

Let's Talk About Nationalism! Between Ideology and Identity

February 4th – April 25th, 2010

Participating artists: Nanna Debois Buhl (Copenhagen / New York), Jens Haaning (Copenhagen), Raul Keller (Tallinn), Eva Labotkin (Tallinn/Tartu), Tanja Muravskaja (Tallinn), John Phillip Mäkinen (Helsinki), Csaba Nemes (Budapest), Audrius Novickas (Vilnius), Danilo Prnjat (Belgrade), Johannes Paul Raether (Berlin), Joanna Rajkowska (Warsaw), R.E.P. Group (Kiev), Twożywo (Warsaw), Shlomi Yaffe (Prague), Katarina Zdjelar (Rotterdam) and Artur Żmijewski (Warsaw)

Curator: Rael Artel

Download exhibition catalogue:

http://www.publicpreparation.org/failid/hp/Kumu_A4_lores.pdf

"Let's Talk About Nationalism! Between Ideology and Identity" is an international exhibition of contemporary art, and its goal is to pose critical questions about contemporary nationalism, to acknowledge the problematic nature of the currently prevalent national discourse, and to create a counterweight in the public sphere. This exhibition project reviews and analyses the complex cultural and political process through which a nationalist ideology becomes a national identity, and also looks at its mutual relationships and negative aspects.

It is difficult to overrate the topical nature of national issues. In the local Estonian cultural space, some of the events that have caused the greatest confrontations, anger and violence in recent years have been conflicts over monuments that perpetuate different treatments of history. From Europe and the world come constant stories of illegal immigrants and the Schengen visa space, as well as news of right-wing extremists and racially-motivated crimes committed by neo-Nazis. Who can live in Estonia and Europe and under what conditions? Who has the right to have a say in local matters? Who can demand political rights and who must simply be content with the opportunity to earn and to consume? The nationalist way of thinking has been welded into the collective mentality to such an extent that casting any doubts on it is seen as inappropriate. The exhibition project "Let's Talk About Nationalism! Between Identity and Ideology" dares to raise doubts and invites us to once again review the mechanisms of collective self-awareness in the context of the contemporary world.

A number of internationally active artists working primarily from a critical approach have been invited to participate in this exhibition and to display both earlier works and pieces that have been adapted to the Estonian cultural context or made specifically for the Kumu Art Museum exhibition. The works displayed in the project are conditionally divided into three groups: ideological habits, reproduction of a nation and conflicts. This exhibition will cast doubt on the dominant national agenda's, which are spared (self-)criticism, and will approach the topic of contemporary nationalism from many different sides. Considering the specifics of

an art museum geared to a wider audience, we have avoided focusing on a narrow aspect of the issue and have instead decided to create a more panoramic picture. There are no complete answers or standard solutions at this exhibition – just questions. The choice of works might be characterized as a selection that is as open as possible and maps the area to the widest possible extent. Each work here is a potential premise for wider discussion.

The project "Let's Talk About Nationalism! Between Identity and Ideology" was prepared by a series of events called "Public Preparation", which on one hand is the format of collective work to map and understand contemporary nationalism and the issues of critical art practices and, on the other hand, it functions as a curatorial strategy to gather and systematize positions and concepts. All the meetings of "Public Preparation", during which this exhibition was prepared and its conceptual framework produced, studied the links between contemporary art and the daily social reality that has been shaped by nationalist ideology. More detailed information on "Public Preparation" project is available in www.publicpreparation.org.

The exhibition has been fully translated into Estonian, Russian and English. Press photos are available in <http://digikogu.ekm.ee/lisa/press>
Media partner of the exhibition is artishok.blogspot.com
An extensive education programme, supported by the Open Estonia Foundation, will accompany the exhibition.

Events:

February 4th at 12 p.m.

Artist talks with Joanna Rajkowska (at 12 p.m.), Jens Haaning (at 2 p.m.) and Csaba Nemes (at 4 p.m.) will take place at the Education Centre in Kumu.

February 9th at 6 p.m.

A screening of 'The State of Exception Proved to Be the Rule'. Dir. Eduard Freudmann and Jelena Radić, Serbia, 2008, 84 min. In Serbian, with English subtitles.

March 9th at 6 p.m.

A screening of 'Rocking The Nation'. Dir. Borbala Kriza, Hungary, 2007, 70 min. In Hungarian, with English subtitles

March 30th at 6 p.m.

A screening of 'Letter from Moldova'. Dir. Joanne Richardson, Romania, 2009, 28 min. In Romanian, with English subtitles;
and 'Red Tours'. Dir. Joanne Richardson and David Rych, Romania/Germany, 2010, 50 min. Different languages, with English subtitles

A series of discussions, meetings and artist talks will take place during the exhibition in the Public Preparation Social Club (in the education room, on the 5th floor of Kumu). Additional information in media and mailing-lists.

Publications:

The exhibition is accompanied with a trilingual catalogue, which is edited by Rael Artel, designed by Jaan Evert, and published by the Art Museum of Estonia. The catalogue is free and also downloadable here (1.7Mb): http://www.publicpreparation.org/failid/hp/Kumu_A4_lores.pdf

The reader 'Public Preparation – Contemporary Nationalism and Critical Art Practices' which will document the "Public Preparation" project and contextualize the show will be published during the exhibition.

Sponsors:

The exhibition would not be possible without kind support by Danish Arts Council, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tallinn, Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonian Cultural Endowment, Estonian Ministry of Culture, Finnish Institute, Goethe Institute, Hungarian Institute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Mondriaan Foundation, and Open Estonia Foundation.