

Branding the terms “Biennale” and “European Capital of Culture” promotes a certain legitimacy to local cultural events in an attempt to make them attractive for corporate sponsorship (and city development) tying them to economic and political agendas. Art and culture are part of the larger political and economic issues that shape the daily life of any city. Invited artists are implicated in these structures. As such, these officially sanctioned spaces for art provide a rich ground for artists to address the conditions that define how their work is produced and displayed.

My own work addresses the overlapping relations that create social space in both the real and virtual sense. To generate a critical reflection on the complicated conditions of artistic production and social space, I am giving visibility to two creative currents that are not sanctioned by the city: Rozbrat, a sixteen year old squat and autonomous space for various political, social and cultural activity that is currently in a precarious position with the threat of closure and ‘Poznan: To nie Firma!’ (Poznan: Not a Company) a counter campaign to the official city campaign ‘Poznan: Miasto know-how’ (Poznan: City of know-how) that became visible in the city in June, 2010. Both play a critical role in creating alternative narratives into how urban spaces should be constructed and used as well as the rights of its citizens to decide about the life of the city.

Rozbrat is currently threatened with closure because of a city development plan within the Solacz district where the squat is located: the official map of the plan designates the area, and site of a vibrant cultural space, as “wasteland”. Fascinated by this contradiction in a public debate, I approached Rozbrat with the proposal to make their issues visible within the Mediations Biennale. They agreed on the condition we address the “social and political problems that they are working on and exist in the city.” They put forward the plan to carry out a political action against the proposed settlements of industrial containers by the city intended to house the very poor which will be installed far away from the city centre and therefore hidden. The idea was to install a container in the city centre during the first week of the Mediations Biennale which would function as an undisguised site for information and public debate.

The proposal was formally rejected by the city due to pavement regulations in the city centre. A counter-proposition for use of the exhibition space within the town hall was rejected by the Biennale because it was “expressing a criticism of the city”. A third suggestion to place the container in front of the hospital of Orzeszkowa Street was rejected by Rozbrat as being secluded and not an effective site for public debate.

My final proposal is to make a financial contribution of 750 euros, half of my artist honorarium, to support Rozbrat’s ongoing activities but not necessarily taking place during the Mediations Biennale.

My collaboration with Rozbrat and taking up the ‘Poznan: To nie Firma!’ campaign are in a long tradition of interventionist approaches that transform officially sanctioned art spaces into an arena where ideas can actually be transmitted to the public with the potential of translating into engagement.

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