

## TEASING MINDS

Exhibition, Workshops, Public Events, Publication  
9 October-14 November 2004

IBON ARANBERRI, BIK VAN DER POL, COPENHAGEN FREE UNIVERSITY, FUCKING GOOD ART, ANDREA GEYER, DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, LOOMPANICS UNLIMITED, STEALTH, STEVAN VUKOVIC and others

Neuropsychologist Ernst Pöppel states that although the human brain is perfectly equipped to register differences, if not sufficiently challenged, it will show a natural tendency to act conservatively. Pöppel's statement coupled with a more general interest in the cultural and urban developments in cities, was a starting point for TEASING MINDS. The resulting questions were explored in relation to the specific context of Munich through workshops, public events and in a publication.

A number of art projects, an art magazine, a publisher, and a series of film screenings approached similar questions but from different points of view. In the exhibition were works by the artists Ibon Aranberri (Bilbao), Copenhagen Free University (Copenhagen), Andrea Geyer (Freiburg/New York), and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (Paris); they formed a spatial, conceptual, and visual setting for the various activities.

A workshop entitled CHALLENGING THE CONSERVATIVE BRAIN was run by Stealth (including the architects Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen, Belgrade/Rotterdam). The aim was to dissect Munich's clichéd image of traditional conservatism and to expose its 'imperfect', often hidden side of parallel cultural scenes and networks. These workshops used the exhibition space as their homebase in three phases and they involved public lectures.

Bik Van der Pol (the artists Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol, Rotterdam) invited the American publisher Loompanics Unlimited to display their publications at Kunstverein München. Loompanics publishes slightly subversive books, which, for instance, teach you how to survive without being connected to the sewage system or electricity board, or how to disappear and never be discovered again - things balancing on the edge of the tolerable and legal. Bik Van der Pol also invited the Rotterdam-based art magazine Fucking Good Art to produce a Munich edition on site during the exhibition period of TEASING MINDS. Together with the curator and critic Stevan Vukovic (Belgrade) and the curatorial team of Kunstverein München, Bik Van der Pol selected a film programme, which was screened 12-14 November at Kunstverein München.

TEASING MINDS is part of the School of Missing Studies (SMS). SMS is an international network of artists, architects, curators, and theoreticians, and aims to provide a flexible platform for international study and exchange on cultural issues related to the urban environment in cities, which have been marked by or are currently undergoing political, social, and cultural transition. SMS does this through facilitating in-depth research and projects by participants who would not otherwise come in contact with each other. SMS projects are developed in the cities of Belgrade, Munich, Rotterdam, Zurich, and New York. SMS Munich was initiated by Bik Van der Pol and Stealth in collaboration with Kunstverein München.  
[[www.schoolofmissingstudies.net](http://www.schoolofmissingstudies.net)]{ [www.schoolofmissingstudies.net](http://www.schoolofmissingstudies.net) }

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER (Paris)  
Atomic Parc (White Version), 2004, video, 6 mins, loop

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster is interested in how space structures feelings in general and desire in particular. In a series of works she has focused on 'tropical modernity'; that is what happens when modernist architecture lands in the periphery. Whereas several earlier works have focused on how a more complex modernity emerges, with feelings and beauty as important components, despite authority and control, Atomic Park (White Version) moves within another 'missing' side of modernity. Atomic Park (White Version) was filmed in White Sands, a section of a desert in New Mexico, where the almost blinding white sand keeps quiet about the fact that an atomic bomb was detonated there. Today, White Sands is home to a nuclear and space research agency.

IBON ARANBERRI (Bilbao)  
(Ir.T. no 513) The Cave, 2003, posters and archival material

In the Basque country, the things that Franco's dictatorship forbade in the city, were done in the mountains in hiding. During the same period, mountaineering was closely linked to Basque culture and nationalism, as were the many caves in the region. This project is based on thorough research of the Aitzgorri mountain range, and focuses on one particular cave, which sits in the middle of an area of exceptional natural beauty that is not easily accessible by car. Ir.T.n° 513 is its scientific code. The cave is an archaeological site and it is also the permanent home of a large colony of bats, which are a protected species. The cave is periodically visited by scientists, and pedagogical excursions are often organised by members of the local nature club. Ibon Aranberri wanted to physically seal off the cave, thereby transforming its original features. To achieve this, he built a flat, opaque metal structure with a door, covering the space at the mouth of the cave. However, the structure leaves enough space for the bats to move freely, and it can be easily dismantled and removed if necessary. (Ir.T. no 513) The Cave has been approved by all the relevant authorities, and has been given all the necessary legal and building permits - the artist keeps one key and another key is made available to all the people and societies involved with the cave. Access to this key is unrestricted and any person wishing to make use of it can. Besides the alterations made to the place, all information about the cave has been reconfigured. The existing maps have been changed, and the installation has been referred to in all archives of the relevant fields of study. For the opening, a group excursion to the cave was organised. The development of this alteration of the landscape will depend on its ability to adapt to its environment. It will rely on the responses it provokes in nearby inhabitants and will have to withstand whatever treatment or aggression befalls it. The installation gains meaning from the place in which it is placed. It connects with the imaginary archetypes of the local culture, where the imbedded romantic tradition still represents pre-history as the great myth of origin. The definition of the collective identity rests heavily on the idea of landscape as a symbolic scenery. Here, the depth of content is trivialised and thus becomes a sign, which hovers between natural science and science fiction.

## STEALTH

(including the architects Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen, Belgrade/Rotterdam)

Challenging the Conservative Brain, workshop, 9 October-14 November

The workshop took a detailed look at the impact of Munich's collectives and networks by using methods borrowed from fields like artificial intelligence and neural science. The start of the project was sparked by a series of interviews with: Hajo Bahner (architect, G34 initiative, Munich), Rüdiger Belter (mini salon, Munich), Michaela Busenkell (architect, a-matter, Munich), Marco Hölzel (architect, Urban Research Cooperative, Munich), Anil Jain (sociologist, publisher, Munich), Lars Mentrup (mathematician, Domagk ateliers, Munich), Courtenay Smith (curator, Lothringer 13, Munich), and Manuela Unverdorben/Ralf Homann (Schleuser.net, Munich/Berlin).

The first session [SOUNDING 9-10 October, production 18-22 October] started with 'detective' work to find out the specific strategies of the initiatives in focus. The second session [MODELLING 23-24 October, production 25-28 October, 1-5 November] discussed what their strategies could be used for, and took those innovations further to a model of what would be an ultimate 'Munich way' of operating. Finally, the third session [ENGINEERING 6-7 November, final presentation 14 November] brought the discoveries made back to the initial initiatives, exploring how their strategies could be 'engineered'.

During three weekends, the topic was thoroughly explored in discussion with the collectives themselves and the participants, as well as through lectures held by experts from various fields: Ernst Pöppel (neuropsychologist, Munich) talked about how the brain actually works (9 October); Gordon Woo (mathematician, catastrophist, and risk management consultant) spoke on successes and failures of terrorist strategies, and on possible innovative approaches to urban culture (23 October); Marko Sancanin (architect, Platforma 981, Zagreb) talked about the reuse of abandoned and vacant spaces for cultural purposes in Zagreb (24 October); and Miran Bozicevic (mathematician, Swarm Intelligences project, Zagreb) spoke about the Swarm Intelligence initiative (6 November). A final presentation on Sunday 14 November brought all the results together. All workshop sessions took place at Kunstverein München.

ANDREA GEYER (Freiburg/New York)

Parallax, 2003, installation with 8 channel-slide projection, 50 mins

The project Parallax investigates the notion of 'citizenship' and 'national belonging', and their role in creating individual and governmental spaces of action. It is staged within the current political and social climate of large US cities. The project takes the form of an eight-channel slide projection in a stylised educational setting. The slides combine text excerpts from news agencies (New York Times, Reuters, AP, CNN, Democracy Now)

with photographs taken in the first six months of 2003 in New York and Los Angeles, and a group of staged photographs that follow a female protagonist on her way through her everyday. Just as the photographs of the street scenes establish a reference to a certain knowledge that describes how the locations they depict function, the introduction of the anonymous protagonist describes the relation of the individual to media information, to the state, and its politics, shown as a structural element of the systems described. To a certain extent, the figure also embodies the question of how the anticipatory and emancipatory practices of acting subjects relate to actual political interrelations. The character's appearance is marked by the artist's positionality in the work. Yet she is not an alter ego - instead, the protagonist in Parallax is a kind of universal character, fleetingly but nevertheless distinctively marked by the specificity of her external appearance in the picture, and the significance of that in regards to the unfolding events. In addition to the staged scenes, the photographs of Parallax also show the periphery of mass demonstrations against the US invasion of Iraq and against domestic restrictions accompanying foreign policy aggression, such as changes in immigration laws and the surreptitious redefinition of the rights of citizens, as well as administrative situations such as courthouses, waiting rooms, libraries, but also the increasing presence of state executives, such as military and police in public spaces. The text excerpts reflect in one way or another on issues surrounding basic duties and constitutional rights of American citizens and their constant subversion through the government. In their combination, the news reports often go beyond the actual communication of events or facts, and reveal their claim of 'objective reporting' in relation to the immanent, constant rewriting of those events and histories.

BIK VAN DER POL (Rotterdam)

(the artists Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol, Rotterdam)

Loompanics Unlimited, a selection of books, 2001-2004

Loompanics Unlimited is a publishing and bookselling company specialising in odd, unusual, controversial, and unpredictable books with an emphasis on questioning authority. They bring out 15 titles per year in addition to the 150 new titles that they offer from other publishers. They have been in business since 1978 and are based in Port Townsend, Washington. Loompanics publishes on money-making opportunities, underground economy, privacy and hiding things, fake IDs, conducting investigations, crime and police science, prison, locks and locksmithing, self-defence, revenge, guns, weapons, bombs, explosives, guerrilla warfare, murder, death and torture, survival, self-sufficiency, shelter, paralegal skills, heresy/weird ideas, outlaw history, anarchism and egoism, reality creation, etc. The wide variety of titles include: How to Hide Things in Public Places, How to Determine Undisclosed Financial Interests, How to Build a Nuclear Bomb, How to Start Your Own Country, Uninhabited Ocean Islands, and Satellite Imagery for the Masses. The selection in TEASING MINDS was made by Bik Van der Pol. Loompanics is, as they say themselves, for knowledge, fun, and pleasure; for the unlimited possibilities of each individual, the spirituality of human freedom, and the resistance against tyranny. Some books in their catalogue deal with activities and methods which, when really executed, would conflict with federal, state, and local law. Loompanics does not advocate breaking the law: their books are sold for information purposes only. Loompanics recommends interested readers to contact the authorities before realising a project based on the information in their books. Loompanics is occupying a niche: they claim by their production a free space where one could think. Everything produced inside and by a society or community can, in reality, also be used against it; a double-sidedness we sometimes experience the hard way. Radicalism then leads to destruction. The consequence of a free choice between concept and reality can only be thought over in a nuanced way, once difference from the existing norm is also tolerated.

[[www.loompanics.com](http://www.loompanics.com)]{[www.loompanics.com](http://www.loompanics.com)}; [[www.bikvanderpol.net](http://www.bikvanderpol.net)]{[www.bikvanderpol.net](http://www.bikvanderpol.net)}

FUCKING GOOD ART

(the artists Rob Hamelijnck and Nienke Terpsma, Rotterdam)

Art-zine invited by Bik Van der Pol

Fucking Good Art is an art-zine published in print and online, about cultural happenings, screenings, exhibitions, and other art events in Rotterdam, and is written in a direct language. Since 2003, Rob Hamelijnck and Nienke Terpsma invite friends, artists, filmmakers, curators, and architects to write reviews, comments, and observations about local events. Fucking Good Art is not academic but written from the moment in a direct style. It is free and bi-monthly. For TEASING MINDS a Munich edition with local contributors was produced and published. During its preparation, daily posters with quotes and reactions to the events of the exhibition were posted around Munich, leaving a daily residue of its presence in the city. The release of the Munich edition took place at Kunstverein München, Sunday 31 October, with a performance by Evil Knievel.

[[www.fuckinggoodart.nl](http://www.fuckinggoodart.nl)]{[www.fuckinggoodart.nl](http://www.fuckinggoodart.nl)}

The München-edition contains contributions by:

Hajo Bahner  
Dagmar Baumann  
Klaus vom Bruch  
Anja Casser  
Susanne Clausen and Pawlo Kerestey  
Beate Engl  
Rob Hamelijnc  
Tone Hansen  
Evil Knievel (performance)  
Alma Larsen  
Bo Christian Larsson and Carsten Recksik  
Nienke Terpsma

COPENHAGEN FREE UNIVERSITY  
(the artists Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen, Copenhagen)  
posters and sound, 2001-2003, 15 mins, loop

'Our practical conclusion is the following: we are abandoning all efforts at pedagogical action and moving toward experimental activity' - this quote by Asger Jorn (Imaginist Bauhaus) stands as an introduction to the philosophy and activities of Copenhagen Free University (CFU). The CFU opened in May 2001 in the flat of Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen. CFU is an artist-run institution dedicated to the production of critical consciousness and poetic language. They do not accept the so-called new knowledge economy as the framed understanding of knowledge. Instead, they work with forms of knowledge that are fleeting, fluid, schizophrenic, uncompromisingly subjective, uneconomic, a-capitalist, produced in the kitchen, produced when asleep, or developed on a social excursion - collectively. They explore and put at play notions such as refusal, evacuation, and inactivity. The CFU is open by appointment. In TEASING MINDS they showed a selection of posters, as well as a recording of a reading of their manifesto.  
[[www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk](http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk)]{[www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk](http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk)}