

Glaser/Kunz: Homeless  
Curated by Chiara Canali

from June, 1st - September 30th, 2011, Palazzo Malipiero, Salizzada Malipiero, San Marco 3198, I-Venezia / Boat Stop: Line 2 - S. Samuele- Palazzo Grassi  
open from Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.



### **Glaser/Kunz: HOMELESS**

Over the years, Swiss artists Daniel Glaser and Magdalena Kunz have devised a complex conceptual and performative architecture based on their distinctive use of new technologies to combine the three-dimensional form of sculpture with the digital projection of the gestures and voices of real people. With their *Talking Heads* or Cinematographic Sculptures, as they call them, the two artists generate a rather

unsettling real-life effect by perfectly matching their video recordings to fit the three-dimensional moulds they have made of their characters' heads.

In their latest piece, *Obsidian, Gordon & Austin*, the characters sit huddled together close to the ground on cardboard boxes or camouflaged within sleeping bags. The words they speak address dreams and visions, hopes and fears, desires and regrets, illusions and hallucinations. They address universal sentiments shared by all of us who seek to cope with the worries and pressures of a day-to-day life increasingly dominated by insecurity and existential anxiety. The condition of the three homeless men can be interpreted figuratively as a metaphor of life itself with its ceaseless quest for identity and meaning, while the place that hosts them might represent the non-places of ultra-modernity typically featuring an almost coincidental mingling of lives and existences.

By concealing the technology that animates the sculpture, the work of Glaser/Kunz makes a multi-sensory, kinesthetic impact that conjures a strong semblance to virtual reality and effectively elicits the spectator's empathy and involvement. The characters are indeed captivating; they stare deep into our eyes and draw us into their discussions, making us imagine that we're looking at live people. Despite the ethereal and immaterial nature of the artist's technology of choice – video projection – their virtual mimesis is unmistakably psychosensory and physical, being based on sculpture and performance: the body is the motif of this interactive art and its technological artifacts.

Chiara Canali

## **Cinematographic Sculptures**

**Chiara Canali: A striking aspect of your work is that it takes viewers a moment to realise that the figures they see are not real people acting out a real performance.**

**Glaser/Kunz:** In a sense that's why our 'Cinematographic Sculptures' could also be described as 'Sculptural Performances'. The aspect of performance is essential to these works. But there is a very important distinction because our 'Sculptural Performances' are here to stay in their physical entirety, in contrast to performances on stage or the performances presented in museums and galleries in the 1960s and 1970s. They cannot survive except in the photographs or films that document them.

**Narration is no doubt an essential element in your work. You start with a story, which your characters tell through their dialogues and verbal digressions. How come you often use the interrogative form, repeatedly posing pressing questions?**

Using questions is a way of challenging yourself. It makes you search for an answer. We ask ourselves questions but viewers are also addressed and inevitably get involved. Many visitors have left their own answers at our exhibitions.

**What is your relationship with the public? Who are the potential addressees of**

## **your work?**

Our work aims at crossing over; ideally, it makes viewers active. For instance, *Jonathan* portrays a collector in a wheelchair and *Autoportrait* is a kind of self-portrait of ourselves in a coupé car. In both cases we wanted to get out of the confines of the museum space and approach the public in a direct way out on the street. Just as we involve people in our work who are outside of the conventional art framework, we also want to reach a public that does not ordinarily seek out contemporary art.

## **In what way do you exploit new media and digital technology to develop work that has a strong aesthetic quality?**

The new technologies mean that art can develop in time, it no longer has to be static. That has opened up so many new possibilities in dealing with the third and fourth dimensions, with time and space. As mentioned, you can leave the Museum, you can engage visitors, you can be open-ended...

## **Your latest work, presented in Venice as part of the Biennale program, is entitled *Homeless*, and is the result of a stay in New York, during which you worked with several homeless people. What made you choose them and not, say, people you know personally?**

We live in a time of great instability and uncertainty and having “no fixed abode” is an existential condition. This project was also inspired by our encounter with a lady in Turin who was very dignified and well groomed, although she had “no fixed abode”. Later, in South Africa and New York, we met many remarkable and interesting people who had lived on the street for a long time and gradually started writing poetry.

## **Is there anything else that is especially important to you?**

We are interested in simplicity and efficiency, as understood by the American Wooster Group company in their theory of drama, and by Samuel Beckett in his theater.

Edited by Cathrine Schelbert

**Daniel Glaser was born in 1968 in Olten. Magdalena Kunz was born in 1972 in Zurich.**

**They live and work in Zurich and Turin.**

### **Selected recent solo shows:**

- 2011 Loft Project Etagi, St. Petersburg  
GAS, Turin
- 2010 Annapril, Munich
- 2009 The Pool NYC, Venice

Museum für zeitgenössische Kunst/Neue Sächsische Galerie, Chemnitz  
2008 Blank Projects, Cape Town, South Africa  
Gagliardi Art System, Turin

**Selected recent group shows:**

2011 THEMUSEUM, Waterloo, Ontario  
2010 Lichttage Winterthur  
Kunstmuseum Thurgau  
2009 12th International Exhibition of Sculptures and Installations, Carrara  
Fondazione Menegaz, Castelbasso (TE)

**Current events:**

*VETO*

Gagliardi Art System  
Via Cervino 16, Turin, Italy  
Until July 3, 2011

*Nairs Resonanzen*

Nairs, Scuol, Switzerland  
June 18 – September 9, 2011

**Reference gallery:**

Gagliardi Art System, Turin



