

STATE:



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.. Edition # 01

STATE:

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Interviews and portraits
Tomas Hein

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Edition # 01

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Margaret Flynn (Ireland)

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Tim Plamper (Germany)

Marje Len Murusalu (Estonia)

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FOREWORD

About this book

This book is part of a project that I started in September 2009 with the idea to document the artworld in London.

A year before, I'd met a collective of artists showing their work in Shoreditch, London. The exhibition, titled *STATE*, gathered the work of fifteen international artists that at the time were based throughout east London. The result of this exhibition was the collective *STATE*, composed of eight of the original artists who had shown their work and curated the exhibition.

When I started developing the idea for this book, *STATE* artists were the first to pop into my mind. Not only because I appreciated their work and the idea of a collective inspired me, but also because their first exhibition had been at the Shoreditch Townhall basement, an alternative underground space where many groups of young, talented artists were showing work at the time.

In this book you will find the work and writings of Tim Plamper, Marje Len Murusalu, Matthew Douglas and Romana Londi, along with transcribed interviews that I conducted during the past three months. The portraits, which you will find at the beginning of each section, have been taken along the time I've put together this book, and I believe, convey the personality and environment of each artist.

Tomas Hein

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2010

PREFACE

About STATE:

STATE is an international art collective of 8 artists who joined forces in October 2008 in London. The first show in Shoreditch Town Hall brought the group together, with an addition of selected guest artists.

STATE implies a challenge regarding curatorial decisions, as it embodies not only the art work presented but its communicating properties. It refers to the moment when the objects shown establish a relation with its public. By stating, the encoder and the decoder must stand in a common grammatical level, but the first must always connect to the second by delivering something new; the aesthetic experience takes place in that small gap between the known and the unknown. And that small gap justifies the will to state.

This connection made by the object (taking the artists presence, becoming an index for its statement) refers immediately to a state of time. When experiencing the object, the observer is pointed to the time which preceded the making of the object and the present moment, when they are consciously taking presence on the action of communicating.

This awareness of the observers own presence and relation with the object, is made possible by the notion of time as referred, but also by his notion of space. The more accurate the relation between object and space is, the more clear and effective its relation to the observer becomes.

www.stateartists.com

2010

TIM PLAMPER

*Born in 1982, Bergisch Gladbach, Germany
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany*





IN CONVERSATION

Q: So, *STATE*, tell me about it.

A: The group you mean?

Q: Yes.

A: I like the idea of having a group of artists together to work as one cohort. In the same field, but with different ambitions, or maybe different skills, and the same ambition. And to get things done more easily because everyone knows something special and can help each other.

Q: So, get inspiration from each other, give inspiration.

A: Yes, get inspiration, most of... yeah, because when you come from different cultural backgrounds, I mean, you get different inspiration from everybody, and you have the possibility to hear different points of view about art, or being an artist.

Q: So you think the culture and the nationality affects the type of art, lets say, the thoughts on art that each person has? Art is not universal.

A: I think it is, definitely cultural based, I mean, it's about the nationality, and the tradition of art in different countries. The Islamic countries, for instance, are totally different how they work with

pictures. Art is most of the time about pictures, and some content. And the way you see yourself as an artist. I think that's totally different, that's what I thought when I talked to these people of *STATE*. I learned a lot about thinking about art while talking with them.

Q: How do the exhibitions work? So far, you've done Shoreditch town hall and you have plans for Berlin right? What's the idea for Berlin?

A: Berlin is meant to be an exhibition like a real first exhibition of the group, just the members of the group, and they will introduce themselves. Or just to introduce the group in itself, I think that would be the better way. I don't think it's important to show everybody's work, for me it would be better to do a project just to show, to present yourself (*STATE*): "Here we are, and we want to do something, and we are a group."

Q: What makes you want to do something as a group, and not individually?

A: No, I want to do both. That's the interesting thing. You work with your individual work, and then you do something special with the whole group. It's a totally different thing when you start thinking in a group about a project and not by yourself. You have different problems and different possibilities. I think it would be nice to do



something else than in your individual work with the group.

Q: Matthew wrote something about *STATE*: Artists as an anti-movement. What can you say about that?

A: I don't know the text I guess. What does he mean by that: Anti movement?

Q: Well, he talked about a movement being something where, let's say, the group has the same aims or goals. And an anti-movement as something more like how *STATE* works: individual artists which occasionally get together for an exhibition.

A: I am not sure about *STATE*: being an anti-movement. Its always nice to say something like this because it's pointing to something different, but I think we have the same ambitions, we have the same ambitions about the group. Everybody wants to be a member of the group. And wants to do something with each other. In that way it's a movement. About having a group. It's not to get to a point where the works are influenced by each other, like the cubists did. I think it's more about the field of art production, and presentation in the context of art.

Q: Do you think with time the work will become homogenized?

A: I don't hope so. I think that would be a problem.

Q: It is a risk you are running in working as a... well, each of you works in different countries and with different things. Different than a collective working together in their own warehouse in London.

A: That would be totally a different thing, then you are, and will inspire yourself and change the way you are working. But I think when you just meet at a place, at a certain time, and do something together, and then spread out again, do your own things and come back, I think that's a better way, 'cause you have time for yourself and, you spend time with the group.

It's more about discussion, the meaning, than about the work itself. Most of the time we spoke and discussed about the way you should present yourself or the way you should talk about your art. It's not about the works, the material.

Q: The Artefacts.

A: Yes, the crafts aspect. It's not about the craft. So, it's more a meta-movement, on a different area, it's more theoretically based. It should be like that, I think.

Q: Tell me about your personal work being exhibited in Berlin. The inspirations, what it's about.

"I think the most important thing is the conversation, the discussion about art."

A: I came to that work because I was thinking about the connection of language and pictures. The meaning you can transfer by words, or language, which is different to what you can transfer with painting or pictures. I was interested in the special logic of language, and the special logic of pictures. It's different to talk about things: you have to follow the logic of language. That's the point where this word "logic" comes from. In pictures not everything is logic. When I was in London the last time, I found a geometrical experiment of Sierpinski, he's a Russian mathematician. That was a starting point for me. Because it is for me a connection where language and pictures come together, in geometry. I wanted to know if you can do something with that. The question I had was: "Can you ask a question with pictures?" "How could it be like to ask a question?" It's more interesting to ask questions to the audience than make statements. It's like an experiment.

It's also connected with the thought of "young men", I took "young men" because I am a young man, and I thought that's a thing I know something about, and I'm interested in. What can we do? What is the connection to young men in the past? And what will be in the future? I found a picture of Thomas Eakin's painting of Douglas Morgan Hall. He was a young American painter, and the portrait was quite realistically painted. This year in spring I did a photograph for a drawing of the brother of a friend of mine, and when I saw both these pictures, I saw definitely a connection, but I didn't know why. It's just the way they look, and it's about ambition. They look like they want to do something. That's exactly what I want to do. I don't know why, but I know that I want to do something.

Q: To finish off - can you tell me something about your hair?

A: I can say it's a question I get asked every time.

Q: It is a very particular style. I don't suppose anyone but your girlfriend has seen you without this hair style for a while.

A: It happened by accident and everybody was shocked. I got a lot of response about it, and I thought I liked it somehow.

Q: Anything you would like to add?

A: Yes, I would like to add one more thing: What I came to think in the last month is that art is not about making nice things or amusing (not only amusing the audience). That's one part.

Q: That does help in the audience to engage though.

A: You have to find a borderline. You have to make them be interested, that's the way it works. You do it on an aesthetic way. But I think the most important thing is the conversation, the discussion about art. It's a discussion from artists to artists through the centuries because we have all these pictures and we know them. Even more when you use internet. You get everything! And it's a discussion about art and what it should be, what it was, and what it will be. That's one of the most important things in art. It's a more collective thing, that might be meant as a movement.

Q: You are free to go man.

A: Thanks.

Q: Thank you.





Virgin, installation, mixed media, 250 x 420 cm, 2009

MARJE LEN MURUSALU

*Born in 1984, Tallinn, Estonia
Lives and works in London, United Kingdom*



Perceptual Zones

Marje Len Murusalu

Next page: 18° 32' N, 72° 20' W - Port-au-Prince, Haiti, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, 2010

The oil painting series "Perceptual Zones" was started in 2009.

Abstractions of geographic areas accompanied by their factual coordinates depict regions, contemporary states and nations' territories as an intuitive mental image. Blueprint fragments constitute a distinctive overlay that conveys a subjective alternative landscape. A region may also be transformed to a new form of landscape, referring to the new aspects of perception generated by a collective memory.

Redefining perceptions often depends on an individual stance, causing the series to raise the question: whether the outcome is determined by a political power, the observing individual or other factors?

The information delivered by media and other channels often remains speculative. An individual's opinion, which is formed, based on that

information is subjective. In many cases though, even the source of the information is subjective, or moreover – manipulative. Nevertheless the image of any geographic area, originating from communication or media, is placed on a "map" in the individuals' mind. A mental vision builds up and solidifies. Often this association remains in the memory for decades, even if the referenced object or area itself has changed.

The perception of individuals is influenced by the environment where they grew up. The values, which they have been brought up with, stay with them even if they perceive them as incorrect. When moving from one environment to another, individuals always carry the knowledge about everything experienced previously. The conceived associations are independent of the will. Any attempt of cleansing oneself is temporary if it can't touch the basic levels of understanding.



AT HOME

Q: Tell me about *STATE*. Your relationship with it as a collective, what it means to you? What the idea of *STATE*: is to you?

A: We got together as a group in October, 2008. The main reason at that time was the exhibition in London we all had part in, and as the cooperation went really well, we decided to continue. All eight members of the group then lived in London, yet just a few months later, only some of us were able to stay. I guess our constantly evolving webpage and our online conversations are the reason for us being able to function as a group, but of course the cooperation would have been more efficient if there wasn't so much distance between us. At the same time, that very distance has proven to be an interesting aspect because of our different backgrounds. Eight artists from seven European countries - this can be a really wide playground for curatorial basis. Perhaps the curatorial part is the most - I would say - important common aspect for *STATE*:. As artists, all members are very different; working with various different mediums, not to mention having a totally different conceptual approach. But for *STATE*: it is rather important to have the same state of mind and that has been sufficient for us to be able to define ourselves as a group.

Q: What is this common state of mind?

A: It's about working as an individual artist, yet

creating a protective shell for each other, in the midst of which we can interexchange different opportunities and support on every possible level that an artist can give to others. I think it is very important, since having a lifestyle of a freelance artist can be quite difficult. I mean, there are definitely easier ways to live your lives, but for the ones who have chosen to work as an artist, it will definitely give more strength and comfort to share your life with our cohorts. Working in an art field can truly be quite difficult.

Q: Especially in a city like London, this feeling of loneliness comes often, especially in the beginning when one moves here. It is a very impersonal city.

A: We are more than colleagues or co-workers; first and foremost we are friends who are interested in each other's work. There is no pressure to adapt with the group, I will develop as an artist on my own direction and yet I can be sure that there are people who are helping and supporting me on my personal journey, wherever it goes. It works for us in both ways: they can be sure that I will do the same in their case.

Q: What's the future of *STATE*: ?

A: I really hope that the future of *STATE*: is this... umm... Well, basically if there is going to be even just one artist of the group, who is going to have



more opportunities thanks to our group, it will certainly inspire the rest of *STATE*: as well. It could be anyone, one never knows. So I think that if something good happens to some of us, it will change the future of *STATE*: in general and at the same time affects each of us personally. So hopefully, this will be the future.

Q: What is the relation of *STATE*: with contemporary Europe?

A: One of our goals has been communicating and cooperating with different artists. In Shoreditch we also had guest artists and we will involve them in the future as well. Furthermore, we hope to promote this way of thinking - that networking in the field of art is very important. These days, (emerging) artists have to do everything by themselves. One has to be the curator, manager, artist, copywriter - one person must handle... I'm talking about emerging artists who don't have a team to assist them. As a young artist you have to do a lot of work all by yourself. Preparing everything on your own in a limited time might affect the result. That's why the Shoreditch exhibition was really successful: there was a tight time limit, but as all of us gave their best effort on distributed tasks, we managed to hold it together. If you know what I mean.

Q: When you talked about young artists, I couldn't help thinking about the YBA

generation. Has this had any influence on you or the group?

A: I would say personally, that as a major art group, the YBA had a great influence on the art world in the 90s. Nowadays the art scene seems to be quite individualistic compared to what we know from the past. Looking back to the art history, it can be said that having a group is a disappearing phenomenon. As for the YBA, I can't say that it has particularly influenced *STATE*: but there is a similarity between our regulations: the YBA was also about communicating, socializing and cooperating and gave space to everyone's individual creativity. On that point they can be viewed as a very good example for *STATE*: or any other contemporary art group.

Q: Let's now talk about your personal work. I know you do film, painting and multimedia. What are you doing now?

A: Lately I've been working with sound collages - mixing realistic environmental sounds together to constitute an integral form. I would even say that this is one of my main interests now. Sounds can reflect the environment in a very realistic way. Even if they are mixed to create a totally new entity, the gathered base samples always remain as documentary. "Vicious Ambitions", the installation that I presented at the Shoreditch Town Hall in 2008, was my first video - and sound installation.

"It's a very material city, a very crowded city and somehow a lonely city."

Since then I've made two more sound collages that are following the same principle, both have been exhibited in Tallinn in 2009. These days I'm planning the fourth one called „Whirlpool“, which will be finished later this year. But of course I continue working with paintings if the idea so dictates. I think these days working with different mediums is the only...

Q: Essence of post-modernism?

A: Yes, but also the only right thing to do. It is more about the concept and what you want to express. If the idea requires one specific medium, then it has to be created in this form, even if it is totally different from the techniques one has used so far. Why should one limit oneself? This is how I've discovered my interest towards documentaries and why I am now working on my second one. I'm interested in people's cultural backgrounds and how they can be influenced by external forces. London, for example, is a great inspiration – it's such a huge multicultural city; people with totally different goals; it is a very material city, a very crowded city, and somehow a lonely city. Such a huge contrast with where I'm originally from - I was born in Estonia, a very small country where the population is decreasing every year... so of course, on one side it is interesting for me to compare myself and my background with other groups of people from different societies, but moreover I'm interested in how much the environment influences and even manipulates one's

cultural identity that has been programmed inside us. I'm talking about politics, media, economics, the corporations and also fellow citizens; how their ambitions can influence other people. So, lately I've been dealing with the question of how much an environment affects an individual's nature. As my final thesis in the university here in East London, I had created a documentary about dying Karelian villages. These small villages in Russia have their very own language, but without political autonomy their cultural traditions are fading away and one nationality is inevitably merged with another. There are less and less Karelians every year and it is easy to see how the environment can have such a great influence on an individual that one cannot speak the same language as one's ancestors, nor remember anything about one's cultural heritage. So, why I was mentioning London is because here I'm going to continue my research. I've met people here who have come from completely different cultures, and yet maintained their inherent values so well; they have even recreated their surroundings here. But maybe there are some other matters that have started to manipulate them - in any case it's an inspiring field of study for me.

Q: Thank you.

A: You're welcome.



Vicious Ambitions, video stills from the video and sound installation, 2008





Shred of Dernier

A documentary by Marje Len Murusalu

Nationality is the relationship between a person and their state of origin, culture, association, affiliation and/or loyalty. Nationality affords the state jurisdiction over the person and affords the person the protection of the state. (Wikipedia)

However, personal identification of one's nationality and loyalty towards it creates a contradiction when a state, which presents its citizen comes into play. Namely – a state might not represent a person of the given nationality.

At this point we have to ask the following question: What is decisive in defining the national identity of an individual? Is it one's personal loyalty towards belonging somewhere or the loyalty of the given society towards the individual? And how extensive is the influence of society on ethno-psychology?

Tver Karelians illustrate such questions and the contradiction deriving from them very well. They are one of the least noticed people among the Finno-Ugric movement and their population is decreasing at an enormous rate. Tver Karelians left their historic homeland in Karelia in the 17th century to retain their Orthodox tradition at a time when Lutheran Sweden had come to power. In this process they reached the vicinity of Moscow – Tver Oblast, where they again lost territorial autonomy. This is definitely one of the main factors influencing both cultural views as well as nationality in general. Because of losing territorial autonomy, language has become the foundation of national cohesion.

There are two major groups within the Finno-Ugric languages: the Finnic languages and the Ugric languages. Finnish is the main language of the Finnic branch, with more than 5.5 million speakers. Then comes Estonian that is spoken by over 1 million people. Smaller language groups are spoken mainly in Russia and the most widespread of them is Karelian with more than 100.000 speakers in the Republic of Karelia and in the Tver Karelian villages. Karelian language has many dialects. However, the locals mix Karelian with Russian, which produces a unique fusion that is

not easily understood by strangers.

Not so long ago, in Soviet times, many Karelians denied their real nationality facing the bureaucratic machinery. Therefore the official data about the number of Karelian population is inaccurate to this day. On the other hand, today there are a number of persons whose ancestors are of Karelian origin but who are lacking command of language and cultural heritage from childhood. Most people using Karelian language as an everyday language are already elderly. Younger people only remember a few poems and songs.

„Our children are Russians!“ they say.

In 1926 the number of Karelians in Tver Governorate was close to 140 000 while by 2002 it was only 15 000. Although the actual number of Karelians might be higher than the official data indicates, it is evident that this is a massive decrease.

In addition to linguistic deprivation, the small amount of handicraft and various traditional old items among Tver Karelians is surprising. The locals admit that the items they once owned have been lost in turmoil during war times. Another characteristic factor is the general miserable condition of small villages with their enormous, but uncultivated fields, shabby stores and collapsed kolkhoz buildings, not to mention the once blossoming and now decayed churches – the theme that had once initiated the migration from homely Karelia.

Those who retain the language are mostly village drunks while the intellectual elite cannot find the words to express themselves as their ancestors. The situation in Karelian villages reflects the problems faced by many other similar places, as they deal with the same fundamental questions.

The video material is collected from the 31st Finno-Ugric expedition during July 2008 in villages in Lihhoslavl District, Tver Oblast, Russia.

MATTHEW DOUGLAS

*Born in 1983, Oxford, United Kingdom
Lives and works in Bristol, United Kingdom*





TEA TIME

Q: How did *STATE*: start?

A: *STATE*: started about a year ago. We were all meant to put on a show of artists based around, investigating curation, as a module.

The opportunity arose to use the Shoreditch Town Hall which, when we went there it seemed like the perfect place. When all eight artists ended up collaborating, we just decided to use the Shoreditch Town Hall, and I suppose *STATE*: started with a dialogue, when we started organizing the show, when we started picking upon each others work, and working out what needs to go in, who we should invite, because we had six other external artists as well. I suppose the germ of the idea came from that.

Q: What is your personal relation to *STATE*: How do you feel towards it? How does the idea of a collective receive you?

A: I think it's about sharing ideas, rather than the work itself. For instance, we are not a collective of painters, we are not a collective of conceptual artists, or a collective of performance artists; we have our individual ways of working and our different practices, but then it's the different ideas and different opportunities that we share which produce that. I think that, in a way it's very experimental collective, 'cause most collectives conventionally work on one thing, or have one single goal, like a movement, which I don't think *STATE*: has, or at least not yet.

Q: In one of your texts you write of *STATE*: as a “non-movement”. What do you mean by this?

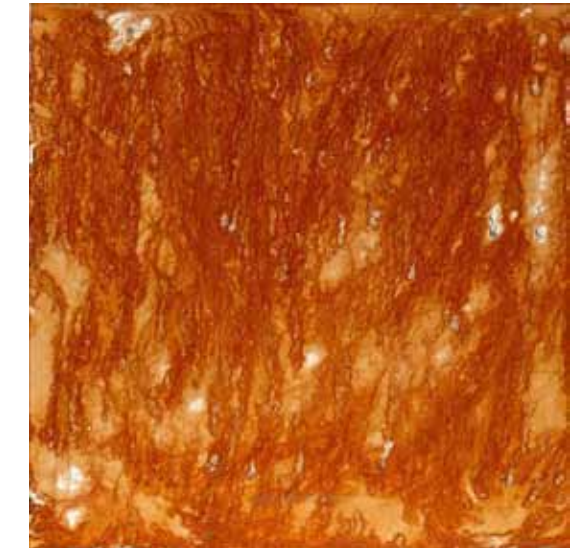
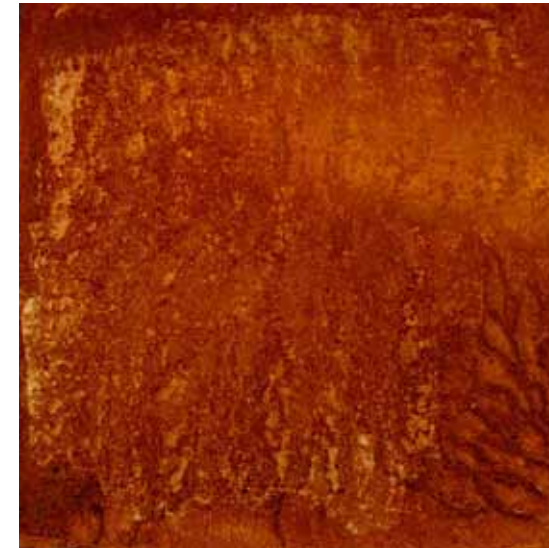
A: I thought that would come up (laughing).

Q: I told you earlier it would come up!

A: Umm... Well it's a “non-movement” in the sense... I don't think we are trying to narrow down any of our ideas to suit one purpose, we are doing the opposite, we are leaving ourselves open, and sensitive to all things that come to us... as a group.

Q: And you react to that. We were talking earlier that in your own work you react. And when the Berlin exhibition came up, you said how you would like to have a reactive exhibition to Berlin, here in Bristol. You have mentioned the word reaction quite often today. How does this fit into your personal work?

A: Mainly my personal work is a reaction to the experiences I have, and the more I get close to that experience within the work, the more successful it is. The more comfortable I am with it. But I find the more I remove the final piece of work from the experience, the more it suffers, so it gets weaker and weaker, the further it is from that experience. So I suppose with *STATE*: as a “non-movement” it's kind of... it's vital that everyone is receptive to everything, and then when we all collaborate we can all put as much in as possible.



Otherwise you end up, like I mention in the article, you end up closing down ideas, trying to suit one purpose, so you compromise many things to suit one goal. But if you remain open to everything, although it seems like a big mess, it can end up, you end up filtering down till it becomes quite solidified, in a way.

Q: Earlier today I wrote in my notes for this interview: “Explain the idea of ‘Allowing the viewer to experience the work as it’s being made’”. I think you’ve been pretty clear about that in the walk we’ve just had in the woods (near the caravan) where you showed me your latest piece, and explained the process of construction of this piece titled “Wood-smoke and Beeswax”.

A: Yes, because my work is so much about experience, it's vital that the viewers themselves can almost imagine themselves in the position of the artist, within the experience of the artist, so me gathering wood is a sort of... it's a survival tactic in a way, and the idea of wood-smoke and beeswax is a sustainable, individual way of living. Something that I want to press forward within my work, it's something that I haven't really examined in too fine detail, and not as directly, but I think that the direction my work is heading. Like with the Shoreditch show, people went into the show and they were basically witnessing a piece of work creating itself. They weren't just looking at something that's been complete, or something that's prefabricated as such, it's just a process

that was working. You could go in one day and observe it, and you could come in the next day and it would change, subtly. Because those pieces were still collapsing, or rusting.

Q: It's interesting the idea of constant change. It has to do with the world, constant change. Things don't have a permanent state. I don't know if evolving, but as in your steel plates they are rusting. Things are made to deteriorate.

A: It would be naïve to think that everything remains the same all the time. I don't think there's very much that you can truly say is solid. I suppose technology tries to make things solid, or tries to make you think that everything is concrete, and sort of everlasting, but in the end, given enough space and time, everything will eventually shift and change. And that is central too when I make work.

Q: I find very central to your work in progress in the woods, it has a strong analogy to your situation at the moment: moving to the countryside into the woods, and building this refuge. What I don't quite understand yet is the “wood-smoke and beeswax” part of it.

A: As I say, that's a working title, and I guess there is a certain... I'm working in seasons at the moment and making work to a certain criteria for one season and then changing the criteria

“Untitled is a bit of a cliché.”

for the next. So I end up with four groups of work. I suppose that's a way of umbrellaing it under some sort of poetic title I guess.

Q: Tell me some more about the Steel work which you showed at Shoreditch Town Hall.

A: They are titled “Works on Steel I-XII”. There's two series. The second series is Works on Steel in Blue. I didn't want to give them titles as such, even though it's very tempting to. I wanted to keep the works without any narrative and often I will show them several different ways up, so they don't really have a horizon line or gravitational pull in any direction, because they are made on a flat horizontal plane, and they are made outside, so it was important than rather than witnessing a reproduction of the world around you, that you are actually looking at the reaction of the materials to the environment to which they were made in. That was really important. So I tried to make them as ambiguous as possible by not giving them any title. And “Untitled” is a bit of a cliché.

Q: Do you have anything you would like to say?

A: I suppose... umm... If you want to keep talking about the works on steel, I think they were quite important for me, for my practice, because they were a complete abandonment of applied making. There was no...

Q: They kind of made themselves in a way.

A: Exactly. And that's the first piece of work that has ever made itself within my practice and it was really important to... umm... I investigated in many ways,

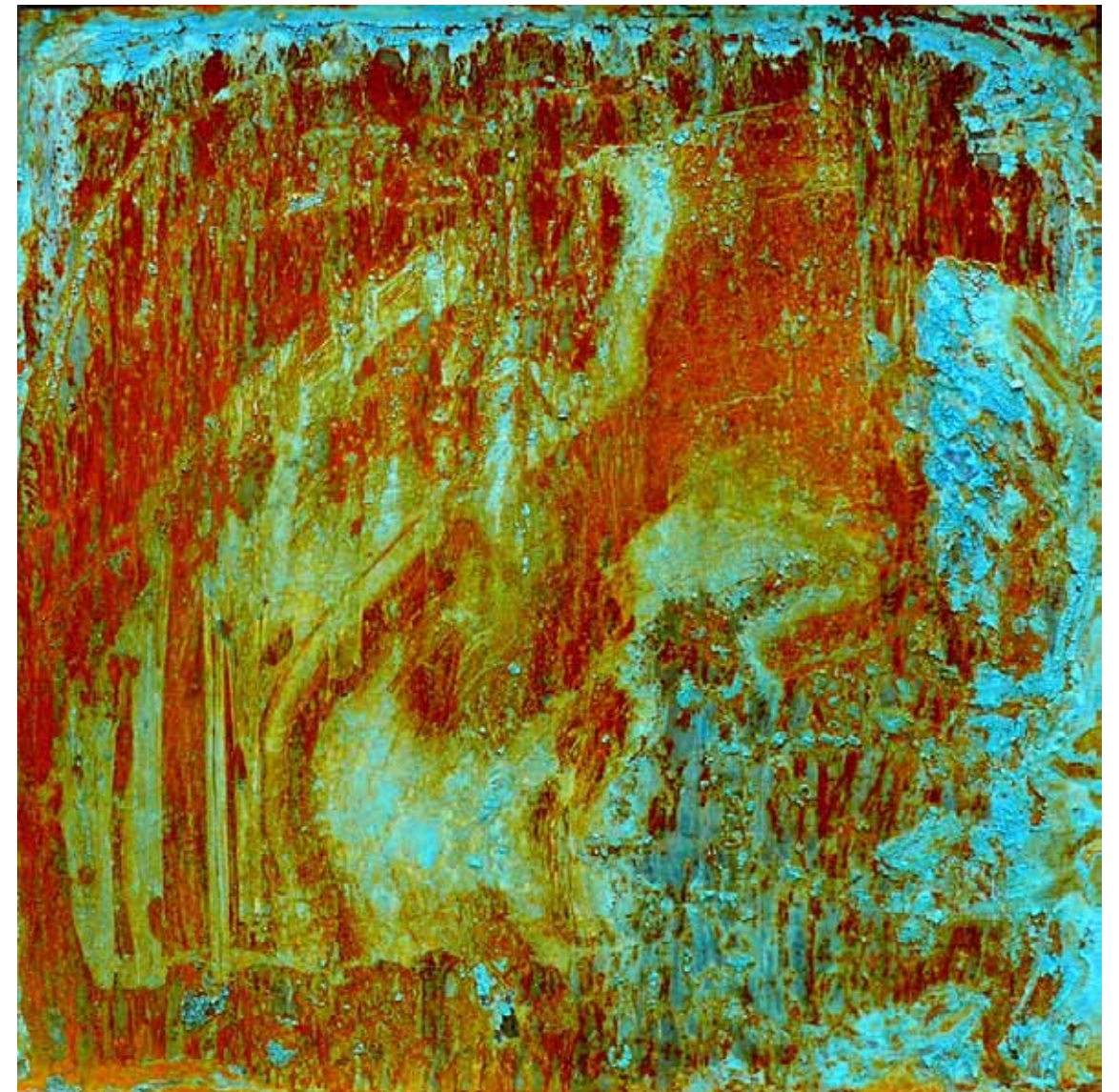
which is one of the reasons I put it in the *STATE*: show, because I wanted to investigate how those pieces worked within that strange environment.

Q: Yes, and it certainly fits with the idea of STATE: . So how did you work before that?

A: In many ways. I was just trying different methods. I did some works which were drawings directly on the wall, then I made some works which were using arrows; so using rational symbols that were doing irrational things like puncturing through the floor, through a wall, or going back within themselves. I was sort of forcing the rational sign to do something completely irrational. Because I find that quite interesting, I find the deconstruction of rational language quite interesting. In a way the Works on Steel do as well, in the sense that they take the idea of painting, and sort of subverted a little bit... umm... which is interesting. On it's own. I suppose that what I'm trying to do now, moving on from those, is try to create a sort of myth within the work, all the work, try and tie it all together into one perception as it were, of the way I act when I'm an artist, as it were. Things that are in the gallery space would be not final pieces or certain section of work, but they'd all reference themselves, to each other as it were... Does it make sense?

Q: Some sense... but at the moment probably makes more sense to you than to me right now. Do you have anything in mind for Berlin?

A: I think I'd like to investigate this phenomenon



of being at a huge distance from one place to another. The idea that to walk from here to Berlin it's an incredible feat, just like walking from here to Lisbon, or from Lisbon to Dublin. Those distances, they are huge. That produces a...

Q: Yes, they are huge in the context we live in today. They are made huge by the technological advancements. You know, back in the days, people walked from London to Berlin, or went by horse or carriage. But today, technology in a way, brings us further apart from each other.

A: It can do, yes. Because it takes away the experience of distance. I think it would be interesting to make work for the Berlin show which was based around the challenge of trying to make work from the distance. So Instead of just sending a painting, or going there and making

an installation and then flying back or whatever; either sending instructions, or sending something that can be posted and then constructed, rather than delivering something in person. But that is something I want to investigate if we do put on a show in Bristol. Because not everyone from *STATE*: is ever going to be able to come to one place at the same time. It's very unlikely. So I think that this issue needs to be dealt with in some way, it would be quite interesting.

Q: It is a very modern aspect of this collective, the fact that everyone lives in different countries, and the distance which this implies.

A: And I think that's important to reference. Yes, I think that's an interesting aspect of *STATE*:.



On Douglas' Practice

An essay about the artist

Previous page: Exhibition view at Shoreditch Town Hall

Douglas's work is linked directly to his own beliefs and circumstance, as his environment and experience changes, so does his output. Douglas is chiefly concerned with questioning the perception of permanence and the inevitable attachment that results from such a perception. Work stems from these concerns and often involve ephemeral materials that are visually sensitive to their surroundings such as mild steel and untreated wood.

Currently the artists practice reflects his relationship with seasonal change and instinctive reaction to his own immediate environment and involves as little fabrication or manipulation as possible.

The presence of the artist is the only clue to his concerns, as a result the work takes the form of a trace or residue of the artists existence, avoiding conceptual investment within a single object.

Douglas is very interested in the perception of the world according to the principles of Taoism and Zen and cites the writings of Lao Tzu and the principles of the Wabi Sabi aesthetic as being central to his current practice. This practice is very varied and crosses a wide spectrum of disciplines including painting and sculpture, performance and drawing are also common.

Some of his previous work has taken the form of installations that change according to the galleries architecture and siting, often employing rational symbols (such as arrows) being forced to perform irrational and seemingly impossible actions, such as passing through the walls or floor of the gallery space. These served to force the viewer to perceive beyond the constraints of their surroundings, and to question ideas of the solid and the rational.

Other work includes works on steel, that again question the perception of an artwork as a solid tangible commodity. The work slowly collapses and deconstructs before settling or disappearing completely.

The artists current work involves him working to a pre-set criteria for one season and brings him closer than ever to purely instinctive action. As

time passes the artist builds structures from materials found in the immediate environment. These structures will eventually (like the works on steel) breakdown and unite themselves once again with their surroundings.

Action or process is vital to the understanding of Douglas's work, as a result the process of making tends to be central to his practice and has, on occasion, verged into performance.

The passing of time is also central to the understanding of his work, often the work evidences the passage of time involved in its making and the continuing changes within the work are documented.

According to the artist "art is a mental awareness attained when I begin to let go of everything I have been taught since I began to make work as an artist"

The gallery provides a space to draw a line underneath a body of work or a series of works, Douglas attempts to break this convention by showing work that is either part completed or still working , such as the work on steel series.

He says "It is always tempting to round off or complete a body of work with an exhibition , however I feel that it is important to nurture a continuity within my practice and allow the viewer to experience the work as it is being made"

Aesthetically Douglas's work is pared down. He prefers to refine complicated concepts into simple visual terms, an installation is usually uncluttered, subdued in colour and represents a trace of an action or an action itself in the form of documentation.

The element of continuity and action are vital and will always be evident within an installation, where conventionally we are accustomed to experience actions from the past within a gallery space, Douglas is more interested in allowing the viewer to engage with their current moment through his actions as an artist.

ROMANA LONDI

*Born in 1983, Rome, Italy
Lives and works in London, United Kingdom*





PART I: SHOOTING

A: *STATE*... "*STATE*:" actually caused a big of a debate between us because I think that it's such an ambivalent word and each one of us was interpreting it in a different way. And that was kind of the purpose because we were a group of artists and people from different countries speaking a language which for most of us is not our native language and having to define what we meant by "State" high lightened the way we were going to interact with one another, meaning that we were aware that in the everyday life just as much as in the art itself we were going to be or could be misunderstood.

Q: How does *STATE*: work as a collective?

A: In what way?

Q: Do you produce artefacts altogether, or do you produce your own work and curate an exhibition?

A: It depends. It's quite independent. Each one of us has their own path, but when we make an exhibition we collaborate because the rhetoric side has to make a sense. I think that what was interesting is that we all had a different theme. We all had a different approach to art, different mediums, interests, so this is actually the main reason that made me continue working with the group. I wanted to be free, and I wanted to be

free in a group who would not expect me to do or be anything but what I do or am.

STATE: what it meant to me was – to state. Stating a statement, and in fact the first exhibition I've made was the first exhibition in which I presented paintings rather than videos or an installation piece. I called it "Instruzioni per l'uso preface" (Instruction for the use of them preface) so, stating that it was the beginning of a conversation, and decided to project them on the wall, because what I intended to give to people was an image and nothing more. A projection. It was sarcastic or better ironic because you can't instruct people on how to use art. I decided to do it the night before I was going to present it, so it was quite a last minute choice, and it made a lot of sense and think it was perfect for the exhibition space. It was so underneath, underneath this building and it was so dark, visceral. I thought it was good also because the title of the exhibition was also *STATE*: (again to me as Stating) and my way of presenting the work was just an image. I wasn't being concrete, like hiding behind, like a light. This is kind of the way I felt art is now a day, and people are in societies, its constructed, and the *STATE*: is. Like a long pointless novel, you have to give them something to see and they don't really care if it's there or not.

Q: In a way that's what I liked about *STATE*: I think the name is very well chosen, as it



can have so many different connotations. The last thing, which interested me about the collective, was the aspect of not producing an artefact in itself as a collective but the idea of producing meaning...

A: Through different mediums, yes. Absolutely, that's why it's working even now. We take also inspiration from one another as I would not know, I would not expect what Marje or Tim is going to do next, because I am NOT like them, you understand? So I do something different and I think that we all do it for the same reasons. I think that down, deep down, we are all there for the same commitment and for the same urge, but we are not doing it in the same way, and we are not STATING it in the same way, you understand? I think also the next exhibitions are going to be very interesting, because the next one is meant to be about individualism.

Q: Where will it be held?

A: In Berlin.

PART II: SITTING DOWN

A: So yes, we're talking about *STATE*:. We were talking about what meant to me and what was the reason that made us choose this title for the group. So now we were talking about how we're going to

proceed for the next exhibition. What we decided to do is that each one of us can choose a city and we'll have to organize it and be the number one person involved in the whole process. For the first exhibition was Matthew, he was the one organizing, advising the others, getting in contact with the... responsible for the venue, etc.. The next time it's going to be Tim. And that's why he... on the website you'll see a picture of the 8 of us.. he decided that for this exhibition we were meant to look like people who had just been brought into a police station, and that's why we all have a face of...

Q: Mug shot.

A: ...mug shot, indeed! Anyway, after Berlin I think it will be either me or Marje's turn to organize an exhibition.

Q: Where would you organize it?

A: I think I would organize it in Milan. I decided for our poster, even if it sounds very obvious, we are going to be shot like the last supper, but we are all going to be standing up and I'm going to play with words. I'm going to call us "Apostoli", which is like the apostles, "Apostoli ora". Which means "A posto li' ora!", means "get yourself there now". It's about being radiant, not being radiant,

"It's about individualism in a capitalistic art world."

about taking ourselves too seriously and always wanting more... everything will be already eaten and dry.

It's an image which has been used and reused and abused but it has such a strong meaning that to use it for the flyer is fine. Milan is the perfect place to do this.

Q: Do you have any work ready to present there? For Berlin and Milan?

A: For Berlin is about individualism, so yes. I have a piece but the problem is if someone will finance it because it's going to be a sculpture piece and installation. It will play a lot with emptiness and richness. It's about individualism in a capitalistic art world. My idea... if I say it, no one will steal it?

Q: I might steal it.

A: I actually would be flattered. However, I've decided to construct these boxes. In one of them you have a projection of what is happening on the other side of the wall. It's all about getting to a space and being on the other side... or conquering something and not being able to grasp it. The second one, of course if I manage to have the money, we'll have half glazed mirrors so people will go in there and will be looking at themselves, while other will be looking at how people look at themselves. It's all about also... you understand what I mean?

Q: Yes perfectly. So you intend to work in different mediums in the future?

A: My work is mainly rooted in structural concerns..

I hope to continue being inspired in different ways...perhaps I will continue working through video art combined with text. ..

In my pieces "Witness"- and "Projection", I have tried to portray the ambiguity of the reality surrounding us through rhetoric experiences and recurrent ways of saying in language.

This experiment works on the enigmatic character of social relations, the indulgent nature of media strategies and the patronising element of any power institution, this has perhaps influenced and brought me now to work on my latest series of paintings which focuses on the tradition of Crests and Monograms in Western Society.

I am subconsciously influenced by rococo and baroque as much as I'm trying to reach contemporary design and advertising of luxury brands ...will see..

Q: Thank you.

A: You're welcome.



Istruzioni per l'Uso: Prefazione

Romana Londi, 2009

This can almost be considered as a reactionary ensemble.

Although I wish to consider myself primarily as an artist painter, throughout the years I have come to think of this practice as a voluble and tricky field, constantly impressed by its heavy history, who's understanding and theory is still sewed around the great masters majestic example.

In my college years I was strictly advised to engage with other mediums, such as performance, installations and video art. This is when I learned to appreciate how the object of a painting lacked the freedom and the always-new experience of other art forms.

Styles and Sets of Meaning

I changed my painting style various times, in accordance to what was the message I intended to give through my work.

Painting has always been a medium which can communicate different things only through the particularities of a single brush stroke; its strength, the consistency of colour, the final varnish, everything IS reason in itself, and I play with it.

Duchamp said: "Art is a conversation with people from different times"

Painting's history is perhaps (and perhaps even to contemporary painting disadvantage) with sculpture, the most significant example of this theory and STATE of Affairs.

In my college years, most of the attention was revolved around the conceptual weight of my work and I was constantly imposed to stick to the "statement of Intentions".

The meaning and conceptual side became fundamental and the starting point from which I would decide how to best portray my idea.

I would capture the narrative of a story in Picasso's cubist style, give life to pretentious portraits with the help of Vermeer, strike the volume of emptiness or the unsettling formality of landscapes through Gerhard Richter's oeuvre and foster my personal struggle in Goya's hands.

The styles of painting to me are the 'sets of meaning' into which I convert my painting for a particular purpose.

YET: It is fundamental for my art to be de-associated with any of the painting genres mentioned above but regarded as a free, constantly moving hand tackling on the meanings that these have come to encapsulate though art history theory.

Curating this STATE of Affairs: Istruzioni per l'Uso: Prefazione

It is with this concern in mind that I resolved to show three paintings projected onto an empty frame.

In some ways, projecting ones image was not a way of negating them from the public as an act of revenge but a plan of escape for the paintings themselves.

While projected the paintings loose their commodified aspect as 'objects', and attention is reserved to the actual experience of capturing and immersing oneself in their ephemeral mirage.

It was almost like playing a magic trick and setting them free, subtracting their most explicit ties to theory of painting; subversively negating their concrete presence in order to highlight the essentially individual visual perception of the public.

It was also setting them free from the reasons I had made them in the first place and to give them to the public as new, as if they never existed unless someone would see them.

STATE of Autonomy:

The paintings are originally made independently, each painting is an autonomous art piece, here exhibited according to the particular choice for location and transformed into one of three ghostly windows on the most common subjects in painting: religious/ portrait, landscape and Natura Morta.

"UNTITLED MOMENT " originally made in 2006, acts in this particular case as a religious paintings and portrait. It works on human intuitions and feelings, suggesting some sort of narrative illustrates a moment of human condition, being in the form of a portrait, draws analogies with iconoclastic paintings.

"THE SCENERY N. 5", originally part of a series of landscape paintings, portrays an empty space, but differently from those sceneries who wish to capture the sublime in a space, or views of cities that mark a moment in history, this one suggests the emptiness of a dark corner square on which someone just happens to rest the look while thinking of something else. In this lapse of meaning, the art

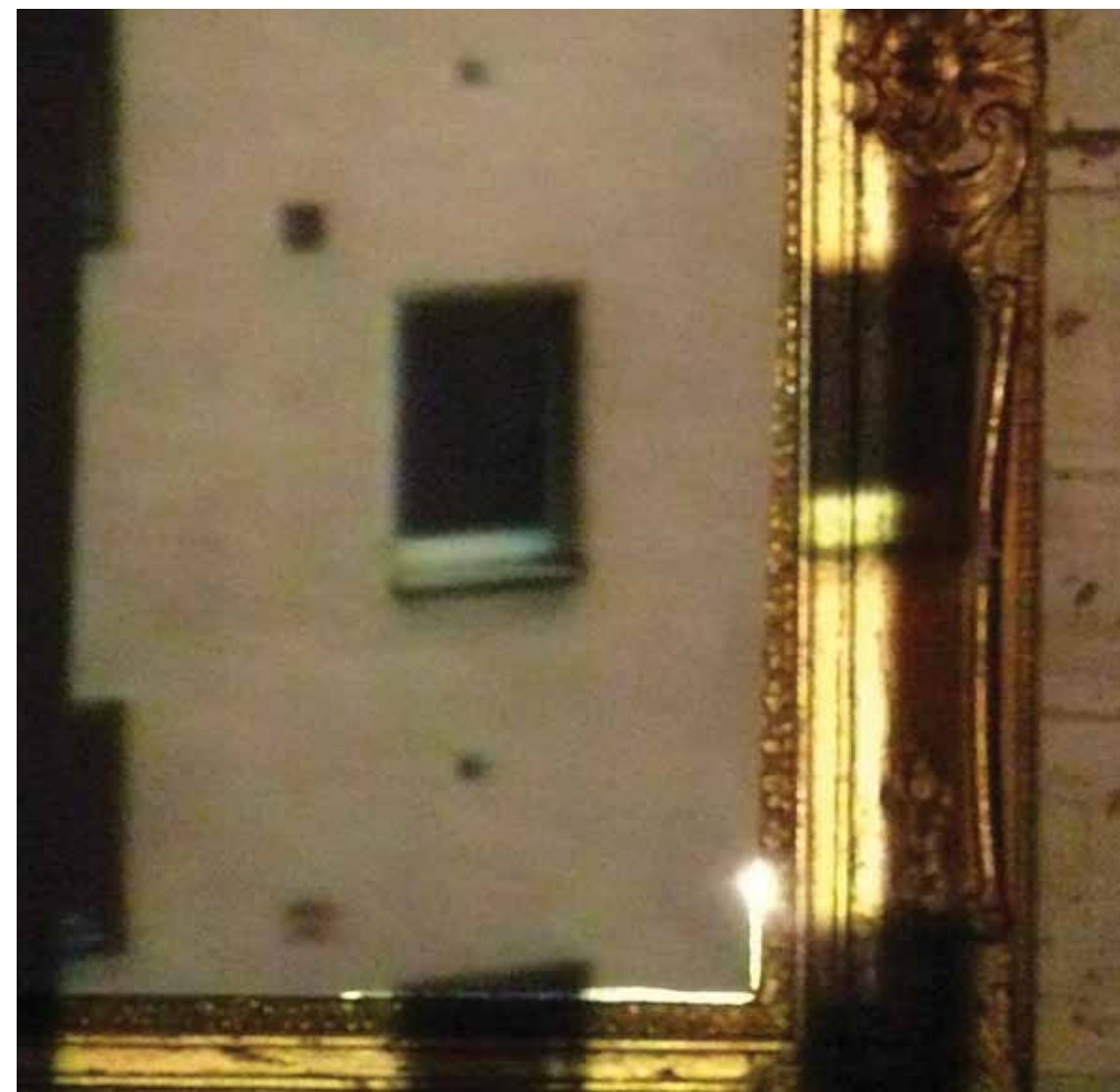
piece becomes the inconsistency, which has to be filled by the subconscious and often nervous perception I personally associate with the illustrated corner of a parking space where nothing happens.

In "Natura Morta, Serie 3 POLITICA", a cauliflower positioned on a silver plate is awkwardly transformed into an ironic portrait of a spongy thinking brain. In terms of the original meaning of the painting, 'Politics' is a tribute to the power of thinking a new, dismantling prejudice and prejudice itself. The choice of the subject goes hand in hand with the painting style adopted to portray it. What is a notoriously a worthless object, in Italian vulgar language 'cavolo' used as the emblem of nothingness, is brought to life under the spell of

Caravaggio's prestigious chiaro scuro effect. Under the layers of blind prejudice I set to reveal the real nature of the subject, to not only recover the original resemblance to a flower but also to state the uncanny one to a human brain as a flourishing and enlighten being.

Honouring the title of the Exhibition *STATE*, my idea was to give this term its most active meaning, hence reading it as the Imperative tense of the verb 'to state'. Somehow, this way allowed my contribution to work as a flag to that present Attempt of Revolution,

Stuck in the paradox of reactionary attitudes.



SELECTED TEXTS

MANIFESTO

Matthew Douglas, 2009

In the winter of 2008 *STATE*: artists met in east London and agreed the following..

..that *STATE*: would be an international collective that served to support its members through group shows, sharing information, opportunities and ideas.

..that the website stateartists.com would be the platform for debate, discussion and furthermore, serve as a place where the activities of each member artist could be shown in the public domain.

General

In this way, the *STATE*: collective could remain constantly in flux, and, through its own diverse membership allow its collective to develop more radically.

STATE: also aims to operate as a vehicle of collective expression uniting individual practices and gaining collective influence from each others work.

STATE: manifesto is subject to change, any alteration is (like the collective membership) subject to vote by its members.

Exhibiting

..that *STATE*: exhibitions would be held periodically in *STATE*: members home countries, work for these exhibitions being exported / imported or make in situ.

..that the member who plays host to the *STATE*: show would have precedence over the purpose of the show and act as head curator - following the model of *STATE*: London 2008.

STATE: exhibitions could also include external guest artists to enrich the work, these artists would be accepted through vote of members with final decisions made by the host artist.

Membership

..that the core group of artists under the collective name *STATE*: will not necessarily remain the same, members may choose to leave *STATE*: or elect fellow artists into the collective to strengthen its membership.

..that new members of the *STATE*: collective would be chosen through the vote of its existing members.

(from notation and recollection)

STATE:

Marje Len Murusalu, 2009

Nowadays some of the problems we are facing are very classic and contemporary. Is it possible to collaborate productively these days? Is it possible to diminish our individuality?

The solution for *STATE*: back in 2008 was the acceptance that it is not possible to have a group of artists similar to the ones that existed before post-modernism - since the quantity of individualism, fuelled by different mediums and perspectives, is too influential these days. However, the contemporary art world is mostly project-based; an artist must do a lot more work than just being a creative. Therefore the direction to pursue is to work as co-organizers /curators and have a common STATE OF MIND.

One of the main goals of *STATE*: artists is not only establishing a dialogue about art and creation within the group, but extending it to the broader international platform, from which various art projects and exhibitions would emerge. Especially, *STATE*: aims to include contributions by artists who are not permanent members, but who are willing to stand by their ideals by actively participating in the community that constitutes the art scene.

STATE:

Matthew Douglas, 2009

This is what *STATE*: means to me:

A dialogue between several points within Europe, 8 simultaneous lives being lived separately yet with a united goal.

STATE: is an opportunity to share ideas and perform actions and produce works of art through a direct and indirect exportation.

The *STATE*: is a paradox or an oxymoron for naturally our collective is in a state of flux and is constantly evolving, when a show is produced a certain degree of coherence is achieved that results in something taking place.

The relationships within *STATE*: are disparate yet can be creatively fertile when required.

STATE: is ultimately a delicate experiment.

STATE:

Tim Plamper, 2009

STATE: is a group of 8 artists connected by the same aims.

The group operates as a syndicate in the realm of artistic practice. Therefore *STATE*: stands squarely in the tradition of vanguard movements. But was the ambition of these historic groups the development of a significant style as an elitarian clique, the intention of *STATE*: is not a formal one. For the enforcement of a formal style should not be a matter of contemporary art, *STATE*: is not even about the formation of a static structure. The duty is the setup of a dynamic platform to provide a space of possibility. This generated scope is used for the discourse on the topics of artistic work nowadays and in future, for the reflections on the individual work, but also for collaborations and the positioning of the group in public. As this space is not a matter of course or even freely accessible, *STATE*: joined forces to address themselves to that task. Hence *STATE*: is not designed hermetically or to claim exclusiveness. The group is intended to be an initial point for the development of an open network that can be shared by different artists or other organisations which agree with the *STATE*:

agenda. *STATE*: is a forceful aggregation that is aimed at the responsible attitude towards the exposure to contemporary art regarding the social environment and the personality of the individual. The means to achieve these aims will be selected accordingly to their efficiency, even if this means a break with wonts or the revilement of established positions.

STATE: is not about the fulfilment of certain patterns of behaviour nor about the orientation towards stereotypes of any kind. The debate is meant to be handled clearly, meaningfully, faithfully, and with the claim for utmost social relevance.

STATE: as a "non-movement"

Matthew Douglas, 2009

Movements (as the name suggests) should involve a progressive aspect. A faculty that forces the artistic zeitgeist to reconsider its position, adopting an emerging trend and rejecting its current one.

Paradoxically by presenting a framework or series of rules that govern a collective, the movement loses its "trajectorical" motion by engulfing the collective with a single objective.

STATE: recognizes the regressive and suffocating nature of such a decision and therefore operates dynamically and reflexively; subject to the environment in which each exhibition opportunities arises. Challenging notions of conformity and the blind pursuit of a single conceptual model. Exhibitions, written articles and other documentation form the trace of such activity.

Often movements are terms applied retrospectively and often are only implicated once the impact of a group of artists is fully realized, this method of categorization is helpfully to place certain artists within a chronological framework but then shuts down any further progressive activity for the artist in question. This would explain the animosity between artists and art historians.

Movements do, however serve to galvanize ideas and feed future work and research, *STATE*: recognizes this and aims (at this time) to exist between a movement and a "non-movement".

Acting individually within a collective.

Education

- 2009 Diploma Fine Art, State Academy of Fine Arts, Stuttgart, Germany
- 2008 Exchange term at University of East London, UK

Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 *AMBITIONS / CIRCUMSTANCES*, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
- 2009 *Komm - Ich zahl Dir die Abtreibung, Baby!*, John Doe Projects, Karlsruhe, Germany
Fight the metric system, LOFT19, Suzanne Tarasiève, Paris, France
- 2008 *Gestürzte*, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
- 2007 *Mein kalter Mund*, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
- 2006 *Was darunter ist*, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2010 *4play*, Infernoesque, Berlin, Germany
Das verworfene Firmament, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
- 2009 *Portfolio*, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
Salon du Dessin, Paris. Galerie Suzanne Tarasiève, Paris, France
BOB – A Tribute to Bob Dylan, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
- 2008 *Salon du Dessin*, Paris. Galerie Suzanne Tarasiève, Paris, France
Eigenrauschen, Galerie pro arte, Freiburg, Germany
STATE: Shoreditch Townhall, London, UK
- 2007 *Augenweite*, Kunstverein Das Damianstor, Bruchsal, Germany
Und ewig lockt die Malerei III, Galerie Rainer Wehr, Stuttgart, Germany
Free Hand 2, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
- 2006 *Free Hand*, Egbert Baqué Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
Augenweite, Städtische Galerie Donzdorf, Donzdorf, Germany
- 2005 *Lange Nacht der Museen*, Stuttgart Germany
Muse heute? Städtische Galerie im Buntentor und Kunsthalle, Bremen, Germany
- 2004 *Gutentak*, Stuttgart, Germany

j_tim_p@hotmail.com

Education

- 2009 BA Fine Art – University of East London, UK
- 2004 Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, Estonia

Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 *Extra Charge*, Windows 204, Bristol, UK
- 2009 *Idée Fixe*, Helleman Tower Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia
Interim Stop (duo with Riho Kall), Hobusepea Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia
Text Off! (Murusalu / Ello), City Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia
- 2008 *Zona*, Aatrium Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia
Text Me Again (Murusalu / Ello), Y Gallery, Tartu, Estonia
Text Me (duo with Eleriin Ello), EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2010 *Genesis: Art for Haiti*, The Rag Factory, London, UK
- 2009 *Letter*, Võru City Gallery, Võru, Estonia
Fine Art Degree Show, AVA Showcase, London, UK
- 2008 *STATE: Shoreditch Town Hall*, London, UK. (curator / artist)
From the End of the World Near Moscow, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia
Making of Contemporary Art, Estonian Contemporary Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia
- 2007 *Empty is Full*, Drawing Project. Helsinki Art Hall, Helsinki, Finland
- 2005 *P_c Exhibition*, Culture Factory Polymer, Tallinn, Estonia

Projects

- 2010 Documentary “Born for the Dance. Kai Leete” (screenwriter)
- 2009 Documentary “Shred of Dernier” (author)

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Education

- 2010 MA FA - University of the West of England, UK
- 2009 BA Fine Art / visual theories - University of East London, UK

Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 *Eight Eighths*, Tobacco Factory, Bristol
Dove Painting, windows204, Bristol, UK
- 2009 *Many small hopeful actions*, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK
Progress in Process, Light Well AVA, London, UK
- 2008 *Four works on steel*, Taparia, Greenwich, London, UK
Recent work, Light Well AVA, London, UK

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2010 *Here today, gone tomorrow*, Milsom Place, Bath, UK
Genesis: Art for Haiti, The Rag Factory, London, UK
Never Let the Truth get in the way of a good story, GWRSA, Bristol, UK
- 2009 *Fine Art Degree Show*, AVA Showcase, London, UK
Aok No.1, Stokes Croft, Bristol, UK
- 2008 *STATE*: Shoreditch Town Hall, London, UK
'A list of names', ETCETERA Gallery, Hackney, London, UK

Writings

- 2010 *The Paradox of Magic*, S. Playford
- 2009 *Distancing Tactics*
- 2008 *Gesture: forced and unforced action*. *STATE*:

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Education

- 2009 Fine Art - University of East London, UK
- 2008 Fine Art - Central Saint Martin, University of the Arts London, UK
- 2003 Political Science and international Relations - La Sapienza, University Of Rome, Italy

Professional Experience

- 2001 - 2010 Romana Londi has been working as a freelance artist. Since 2003 collaborating with advertising companies, documentaries and galleries in London, New York, Berlin and Paris.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2008 *STATE*: Shoreditch Town Hall, London, UK

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IMPRINT

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“And don’t forget to wear a mustache.”
Tomas Hein