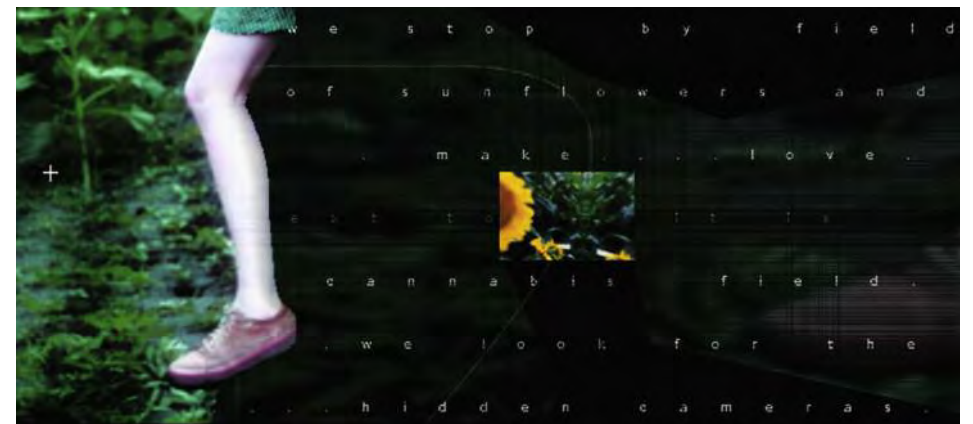
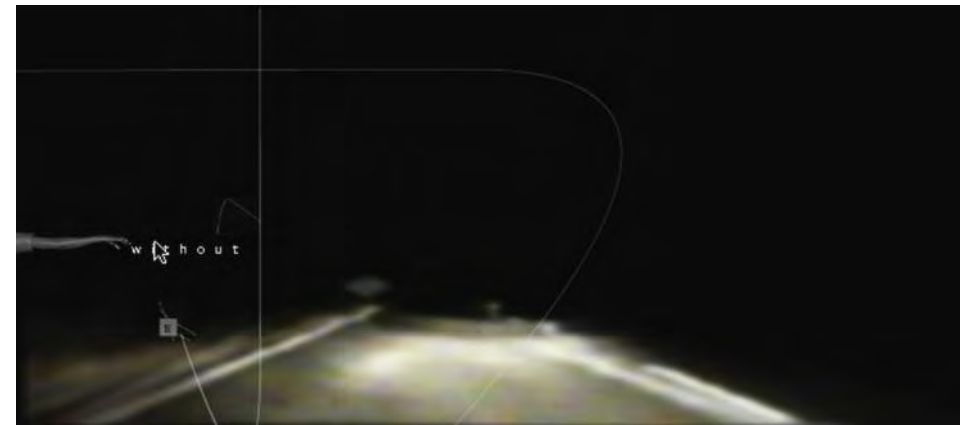
CD-ROM/WEB APPLICATION, 2001

## ARTISTS

BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA & MIROSLAV NICIC



*“luis I think!”* represents a personal documentation on travelling between the birth countries of the authors (Bulgaria and Yugoslavia) and Austria, their home in the period of 99/00.





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**CONTACT**

**BORJANA VENTZISLAVOVA**  
**[HTTP://BORJANA.NET](http://borjana.net)**  
**[BORJANA@NEBUDU.NET](mailto:borjana@nebudu.net)**