

2012

“I am part of all that I have met;
yet all experience is an arch wherethro’.
Gleams that untravell’d world, whose margin fades.
For ever and for ever when I move.”
Alfred Lord Tennyson, Ulysses, 1833

Dear Miss Nasty, dear Franziska,

This poem is an avowal made by the restless Odysseus, who cannot wait to set to sea again and leave his homeland. You too will leave Nida in a few hours, and I am giving you this letter to take with you on your journey home to Hamburg. It reminded me of you and your artistic practice, because you have told me about your passion for sailors (women as well as men), and all your work is infused with wanderlust, sailing, colonial history and global pop culture. I have visited you in your studio many times, and for weeks there have been large-format cut-outs of tattoo motifs on the wall, reaching down to the floor. The poster series “Never say ever” and the texts you found and wrote yourself are all about viewing your own life and its day-to-day occurrences as a journey. You jump on board events, observe them, get closer, participate and record them. You stage-manage what has happened retrospectively as a heterochronic event composed of diverse occurrences both experienced and not experienced – made up of situations, ideas, e-mail conversations, personal conversations, music, books and image material. These factual and imaginary events flow into photographs and texts that you compile to create scenographic posters that you print onto simple copier paper and paste onto rice paper. The sentences, titles and texts on your posters are idiosyncratic, contradictory and at times cryptic. Who is Barry Better, who are the Nasties and whom are you addressing when you speak to “The Nidden Women”? Your yearning for ambiguities, false truths and “glowing energies within cool sands” (to use your words) is communicated by almost all the posters speak. Your exhibition created during your two-month stay at the Nida Art Colony and the publication “Never say ever” are evidence that the people you encountered and the experiences you shared with them have shaped you irrevocably – as with the words that poet Alfred Lord Tennyson gave to Odysseus: “I am part of all that I’ve met”. Your posters refer to things that have made an impression on you, and they colonise these experiences with imaginary, crazy/displaced (in German: ver-rückt) data. For instance everyone understands your formulation “one lunatico selfportrait” and yet “lunatico” is an Italian word that has lost its way in an English description. For years you have been collecting professional and private e-mails, SMS messages, song lyrics, typographies, conversations, slogans, photos, self-portraits, vinyl records, MP3s, Herbert Hoffmann’s motif boards, poems and stories. Almost all the material in your archive is related to situations that you have experienced together with other people on different days and in different places. You invent a title retrospectively, appropriate the pictures and texts that you have and pre-date the event back into the past. What remains only as a trace, like the strands of hair on the floor in your first poster “The Baltic Cut” at the start of your residency on 1st June 2012. Settings you stumbled upon, such as the locks of hair on the floor after the haircut, or the supposed “Child’s Room” with its clumsily-hung posters of Johnny Depp, Andy Warhol and yourself (that’s you behind the mask, right?) in “Home

Sweet Hamburg” turn into ready-mades for your retrospectively stage-managed daydreams on paper. One of your favourite singers Hildegard Knef also holds onto long-gone moments in her ballads – moments which can however pop back into our consciousness at any time as a result of ‘*mémoire involuntaire*’ as expounded by Proust.

“Der Hut meiner Mutter im Kleiderschrank,
Geruch von Kaffee im Flur,
die Angst vor dem Mann auf Zigarrenplakat,
der Schuh, der den ersten Falter zertrat...”

Hildegard Knef, *Eisblumen*, 1970

(My mother's hat in the wardrobe, / Smell of coffee in the hall, / Fear of the man on the cigar billboard, / The shoe that stamped on the first moth...)

When I look at your posters, I recognise that you are in search of this immediate, vivid memory that is governed by coincidence and can surface at any time. Your deliberately playful approach to typography, the smashed ostrich eggs, the pseudo-Caribbean pattern on the bed linen at the Nida Art Colony, the pink bubble-wrap covering an unknown picture or the advert from East Prussia with the laughing sausages from the book “Parallel Memories” play on the absent witness idea – nobody apart from you and a few initiated people were present at the announced events. Despite this – or precisely because of it – your radio show “Straight from da heart” on 11th July 2012 at 9 pm on Neringa FM was dedicated to your friends, your family and any unknown listeners anywhere in the world who were able to think back to past moments, moods and experiences. Yet your soundtrack is not just about memory, but more than anything else it is about enjoying the present, about producing wishes for the future, and about community. In this book you invite the reader to enter the names of their “buddies”, quote their influences and finally to open up all the double pages of the book and hang up their personal favourite as a poster. In the hands of your readers, your posters turn into proclamations of a daily journey to unknown shores.

The Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro recently declared in a discussion about “Assemblages: Félix Guattari and Machinic Animism”, that he is interested in how the past attaches itself to a subject, or how the subject would be feasible as a “material subject”. It is of elementary importance to the indigenous peoples of the Amazon that they should create a body. The thing is, for them it is the body – not the soul – that makes people human. Because of this, all techniques that exist in this context, such as jewellery, make-up, tattoos, wounds or body painting serve as agents to create the body for Viveiros de Castro. In your tattoo sessions with your colleagues and culture-producing friends, you also understand the body to be a pre-dyed and folded piece of paper on which you draw. Each of your tattoos reflects the context of its origin and the individual story of your collaborators. For instance I have been walking around with two dots and a hand-drawn X on my body since 12th July 2012, and French artist Sophie Bellot has an orbital axis consisting of dots around her torso, which starts on the inside of her wrist, snakes round over her shoulder, back and the outside of her upper arm, finishing in the same place it began. The dots tattooed onto our bodies communicate with each other, just as all entities, objects and living beings in the animistic philosophy do. And whilst I am on the subject of animism, I think of the large number of palm trees in your exhibition gallery in the Orangery in the Catholic Church in Nida for your “Never say ever” exhibition from 18th July to 31st August 2012. The “Never say ever”

exhibition gallery reminds me of Walter Benjamin's description of the photographic studio towards the end of the 19th century that he recalls in the light of a bizarre childhood portrait of Franz Kafka around 1888. In this picture, Kafka – then about six – poses adorned and decorated amidst an over-the-top composition, looking sad for the camera. In his left hand he holds an oversized hat and in his right a staff, whilst he gazes past the palm branch at a point beyond the edge of the picture. As a result, Benjamin viewed the photo studios around the turn of the century as a mixture of torture chamber and throne room. Tapestries, easels, palm branches and drapery were just as likely to be found in the photographic studios as in middle-class dwellings, because they embodied the insatiable yearning for something different far beyond one's own four walls. Against this background I understand your decision in favour of this multifunctional corridor on the way to the chapel as an orientation towards over-the-top décor. This humid greenhouse for palms and plants that have outgrown the residents of Nida is also "tropical" in a wider sense – a waiting room for dreams that have grown too big. Along with the posters and their unknown variables, your "Creatures of the Curonian Lagoon", it poses puzzles that send the thoughts of each and every one of us on a journey into uncertainty.

I hope you have a good flight and I'm really looking forward to receiving your reply.

Yours, Ulrike

P.S. My X hasn't healed yet.

Franziska Nast was born in 1982 and is the current holder of the artist-in-residence scholarship awarded by the Goethe-Institut in the Nida Art Colony in Lithuania. She lives and works as an artist, communication designer and publisher in Hamburg.

Pun on the line "Freitags ist sie **nie da**" (She's never there on Fridays) from the song "Die da!?" by German hip-hop band Die Fantastischen Vier, Berlin, 1992.

In German: "Ich bin ein Teil von allem, das ich traf. Doch jede Erfahrung ist nur ein Tor, durch das jene unbereiste Welt hindurchschimmert, deren Rand verblasst für immer und ewig, sobald ich mich bewege."

The spelling "ver-rückt" is derived from Martin Heidegger's essay collection "Holzwege" (Off the Beaten Track), written between 1936-1946.

This formulation is in the announcement text of your invitation to the radio show "Straight from da heart" on 11th July 2012 at 9 pm on Radio Neringa FM, published at <http://www.neringafm.lt/>.

lunatico is also a reference to the 15th song of a total of 18 songs on the radio show: "Mi Confesion" by the Gotan Project from the album Lunatico (2006), length 4:21.

Max Popov, Parallel Memory. 150 Years of Königsberg and Kaliningrad History in Photographs, Kaliningrad 2012.

Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato: Assemblages: Félix Guattari and Machinic Animism. In:

e-flux Journal #36, 07/2012. See: HYPERLINK "<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/assemblages-felix-guattari-and-machinic-animism/>"<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/assemblages-felix-guattari-and-machinic-animism/> Last accessed on 26.07.2012, 13:57.

See: Walter Benjamin, Short History of Photography, Berlin 1931