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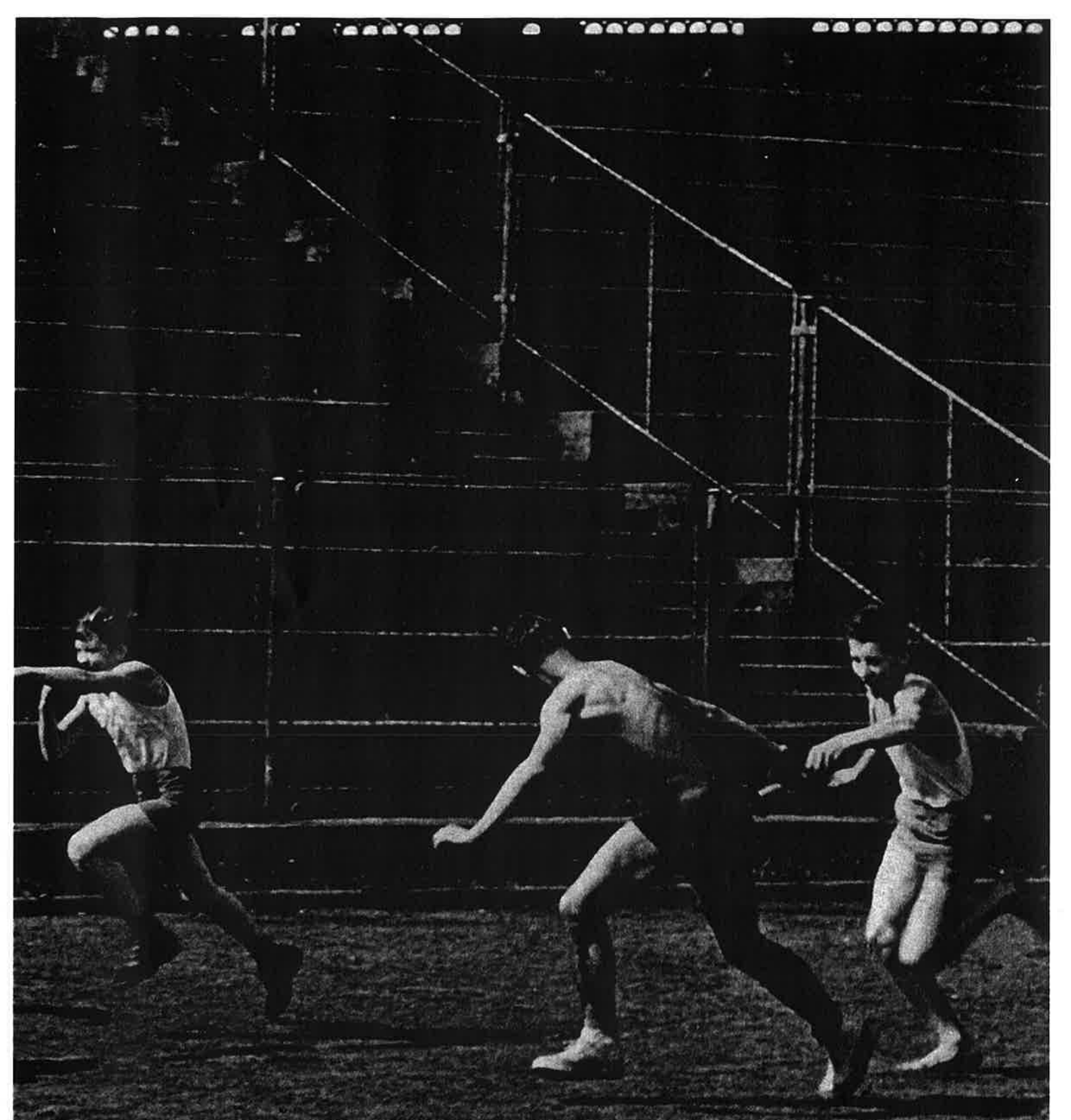
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CODERED Brazil Prostitutes puts on a fashion show at the 27. São Paulo Biennial

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Tadej Pogačar &
P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E.

muzej sodobne umetnosti
Museum of Contemporary Art

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Cristina Freire

Muzej in umetniška razstava sta premični interaktivni strukturi, ki lahko spodbudita različne diskurzivne platforme.

Delo *CODE:RED* Tadeja Pogačarja je nastajalo na različnih krajih v sodelovanju z lokalnimi organizacijami aktivistov, povezanimi s seksualnimi delavkami. Projekt, ki je bil predstavljen na 27. bienalu v São Paulu (2006), ne obravnava samo specifičnih družbenih mobilizacij, temveč tudi protislovja, ki obstajajo znotraj umetniškega sistema samega.

Z vključitvijo marginalizirane skupine prostitutk v prostor bienala v São Paulu se umetniško področje obrne na glavo. Njihova prisotnost namreč ponovno opredeli prostor, s tem

The museum and the art exhibition are mobile structures of interaction, capable of mobilizing diverse discursive platforms.

Tadej Pogačar's *CODE:RED* has been carried out in different places and in cooperation with local activist organizations involved with the rights of sex workers. The project presented at the 27th São Paulo Biennial (2006) dealt not only with specific forms of social mobilization but also with contradictions that exist within the art system itself.

By including prostitutes, a marginalized group, in the São Paulo Biennial, the artistic space is displayed inside out. This distortion gives it new meaning by abruptly exposing the

ko se na surov način izpostavijo družbeni mehanizmi izključevanja, stigme in predsodkov, ki ločujejo vsakdanje življenje in dogajanje na ulici od globalnega in medijskega sveta umetnosti.

Tadej Pogačar je svoj prostor na bienalu v São Paulu delil z nevladno organizacijo prostitutk Davida in tako predlagal drugačne možne načine življenja in sobivanja.

Na bienalu se je tako ponudila priložnost za prezentacijo/reprezentacijo drugosti. Umetnik kot posrednik disonanc je v enega izmed najpomembnejših spomenikov moderne brazilske arhitekture, monumentalno Palačo industrij Oscarja Niemeyerja iz petdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja, v kateri poteka bienale, povabil seksualne delavke, katerih prisotnost je dosegla višek na anarhistični in dionizični modni reviji/zabavi. Tako je bilo z združenjem osrednjega in obrobnega v prostoru, prežetem z močjo **umetniške legitimnosti, vzpostavljeno območje napetosti. V tej diskurzivni platformi, ki je razstava sama, lahko izraz »seksualna delavka« spodbudi tudi druge dialektične pomene.**

»Prostitucija lahko zahteva, da se šteje za delo od trenutka, ko se delo prelevi v prostitucijo,« piše Walter Benjamin, ko razmišlja o modernizmu. Tej hegemonistični in evropski modernosti se zoperstavljajo druge modernosti, razpršene in neskladne s splošno sprejetimi normami. Gre za različne modernosti, ki so si v dialektičnem nasprotju, izvirajočem iz različnih, prekrivajočih se libidinalnih in finančnih ekonomij. Projekt *CODE:RED* je del umetnikovega širšega projekta, ki vključuje obsežno raziskavo modelov neformalne ekonomije, aktivizma in samoorganizacije. V tem smislu njegova strategija spodbuja dinamiko, ki poruši pomen vidnega in marginalizirane postavi v ospredje.

Takšna poetična in politična operacija, neke vrste situacijski *détournement*, napeljuje na subverzivno dejanje, saj ponuja drugačno soočenje vidnega z nevidnim. Strateška in taktična moč projekta Tadeja Pogačarja je v tem, da prekinja odnose, ki smo jih vajeni. Središča pozornosti se premešajo in pozornost javnosti se usmeri k pogosto izključenim spektrom družbe, kar privede do preloma na domnevno nevtralnem področju umetnosti.

Za izvedbo dela Tadeja Pogačarja v Braziliji je bilo treba najti lokalne sogovornike in tako je prišlo do srečanja z Gabrielo Leite iz nevladne organizacije Davida. Njena politična agenda prostitutke je bila jasno **izražena že v kontrakulturi šestdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja ter je kasneje neposredno vodila k zahtevam za državljanske pravice in družbeno delovanje prostitutk v izobraževanju, zdravstvu in zakonodaji.**

Bivanje Tadeja Pogačarja kot rezidenčnega umetnika v Rio de Janeiru in njegovo sodelovanje s skupino Davida sta **bila ključna za premislek o tem, kako bi lahko *CODE:RED* umestili v brazilski kontekst. Umetnik je tako s privolitvijo skupine prevzel projekt modne znamke Daspu z osnovno idejo**

social mechanisms of exclusion, stigma, and prejudice, which separate everyday life and street life from the global and media worlds of art.

Tadej Pogačar shared his space at the São Paulo Biennial with Davida, a non-governmental organization that works on behalf of prostitutes, and through this gesture proposed other possible ways of living and co-existing.

The Biennial thus opened the door to the presentation/representation of alterity. As an agent of dissonance, the artist invited sex workers into one of the most important symbols of modern Brazilian architecture, the monumental Palace of Industries, a project by Oscar Niemeyer from the 1950s, where the Biennial is held. Here the presence of prostitutes culminated in an anarchic Dionysian fashion show/party. A zone of tension was installed in the exhibition space as the centre and margins collided, magnetized with the power of artistic legitimacy. The expression "sex worker" can also activate other dialectic meanings in the discursive platform that is the exhibition.

"Prostitution can lay claim to being considered work the moment work becomes prostitution," Walter Benjamin writes as he contemplates the notion of modernity. Hegemonic European modernity is contrasted with other modernities - decentralized and dissonant to the generally accepted standards. The different modernities stand in a dialectical opposition that derives from overlapping and conflicting libidinal and financial economies. *CODE:RED* is part of a wider project in which Pogačar extensively researches models of the informal economy, activism, and self-organization. In this regard, his strategy promotes a dynamic that subverts the meaning of the visible and places the marginalized in the foreground.

Such a poetical and political operation, a kind of Situationist *détournement*, is implied in an act of subversion that proposes a different confrontation of the visible with the invisible. The strategic and tactical potential of Tadej Pogačar's project suspends the relationships we are used to. The centre of attention is shuffled and public attention attracted by the frequently invisibilized spectres of society, provoking a split in the supposed neutral territory of art.

Seeking local interlocutors for his work in Brazil, Pogačar met with Gabriela Leite of Davida. Leite's political agenda as a prostitute was already well defined in the counterculture of the 1960s, which later led her directly to demanding civil rights for prostitutes and civic actions in the areas of education, health-care, and legislation.

Pogačar's stay in Rio de Janeiro as an artist-in-residence and his collaboration with Davida were fundamental in helping him understand how *CODE:RED* could fit in the Brazilian context; thus, with Davida's agreement, the artist adopted the idea of presenting the evolution of their project Daspu, a fashion label designed by prostitutes and intended for their use.

predstaviti razvoj kreiranja blagovne znamke oblačil, ki so jih za lastno uporabo ustvarile prostitutke.

Beseda Daspu je nastala iz ironično spremenjenega imena Daslu, ki je takrat predstavljal najprestižnejšo trgovino z oblačili mednarodnih modnih znamk v Braziliji. Zaradi podobnosti imen in velike razlike med udeleženi družbenimi skupinami se je lastnik znamke Daslu celo pritožil na sodišče in zahteval spremembo imena Daspu, da med modno znamko prostitutk in njegovo trgovino ne bi bilo nobene podobnosti. Takratni Daslu je bil poznan kot tempelj luksuznega potrošništva ter je bil sinonim za največje socialno in ekonomsko razlikovanje. Kasneje se je trgovina ponovno pojavila v medijih, ko je morala zaradi razkritih dokazov o utaji davkov in drugih finančnih goljufijah zapreti svoja vrata.

Na bienalu je bil projekt Daspu predstavljen s časovnico akcij nevladne organizacije Davida. Hkrati so bile na razstavnem prostoru bienala razstavljene lutke, oblečene v poletno kolekcijo Daspu, poudarek pa je bil na ključnem kosu – poročni obleki iz motelskih rjuh, ki jo je dopolnjevala ročno izdelana ovratnica iz kondomov.

Na dan odprtja razstave je bila kolekcija Daspu na modni reviji/performansu/zabavi predstavljena na prostitutkah. Pred performansom je bil razstaveni prostor spremenjen v odprto garderobo, sama modna revija pa je bila posneta in nato predvajana do zaprtja razstave. Domnevna nevtralnost razstavnega prostora se je popolnoma spremenila s funk glasbo iz Ria de Janeira, ki v refrenu ponavlja »Daspu é uma puta parada / Daspu é uma parada de puta«¹.

V nadaljevanju sledi odlomek intervjuja z umetnikom²

Cristina Freire: Kakšni so bili vaši prvi vtisi o projektu nevladne organizacije Davida, ko ste bili kot slovenski rezidenčni umetnik na obisku v Rio de Janeiru?

Tadej Pogačar: Moj obisk v Rio je bil kratek, vendar zelo intenziven. Moji gostitelji so bili prijazni, počutil sem se kot doma. Takoj ko sem prišel, so me povabili na ogled nogometne tekme. Portugalska je tedaj igrala na svetovnem prvenstvu.

Maria Silva Leite, Flávio Lenz in drugi so razumni, pogumni, odprti in razumevajoči ljudje. Davida je nevladna organizacija z dobrimi izkušnjami iz sodelovanja z umetniki. Delati z njenimi člani mi je bilo v veliko čast in to je bila zelo dobra izkušnja. Imam jih za svoje prijatelje.

C. F.: Kako to, da ste se odločili deliti svoj projekt s projektom Daspu in ga predstaviti na bienalu?

T. P.: Vânia Mamede, moja asistentka na bienalu, mi je bila v zares veliko pomoč. Pomagala mi je vzpostaviti prve stike in



NGO Davida,
27, Bienale
São Paulo /
27th São Paulo
Biennial, 2006

The word *Daspu* is an ironic misspelling of the name of what was at the time São Paulo's most exclusive department store for international designer clothes: Daslu. Because of the similarity of the names – and the gap between the social groups involved – the owner of the Daslu brand filed a lawsuit against Davida, demanding that they change the label's name so there would be no similarity between a brand associated with prostitutes and the store. As a synonym for the highest social and economic differentiation, Daslu was considered a temple of luxury consumption. (Later, this same retailer returned to the news when evidence of tax evasion and other financial crimes on the part of its administration forced it to close its doors.)

In the Biennial's exhibition space, the Daspu project was shown through a timeline of actions by the NGO Davida along with a simple display of mannequins wearing the Daspu summer collection; the focus, however, was on the key item in the collection – a wedding dress made out of motel sheets, complemented by an artisan choker necklace made of condoms.

On the opening day of the exhibition, the Daspu collection was presented by prostitutes in a fashion show/performance/party. Before the event, the exhibition space of the Biennial was transformed into an open-air dressing room. The fashion show was filmed and then screened throughout the duration the exhibition. The supposed neutrality of the exhibition space was completely transformed by funk music from Rio de Janeiro with the refrain: "Daspu é uma puta parada/Daspu é uma parada de puta" ("Daspu is bitchin' good stuff / Daspu is stuff for bitches").

An Interview With the Artist

Cristina Freire: When the project with Davida began in Rio de Janeiro, what were your first impressions as a Slovene artist-in-residence?

Tadej Pogačar: My visit to Rio was short but intense. My hosts were cordial; I felt as if I had come home. As soon as I arrived,

tako sem izvedel za nevladno organizacijo Davida, za njene družbene in kulturne dejavnosti ter se prepričal, da želim sodelovati prav z njenimi člani. V Rio sem jih obiskal, spoznal sodelavce, seksualne delavke in organizatorje, s katerimi smo se veliko pogovarjali. Zgodovina projekta Daspu je občudovanja vredna. Gre za zelo posebno zgodbo o uspehu in zdelo se nam je nujno, da jo predstavimo tudi v kontekstu umetniškega dogodka.

C. F.: Daspu je na 27. bienalu v São Paulu pritegnil veliko medijske pozornosti. Če se spomniš, je bil članek o modni reviji znamke Daspu objavljen na prvi strani pariškega časopisa *Le Monde*. Kako si razlagaš tako nenavadno pozornost, namenjeno sodobni umetnosti?

T. P.: Podobno se je zgodilo že na 49. beneškem bienalu, kjer smo v sodelovanju z Odborom za državljanske pravice prostitutk (Comitato dei Diritti Civili delle prostitute) organizirali *Prvi svetovni kongres seksualnih delavk in novega parazitizma*. Tudi pred tem odprtjem so bili v glavnih italijanskih časopisih objavljeni članki z naslovom »Prostitutke prihajajo!«. Vedno je pomembno, kako novinarji predstavijo informacije. Preseči morajo senzacionalistični pristop in se bolj poglobiti v temo.

C. F.: V razstavnem prostoru si vključil časovnico akcij Davide in znamke Daspu, videointervju z njuno ustanoviteljico Gabriela Leite in zadnjo kolekcijo Daspu. Kako si si zamislil postavitev v razstavnem prostoru? Ali je bilo težko predstaviti ideje in procese?

T. P.: Že med mojim prvim obiskom v Rio smo se začeli pogovarjati o predstavitvi na bienalu. Pri izmenjavi idej so se porodile številne zamisli. Spoznal sem, da je Davida v lokalnem življenju Rio zelo dejavna. Njena prva modna revija je potekala na ulicah starega dela mesta blizu fundacije Hélio Oiticice, ki je bil eden ključnih umetnikov in zaradi katerega je bil začetni koncept bienala »kako živeti skupaj«.

Vse se je nekako ujelo: lokalna zgodovina, neformalna ekonomija in samoorganizacija seksualnih delavcev. Odločili smo se, da modno revijo skupaj predstavimo na bienalu. Davida pa je pripravila čudovito presenečenje: fantastično poročno obleko iz recikliranih rjuh iz tako imenovanih »hotelov ljubezni«, ki predstavlja edinstveno združitev umetnosti in življenja. Vsi vemo, da na svetu ni nobenega muzeja družbenih manjšin, ki bi nam prikazal zgodovino gibanja in aktivizma seksualnih delavcev. Eno takšno delo smo predstavili mi.

Časovnica zgodbe o uspehu znamke Daspu je predstavila družbeni okvir in ozadje za razumevanje kompleksnosti teh pojavov.

I was invited to watch a football game; Portugal had just played in the world championship. Maria Silva Leite, Flavio Lenz, and the others are wise, brave, open-minded, sensitive people. Davida is an NGO with a good experience of working collaboratively with artists. It was a great privilege and nice experience to work with them. They became my friends.

C. F.: How did you come to the decision to exhibit and share your project with the Daspu label?

T. P.: Vania Mamede, one of the exhibition assistants, was very, very helpful. She helped me establish my first contacts and as soon I learned about Davida and their social and cultural activities, I was sure they were the ones I wanted to collaborate with. I visited Davida in Rio, met collaborators, sex workers, organizers, and had a lot of discussions. The recent history of Daspu was very strong. It is a very special success story, and it also seemed necessary to present it in the context of an art event.

C. F.: Daspu's presence at the 27th São Paulo Biennial received a lot of media attention. If you remember, the Daspu fashion show made the front page of the newspaper *Le Monde* in Paris. How do you explain this sort of unusual "attention" for contemporary art?

T. P.: The situation was similar at the 49th Venice Biennial where, in collaboration with the Comitato Dei Diritti Civili delle prostitute, we organized the *First World Congress of Sex Workers and New Parasitism*. Even before the opening, there were articles in the main Italian newspapers with headline "Prostitutes are coming!" It is always important how journalists shape information. They need to get past the sensational approach and go deeper into the issue.

C. F.: In the space of the exhibition you included a timeline of Davida and Daspu activities, a video with an interview with Gabriela Leite, Davida's creator, and pieces from Daspu's latest collection. How did you conceive what should be done in the exhibition space? How difficult is it to show ideas and processes?

T. P.: Ever since the first visit in Rio, we had been discussing the presentation at the Biennial. We started by brainstorming, and there were a lot of different suggestions. I learned that Davida is very active on the local scene in Rio. Their first fashion show took place in the street in the old part of town, near the Foundation Hélio Oiticica. Oiticica was also one of the key referential artists for the Biennial's basic concept "How to Live Together". Everything in a way came together: local history, informal economy, the self-organizing of sex workers. We jointly decided to bring the fashion show to the Biennial.

C. F.: Del razstave na bienalu je bil tudi posnetek modne revije znamke Daspu, ki je potekala ob odprtju. Ali je šlo za strategijo, kako aktivirati razstavni prostor?

T. P.: Dejstvo, da je lahko publika prisostvovala modni reviji seksualnih delavk na bienalu, je bilo zelo pomembno. Njihova telesa so se pojavila na »napačnem« kraju in v vlogi, v kateri jih ne bi nikoli pričakovali. Presenečenje je zelo uporabna strategija. »Postale so vidne«, predstavile so svoje projekte, svojo lastno blagovno znamko, torej nov samozadosten ekonomski model.

C. F.: Ali je modni svet (blagovne znamke, modne revije itd.) neke vrste kritičen prostor, medprostor, ki lahko poveže »realno življenje« z belo kokco razstavnega prostora bienala?

T. P.: Poznamo modne revije, ki so potekale v glavnih svetovnih muzejih, kot so MoMA, Guggenheim in drugi. Na njih so sodelovali pokrovitelji velikih muzejev, kot sta Hugo Boss in Donna Karan. Naš dogodek je bil drugačen. Kulturne in ekonomske strategije Davide so veliko bolj v duhu sodobne umetnosti. Preimenovanje Daslu v Daspu je bila spiritualna gesta v slogu *détournementa* Guya Deborda in situacionistov. Daslu in Daspu jasno govorita o brazilski družbi in njeni družbeni razslojenosti. Hkrati je Davida ovrgla eksotične in stereotipne predstave, ki seksualne delavke prikazujejo kot žrtve. Te so dostojanstvo vzele v svoje roke in na bienale med drugim prinesle tudi kritičen pristop k interpretaciji popularne kulture.

Prevedli Maja Žabota in Andreja Javorič Sousa

¹ »Daspu je dobra roba, / Daspu je roba za kurbe«.

² Intervju z umetnikom je Cristina Freire opravila februarja 2010 po elektronski pošti.

Davida prepared a wonderful surprise: a wedding dress, a fantastic recycled dress made of sheets from the so-called "love hotels", a unique fusion of art and life. We all know that there is no museum of social minorities that would present the stories of sex worker movements and activism. We offered one part of it. The timeline describing the Daspu success story constructed a societal frame and the basic background for understanding the complexity of these phenomena.

C. F.: The Daspu fashion show was also included as part of the presentation at the Biennial, and the film that documented the fashion show was shown during the exhibition. Was this a necessary strategy for activating the space?

T. P.: It was important that the audience experienced a fashion show by sex workers at the Biennial. Yes, their bodies appeared at the "wrong" place and in a role people would not have imagined. Surprise is a useful strategy. They "made themselves visible" – they presented their project, their own brand, that is, a new self-sufficient economic model.

C. F.: Was the fashion world (the fashion label, fashion show, etc.) a sort of critical space, a place in between, which connected "real life" and the white cube of the Biennial space?

T. P.: Fashion shows have been organized by MoMA, the Guggenheim, and other major museums worldwide. Think about some of the corporate sponsors of big museums, such as Hugo Boss and Donna Karan. Our event was different. Davida's cultural and economic strategies are very close to the spirit of contemporary art. Renaming Daslu to Daspu, for example, is a gesture in spirit of Guy Debord and the Situationists. It speaks clearly about Brazilian society, about class divisions, etc. Davida also shattered the exotic and stereotypical images that victimize sex workers. They took their destiny in their own hands and brought to the Biennial, among other things, a critical approach to reading popular culture.

Translated by Maja Žabota

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