

BERLIN SHOW #4: Inventory

17 November 2015 - 12 March 2016
Tuesday - Saturday, 12 – 18 h
Potsdamer Strasse 77-87, 10785 Berlin

Galeria Plan B is pleased to announce BERLIN SHOW #4: Inventory, an exhibition organized on the occasion of the gallery's 10 years anniversary. The project includes 15 different solo presentations by the gallery's artists, shown successively over a duration of 15 weeks.

This autumn, Plan B turned 10 years old. When we initiated this project in 2005, the premises were significantly different. At that time, the gallery came into being as a response to the precariousness of the local art scene in the Romanian city of Cluj. A new space would respond to the existing difficulties in the local art scene that was in need of revival, and worked towards a program that included young contemporary artists that evolved along with the gallery itself. From the beginning, the space has been adamant about including historical artists in their programming as well without whom, we believe, contemporary art could not be understood completely.

Plan B is a collaborative project conceived together with the artists and augmented with each new artistic, theoretical and critical contribution. For the past 10 years, the project's artistic and directorial independence, as well as the financial one have always been essential to the space's existence.

In 2008, Plan B opened a second exhibition space in Berlin. The dynamic art scene of this city, unique in its eclecticism and richness, potentiated the gallery's program even more and opened up new directions for the kind of practices we wanted to highlight, that didn't all strike root in Cluj. Simultaneously and paradoxically, Berlin has given us the chance to amplify the voice of the Romanian art scene. Therefore, we've decided to look back on the past decade through a series of exhibitions in the Berlin gallery space.

The BERLIN SHOW #4 exhibition is an inventory of the artistic practices that make up the gallery; a sequence of solo exhibitions in a space within the gallery designed by Mircea Cantor, a long standing friend of the gallery in these past 10 years. The series of exhibitions counts as an overview of an ever evolving project. It highlights its commencement in the past, its current state of being and its developments towards the future. A space within the space always requires special motivation and needs double consideration why to do it. An anniversary can be a good reason, and that's why a simple, yet sophisticated form needed to mark this moment. I said sophisticated because all measures and relationships between the sizes, the volumes, and the surfaces are based on the golden ratio. We have so many examples throughout art history that embody the use of the Pi number. 10 years of activity of Plan B needed to be visualized as the materialization of their adventure from moving from location to location, opening up, growing with the artists. The outside column, hidden in the back of the "cube" is almost like a reference to the 'house's snake' - the legendary, fairytale creature that hides, yet protects the house from evil. This snake indeed is the extraordinary vision and dedication of Mihai and Mihaela, that have been keeping "the house alive" in all these years, through bold proposals from the artist's side.' Mircea Cantor, Paris, November 13, 2015

The exhibition started with the project **Dead Weights by Ciprian Muresan**, on view from November 14th to 21st.

Dead Weights reflects on the strategies of undermining the ideological discourse of an artwork. By copying an art object, that object grows weak and vulnerable, turning against and dismantling its original spirit. Muresan's project draws on Romanian art history, using copied sculptures from the Art Museum in Cluj as weights for etchings that remain unrevealed to the public. The artist's undertaking unfolds in a story about authority, the accepted canon, history, and mimetic strategies for subverting them all. The authority of an art object can be disrupted by appropriating it and reworking its meaning.

Ciprian Muresan, *Dead Weights*, 2013, 12 etchings, 12 wooden boards, 18 plaster sculptures, dimensions variable

The second project presented is **And what if there is nothing beyond it? (2015) by Miklos Onucsan**, on view from November 24th to 28th.

And what if there is nothing beyond it? (2015) is an installation that recreates the symbol used to represent the infinite from a real, material line and its shadow, making it visible for the viewer only from a certain position in the space. The conventional notion of limitlessness, that 'something' which always has something beyond it, is represented by this phantom-like sign, visible from a narrow angle, for a moment of hesitant reflection upon the conventions he is working with, upon their texture and efficiency in the spheres of the visual and of the intelligible.

Miklos Onucsan, *And what if there is nothing beyond it?*, 2015, site-specific installation (panel, rope, directed light), dimensions variable

The third project presented is ***You have always to start anew (2010)*** by **Belu-Simion Fainaru**, on view from December 1st to 5th.

The light bulb that unexpectedly meets the visitor signals the access to a new space, with a different structure, where sudden actions can occur. The first reaction is to avoid the light that seems unsuited for that place. But as soon as you get accustomed to the space, you realize that you are in a daily quest for light. There are 7 light bulbs and on each of them the artist has written a day of the week, so that each day has its own.

The fourth project presented is ***Watercolours (1966-1968)*** by **Victor Ciato**, on view from December 7th to 12th.

The 5 watercolors presented are part of a series entitled 'Momentul 0' painted between 1966 and 1968. After finishing his studies at the Fine Arts Institute 'Ion Andreescu' in Cluj in 1964, Victor Ciato's 'Momentul 0' represented a real turning point in his artistic practice. In this way he wanted to free himself from the academic norms and the "ballast" of prolet-cultist painting and reinvent - in a real modernist manner - creating his own norms. In this way he achieved the series of abstract watercolors, works that were not meant to represent anything in particular. They are puristic abstractions, colored in a refined manner; nowadays, their artistic value is doubled by the importance of the auto-formative (self-formative) exercise, performed in those circumstances. Related to the art of that time, the search into the problematic field of the non-figurative can be perceived as a radical gesture of re-definition. Victor Ciato, born 1938, lives and works in Cluj, Romania.

The fifth project presented is ***The Storm (2015)*** by **Adrian Ghenie**, on view from December 15th to 20th.

The Storm (2015, oil on canvas, 240 x 200 cm), first shown to the public in Adrian Ghenie's *Darwin's Room* in the Romanian Pavillion of this year's Venice Biennale, is a self referential work retrieving the storm theme from the history of painting and converting it into a tumultuous landscape which takes shapes of personal history and anguish, integrating figurative features and visceral abstractions. Being part of The Tempest series which stands as a metaphor for the disquietude of subterranean history, The Storm comprises records of the action of painting itself, as if you could see the motion of applying paste with an almost crypted figurative detail, of his mother's hand smoking in the middle of the tempest, surmised from the previous title of the work, Mother Smoking.

Adrian Ghenie, *The Storm*, 2015, oil on canvas, 240 x 200 cm

The sixth project on show is ***Panspermia (1985)*** by **Rudolf Bone**, on view from January 5th to 9th.

Plan B Cluj / Berlin invited Rudolf Bone (b. 1951) with a reenactment of the performative sculpture, *Panspermia* from 1985, made out of glass lamellas and a stone thrown by the artist in the middle of the glass structure like a gesture that is both full of energy and of despair perhaps. The rock is the proof that *Panspermia* hypothesis is true and we should consider it when we enclose ourselves in inflexible systems of thought. "Breaking" the normative structures was a visual strong gesture back then in the 1980s, during the communist regime, but it still is today a very intense reflection on the human condition. This performance results in a work that is not only the trace of the action, but also a sculpture that keeps reminding us about the fragility of existence.

Rudolf Bone, *Panspermia*, 1985, installation, glass and stone, dimensions variable, action

The seventh project on show is by **Navid Nuur**, on view from January 12th to 16th.

Navid Nuur (b. 1976, Teheran, lives and works in The Hague) researches the way in which specific spaces and materials can engender new experiences, shifts in attention and perceptual thresholds. 'In-betweenness' would be the most defining characteristic of Nuur's organic practice, with its formal echoes of Minimalism and Conceptual Art on the one hand, and a truly mind blowing sensorial exoticism on the other. On the level of the works themselves, 'in-betweenness' points at the processual aspects that prevent them from becoming definite, static objects. A couple of years ago, he coined the term 'intermodules' to describe his spatial work: they are things mediating between thoughts and their materialisation, negotiating the space they occupy, and their temporal presence.

Navid Nuur on the works in the show, 'II', 2005-2016 and 'Cut²', 2005-2016: Each of the works represents a line or, better said, the gesture of a line and how it can distort one's perception or even a framework of references like a golden rule. And both break the space open. The mirror is the only one relating to the proportions of the space and you can see new dimensions added because of that open scraped part which messes up the golden rule instantly. The second work, the line in the space, may easily look like a line on the wall or even a cut in the wall, because it cuts the space - there is no end or beginning. It floats in the invisible part of the space, expanding and taking the inner space, which is not there for granted. You even

feel you have to orientate yourself, asking yourself what you are looking at, where you stand, what you see... To give it an extra push, there is also the colour - a fluorescent red, a colour which was created because of the way it reflects light and is normally used to signal and mark specific objects and spaces. Both works are minimal, but target a maximal result, exposing more of the space than you'd think.

Navid Nuur, 'Il', 2005 - 2016, mirrors, 99.5 x 61 x 7 cm

Navid Nuur, 'Cut²', 2005 - 2016, micro nylon, fluorescent red paint, dimensions variable

The eight project on show was **'Supporting means and transfer systems' (2010-2011) by Gheorghe Ilea**, on view from January 19th to 24th.

Gheorghe Ilea (b. 1958, Bucea, RO, works and lives in Zalau, RO) conducts an investigation into the seductiveness of images. In his works, Ilea persistently explores the boundary between consistency and a certain hypnotic density in his images. Although a shapeshifter, with effects and solutions ranging from the heavily gestural to the hyperrealist, Ilea has been assimilated to the mystical, neo-Orthodox dogma in Romanian painting through the '90s. There is an intellectual exuberance fuelling the works, with painting as research medium, rather than safe aesthetic bet or mystical springboard.

The carbon papers from the artworks *'Supporting means and transfer systems 1&2'* (2010-2011) were used, as the title suggests, as aid and transfer materials for another of the artist's work, entitled *Tronicart 1300* (2011), which comprised 56 painted Dacia 1300 car bonnets. The car model, manufactured by the Romanian company Dacia under Renault licence, was produced in the communist era starting 1969 and still exists in the minds of the Romanians as a symbol of the communist period. The subjects presented in the 56 images make up in their diversity an almost implausible self-portrait and a fugitive autobiography (of the artist). The images refer to places and memories dear to the artist, to the Scripture and memorable figures of the Romanian orthodoxy, to the hopes and threats of the nuclear era or to the intimacy of the kitsch decorated object. Some are pretentious abstract compositions or present the Romanian flag as a luscious painting, others bring back to life old, but not yet harmless images of a totalitarian propaganda. The texts refer to the Socialist Republic of Romania and to the Soviet Union, to clichéd phrases and to family stories, to literary texts and to Dacia itself. The irony and self-irony are frequently detected, functioning as protection mechanisms in a dictatorial and absurd world. (with excerpts from an original text by Bogdan Iacob, art historian and critic)

Gheorghe Ilea, *'Supporting means and transfer systems 1'*, 2010-2011, pencil on 50-year-old carbon copy paper, 100 x 125 cm

Gheorghe Ilea, *'Supporting means and transfer systems 2'*, 2010-2011, pencil on 50-year-old carbon copy paper, 97 x 120 cm

The ninth project on show was **'Temporary Self-portrait / Because of you' (2015) by Cristi Pogacean**, on view from January 26th to 30th.

Cristi Pogacean (b. 1980 in Targu-Mures, RO, lives and works in Targu-Mures, RO) creates an "art for the masses" that appeals to a shared consciousness – a stereotypical one which is performed and constructed through conventional notions of commemoration and glorification. Taking an ironic stance towards the aesthetics of monumentality, his works are powerful and imposing, both on account of their alluring aesthetic qualities and their earnest appeal to collective mindsets.

Cristi Pogacean's *'Temporary Self-portrait / Because of you'* represents a reaction to the temporary space designed by Mircea Cantor, a space that contains an intrusive, yet perfectly justified, corner in the left back part. This specific feature/'intrusion' triggered in the artist a tame, even submissive response embodied by a temporary artwork - a self-portrait. It was a deliberate choice of artistic expression meant to emphasize the personal character of this gesture, one that can be described as contradictory, full of admiration, while simultaneously ironic. The self-portrait is missing a quarter in the left back part, that which corresponds to the intrusion in the exhibition space created by the presence of the column hidden behind it. This makes the work site-specific and also renders it useless in a different context. As a consequence, in the last day of the exhibition, the pedestal on which the work is displayed will be removed and the sculpture will be destroyed.

The tenth project on show was **'Untitled' (2016) by Alexandra Croitoru** in collaboration with Vlad Basalici, on view from February 2nd to 6th.

Alexandra Croitoru (b. 1975 in Bucharest, RO, lives and works in Bucharest) takes a critical stand in regard to the current social and political context by questioning established power and gender structures. In her works, Croitoru explores the relationship between fact and fiction in documenting history, of which art makes no exception.

An ironic approach to the fetishisation of Constantin Brancusi's work, the performance *'Untitled'* revolves around the 'Walking Stick' – a conceptual sculpture in the form of a cane carved with the motif of the endless column. In 2013, Croitoru commissioned the cane from sculptor Napoleon Tiron, a member of the generation presented in the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1995, as part of the L'eredità di Brancusi in Romania (Brancusi's legacy in Romania) exhibition. Through a symbol of the artist regarded as "the pinnacle of Romanian sculpture," the sculptural tradition is thereby recycled in the object Vlad Basalici uses as part of his performance and that is ultimately employed to question the entire edifice, in which national and artistic values interpenetrate and give birth to the Brancusi obsession in Romania.

At first sight, both the title and the object evoke the visual grammar specific to the minimal sculpture, albeit resized to handcrafted and utilitarian dimensions. On closer inspection, however, its appearance recommends it as an absurd reciprocal ready-made, a monumental sculpture transformed through resizing into a useful item. But its process of production equally presents it as an assisted ready-made, a utilitarian object elevated to the rank of artwork through the manual intervention specific to high art, sculpture, to be precise. Thus, this object/fetish synthesizes a number of contradictions that can be encountered in the posthumous destiny of Brancusi's work. It combines pop art with folk craft and elitist art, and it invokes the ethno-nationalism that was present in Romanian urban architecture of the 1980's. At the same time, the walking stick evokes the arsenal of kitsch trinkets associated with the name of Brancusi as a commercial brand, which are on sale at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Memorial House in the village of Hobița.

The association of artwork and merchandise via the artist's name as cultural brand, as well as the association between artistic and country branding, is not accidental in this context. Both the culture industry and the nationalist discourse in Romania have made use of Brancusi on repeated occasions, recycling his works as images devoid of intrinsic meaning, in the manner of floating signifiers.
(with excerpts from a text by Cristian Nae, art critic)

Alexandra Croitoru in collaboration with Vlad Basalici, *Untitled*, 2016, performance

The eleventh project on show was an installation by **Achraf Touloub**, on view from February 9th to 13th.

Achraf Touloub (b. 1986 in Casablanca, MA, works in Paris, FR) develops a work based on the interweaving of the notions of tradition and globalization. Symbolic and narrative strategies derived from traditional thought are employed in experiments that produce, in drawing, sculpture and video, elaborate images of the contemporary entanglement of tradition and technological society, invested with equal systemic capacities to shape the global. The works contend that the conventional binary that opposes tradition and modern mind is in fact a movement of convergence, fundamentally between the archaic charge of the image and the symbols that express or encrypt the global mind, the brain of the Earth's body.

The video *Untitled (Extended Wall)*, 2015 is a collage that uses short (2-4 seconds) sequences of promotional videos from data center companies, sequences that were altered and played in slow motion. The video evolves as an exploration of memory - the viewer travels slowly through a succession of empty spaces and corridors that materialize our shared collective memory. These spaces remind us of places we already know, but which are empty; the viewer is the explorer focussing on the aesthetical power of these spaces. Functional objects represent symbolical dimensions, for example the server, which has both the technological and the symbolic power through its sculptural form.

The voice that narrates the video is 'Heather', one of the most common voices used by text-to-voice conversion softwares and who, in this case, transforms into speech a mix of texts from different advertisements and Internet videos, which are meant to bring focus on the main idea, that of introspection. The viewer is initiated in Heather's knowledge about the coming *shift*, a recurring concept in the practice of Achraf Touloub; *the shift* refers to the phenomenon of the immigration of feelings into the digital world (the network, the cloud). The video creates a superposition of the architecture of mind, data as information and the white cube as a space, and it is as through this exploration the gallery is extending towards these spaces; this superposition illustrates the alteration of the state of mind through the current channels of information.

The drawing *Untitled (Three Knots on Head)*, 2011-2016 represents a collective self-portrait. The artist began work on it five years ago and finished now - this was the time he took in order to explore the question of being in between different states of mind; this is the portrait of a 'mood', a temporary state of mind. The knot is a symbol that refers to the power of illusion and the saturation of images and to its effect on the being and the human perception, to the trap of the virtual, digital world that prevents us from having real-time experiences.

Achraf Touloub, *Untitled (Extended Wall)*, 2015, video loop 7 min 30 sec, custom-made bed, dimensions variable

Achraf Touloub, *Untitled (Three Knots on Head)*, 2011-2016, pencil and black ink on paper, 35 x 25 cm

The twelfth project on show was ***Sarcophage noir sur sol blanc (1990)*** by **Horia Damian**, on view from February 16th to 20th.

Horia Damian (1922-2012) always had a conceptual approach towards painting and sculpture, working in a way that touched upon the idea of utopia. *Sarcophage noir sur sol blanc* marks a shift in Damian's work: from the visionary projects for monumental structures of the '70s and '80s to a series of paintings referencing the history of art, which he developed in the final part of his career. In this regard, the work on display reveals the artist's struggle to convey the essence of Renaissance frescoes through objects. Questions about life and death are formally translated in the form of the sarcophagus as a portal to a celestial space – a recurrent motif throughout his work. A canvas by Masaccio from the Santa Maria Novella church in Florence was the trigger for Damian's aesthetic enquiry that resulted in an innovative relief painting based on the traditional framework set up by the Italian masters.

Horia Damian was born in Bucharest, where he had his first personal exhibitions before moving to Paris in 1946. Damian collaborated and developed friendships with artists such as Fernand Léger (with whom he studied), Constantin Brancusi, Auguste Herbin, Salvador Dalí and Yves Klein. Solo exhibitions include: Museum for Contemporary Art Bucharest (2009), the Venice Biennale, Romanian Pavilion (1993), Centre Pompidou Paris (1980), Guggenheim Museum New York (1976), Neue Galerie Sammlung Ludwig Aachen (1973), Musée d'Art Moderne Paris (1972), Leo Castelli Gallery New York (1957). Group exhibitions include: Sao Paulo Biennial (1973), Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (1962), Bridgestone Museum Tokyo (1957).

Horia Damian, *Sarcophage noir sur sol blanc*, 1990, object, wood, 197 x 334 x 23 cm

The thirteenth project on show was ***Time degenerated menu (2006-2016)*** by **Gabriela Vanga**, on view from February 23rd to 27th.

The multi-disciplinary practice of Gabriela Vanga (b. 1977, Romania; lives and works in Paris) includes photography, video, painting, performance and installation. Among the aims of Vanga's work is to reconsider reality by challenging perception. Identity, fact and fiction are some of the issues Vanga deals with in her practice.

Made up of 38 ceramic plates the artist handcrafted together with her children, *Time degenerated menu* represents Vanga's attempt to translate her daily activities, practice, actions, impressions and thoughts into a conceptual diary. Fascinated by the fragility of fine china, Vanga playfully altered its primary use from household object to accessible medium for a meaningful act of art based on personal introspection. An ongoing project for the past ten years, the installation came up as a response to Vanga's challenge of finding a balance between family life and artistic career. In fact, the starting year of the project (2006) has a double significance for the artist because of two fortunate events: the birth of her first child and the date of her first exhibition with Plan B, in Cluj. The work marks therefore both the celebration of the gallery's tenth anniversary and the 10-year-long collaboration between the artist and Plan B, while opening up new possibilities for the future.

Gabriela Vanga, *Time degenerated menu*, 2006-2016, 38 unique ceramic plates, typographic ink, variable dimensions

The fourteenth project on show was ***Reenactment. A Fresco for the Future (2016)*** by **Șerban Savu**, on view from March 1st to 5th.

Figurative painter Șerban Savu (born 1978, lives and works in Cluj, RO), creates a wide range of compositions capturing the daily existence of the contemporary man at work and leisure; his paintings, characterized by empathy and close scrutiny, observation and abstraction, reduction and re-composition, are capable of initiating an assessment of the present moment understood in a wider, historical sense.

Below is an excerpt of an interview between Mihai Pop and the artist regarding the work on show.

Mihai Pop: So, if we expand this topic (the relationship between reality and art) to your recent work – the reenactment of the mosaic from the Steagul Roșu (The Red Flag) factory as a fresco – we could say that the relation between reality and art, as filtered through the ideologic context determining the stylistic features and the issues typical for an era, takes on a new layer of the analysis you conduct through painting – recent history and the various ways to integrate it or, on the contrary, to exclude it from the public discourse. The history of art you employ is not just the „official” history, but also our history, a shared history of the profane beholder, who chooses what to look at and how to understand what one is seeing. Please tell me how you decided on this theme, because originally the mosaic from Brașov was the pretext for another painting, in which you imagined yourself working on a fresco that you are now recreating on a larger scale. It is also a challenge for you, right? You place yourself in the situation of working in a technique and manner that do not necessarily belong to your practice.

Șerban Savu: From the first moment I saw the mosaic in Brașov, I liked it. I found it refined, aesthetic, valid. Of course, I only saw online photographs of it, as I was not able to see it live since it was de-installed and has been in storage ever since 2007. By introducing it in one of my recent paintings, in which I recreate this mosaic as a fresco inside an industrial hall, I wanted to reflect on this example of socialist realist art beyond ideology, just as I would view a Roman mosaic or a Renaissance fresco. The context is obviously essential for understanding the art of a certain era, but the way we position ourselves in regard to the official art of the communist regime is highly emotional, while the features of the Roman times are far blurrier for us when we look at a mosaic from that period. I am not interested in viewing this mosaic from Brașov either ironically, or nostalgically, or as a curiosity, but rather as any other artefact from a given historical period.

However, in the Berlin space of the Plan B gallery I now intend to paint this image of the mosaic from Brașov on a monumental scale. As you very well noticed, it is a new challenge for me as I have never done this before. I try to place myself in the mindset of artists from that time and imagine how they worked out an artistic vocabulary despite the thematic, ideologic and political limitations.

Șerban Savu, *Reenactment. A Fresco for the Future*, 2016, acrylic on wall, 255 x 640 cm

The present project on show is *Reenactment. A Ruin for the Present (2016)* by Cristian Rusu, on view from March 8th to 12th.

The work of multidisciplinary artist and stage designer Cristian Rusu (born 1972, lives and works in Cluj, RO) is mainly a research on the notion of space. Using various techniques including drawing, photography, video, installation and by mixing utopian-like visions with concepts of the visual, space and architecture, he questions the interaction between aesthetics, sensitivity and ideology.

The final project of BERLIN SHOW #4: Inventory, Cristian Rusu's intervention in the gallery space is both a total deconstruction of the space designed by Mircea Cantor, respectively of Șerban Savu's wall painting, and a promise of reconstruction. Demolished by the same team of craftsmen who constructed the structure four months ago, the space, which hosted 15 solo presentations by the gallery's artists, becomes a poetical and a melancholic ruin inside the gallery. The cycle of an exhibition is thus closed, while a follow up is already under way. Cut into pieces, the mural by Șerban Savu is stored as an artefact in Ziploc bags – recalling the way of storing fragments from the Berlin Wall as souvenirs –, before being shipped to Cluj, Romania, where it will be reconstructed in the Plan B gallery space. The symbolic gesture of reconstruction emphasizes the artistic dialogue between Berlin and Cluj – the city where the gallery was founded in 2005. Demolished but yet archived in fragments, Cristian Rusu's installation is nonetheless an attempt to transcend the gallery space and subvert the physical distance between the two cities where Plan B has been active over the past 10 years.

Cristian Rusu, *Reenactment. A Ruin for the Present*, 2016, site-specific installation, demolished temporary gallery space; fragments of Șerban Savu's wall painting stored in Ziploc bags

For more information, please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro and +49.172.3210711.