

Nada Beros

**Nina Fischer and Maroan el Sani:
Archaeology of transition and collective amnesia**

Nina Fischer (Emden, 1965) and Maroan el Sani (Duisburg, 1966), have been working as a pair since 1993. In their work they most often make use of photography, film, video and installation. One of their central themes is transition, going-over from one state to another. It is the very moment of transition that is the elusive spot that they attempt to record in their lens of camera or video camera. In a series of works at the end of the nineties and the beginning of the new century these artists investigate the problem of abandoned premises and the possibility of changing their use. Working in Berlin, in a city in which the traces of the half-century-long division into East and West are still visible, they have such places as part of their everyday reality, but they are also spots of collective amnesia (Palast der Republik Part 1-3, 2001.-2004.; =-273,15°C=,0 Kelvin, 2004). It need arouse no wonder that Fischer and El Sani, who are anyway very sensitive to slight shifts in the social issue, easily found suitable material for the development of a project started off in Berlin and continued in Liverpool under the common title Phantom Clubs (1998-1999). Occupied with the urban youth culture, in this project they explored the subculture places in Berlin and then in Liverpool, photographing them by day, when these places reveal nothing of their real purposes, go into clubs and into places that might very well be turned into club hang-outs. In Zagreb the initial idea about phantom clubs turned into a wide-ranging enquiry into abandoned and hidden places, meant for a narrow and dedicated set of visitors, which the artists put into four categories. What fascinated them in Zagreb was the speed with which the places varied, witnessing to the rapid social changes that happened in this part of Europe during the last twenty or so years. Hence they called the project Zagreb Turbo Nightclubs, alluding to the speed of the motor, but also to the turbofolk phenomenon that they met here for the first time.

In a series of 21 photos, though the restricted optics of clubbing, the artists track the turbulent social changes that remain concealed to the superficial eye. Like archaeologists of the transition, they detect and peel off layers of epochs that have an ever-shorter life. The cult clubs of the eighties, in the time of communism, had another appearance and a pro-western public; the nineties, with the war and the transition brought on the one hand the exclusive clubs for the young, and on the other the minority turbofolk clubs. The new millennium has brought pluralist tendencies, where alongside each other there are the abandoned squats now meant for exclusive visitors, institutes of clubs, study places in a sense, often grant-aided by foreign foundations, the city or the state, populist places on the edge of town with the most diverse of publics.

The artists give back a work that was created in the public space to the public space – in the form of posters that will illegally occupy the places of the previous clubs and places of some future gatherings.

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