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by Carola Plazek

One doesn't inhabit a world in the space of ten days, of course, but perhaps what is important is to allow experiences to happen at all and, therefore, to make a decision in favor of experience. Merely being present in a foreign place for such a short time, working on an art project that also absorbs one's concentration, can also open up windows in one's own consciousness. Yet it is a naïve assumption that being present would, moreover, also constitute correspondences with the country of Georgia and its conditions; here, too, a difference between the collective and individual approaches must be considered. It is also difficult to be invited to make an artistic statement that makes reference to the situation of a place, as well as to be expected by the organizers to produce a statement. How could art, whose appearance in a certain sense is released from political coordinates, because as art it always also rises above these, at the same time and self-evidently also be shaped precisely by them. How can art by Austrian artists, or art from Schengen-EU, speak from this situation, without a determining stance, without seeming paternalistic, without bringing in our discourses on freedom as the only valid stance, with flags flying? How could an artistic production that is already aware of facing this kind of demand, escape the danger of making authoritarian or even well-intended, nevertheless postcolonial claims?

Being: artist in residence and in the country of Georgia - to tell what that can mean, besides, or perhaps: going beyond the known political coordinates. It first constitutes a possibility to follow the history of impact which we, given our lack of experience regarding the events of war and diaspora, and the associated fear of these, perhaps somehow imagine, since even the smallest bits of information are known to be sufficient to initiate fantasies. Nevertheless, they would typically remain sterile even if each of us from Vienna had a different one. Our images are first associated with the views with which we are familiar and also on the critique thereof. The discursive critiques of a view make visible to us its vulnerability and the necessity of critique. Yet, we have not left this view behind because of its critique: we do not yet have another one.

The idea of the magnitude of social shifts due to a catastrophe such as a war that breaks out randomly - in Georgia the word tectonic is heard frequently to describe it - can only be first a stutter, and the view a fragmented one.

These problems were present from the onset of this undertaking. A central figure of the project curated by Tina Bepperling was to bring into play mutual dependencies - or communication - into the stories. Thanks to this kind of understanding and exploration, and in connection with one's own impressions, a picture can be created that remains undoubtedly subjective and that rises above the clichéd concepts that we are all bound to carry with us. It might be valuable for all participants to know that the conversations are centered around both the perceptible emotions such as agony, depression, and the effects of being unable to act (helplessness) and the simultaneous search to see in the initiatives for utopian designs a reason for positive movement. And their effects have been inscribed in the artworks.

The artistic positions of Gilbert Bretterbauer, Tina Bepperling, gangart (Simonetta Ferfaglia, Heinrich Pichler) and Isabel Becker, who comprise the "Austrian Pavilion," are autonomously developed projects, that is, they neither refer to one another nor to any kind of common grouping to which the curatorial idea was intended to apply. Pavilion is a purely operational title, which offers an invisible platform to the country and project groupings; it is possible to understand this in whatever way possible.

The four artworks function first independently, connected with the location as much as the wish to put something into motion through art. And in this they also produce a meshwork. For, in their negotiation of the concepts of freedom, adaptation and communication, suddenly the thoroughly heterogeneous approaches indeed come together. If the artworks themselves also embrace these practices, and display them in a formal sense, then they will be believable and appropriate in their language; they will really invite reflection about the parameters of possibility. That is one of the gifts that art can give us all.

(Translated by Charlotte Eckler)