

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART & MEDIA



EXHIBITION

15.04.08 - 21.06.08

NO PLACE - LIKE HOME

PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION IN EUROPE

MIGUEL ABAD, AN ARCHITEKTUR, XAVIER ARENÓS, HERMAN
ASSELBERGHS, FEDERICO BARONELLO, URSULA BIEMANN,
RAPHAËL CUOMO, PIETER GEENEN, MARIA IORIO, PRAVDOLIUB
IVANOV, TAKUJI KOGO, BÉNÉDICTE LIÉNARD, ARMIN LINKE,
THOMAS LOCHER, HANS OP DE BEECK, YVES METTLER,
MIGREUROP, ERZEN SHKOLLOLI
CURATED BY PAUL WILLEMSSEN

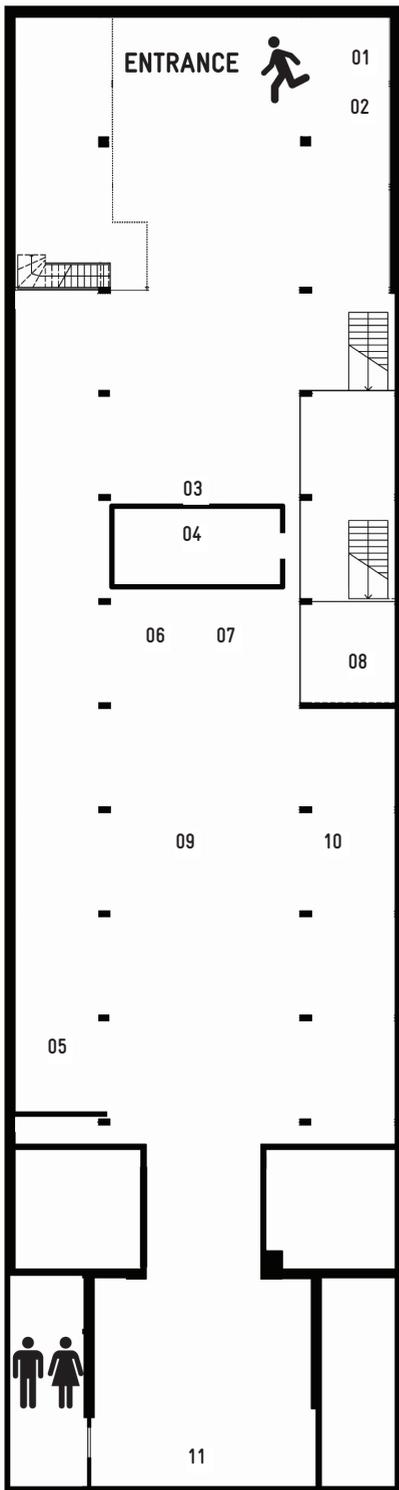
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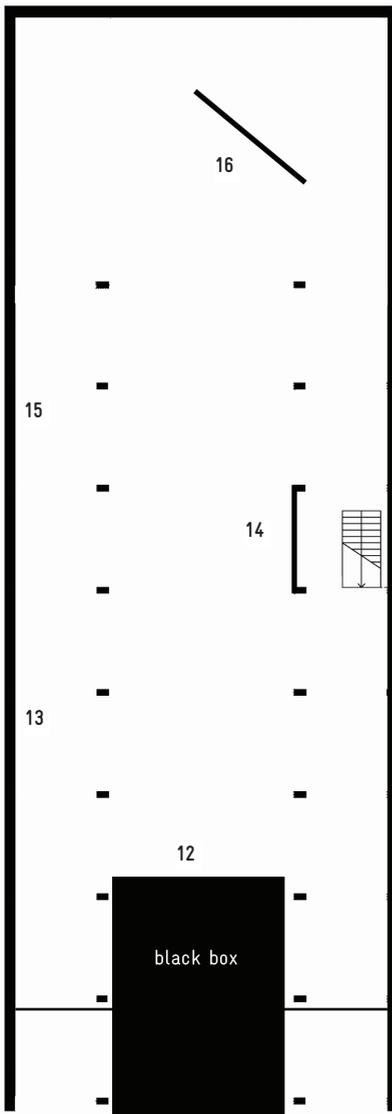
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15.04.08 - 21.06.08

NO PLACE - LIKE HOME

PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION IN EUROPE

The group exhibition *No Place - like Home: Perspectives on Migration in Europe* features eighteen Belgian and international artists. Their videos, photographic works and installations take a closer look at what lies under the surface of the migration issue. Migration is a thing of all ages. Where Europeans once colonized various continents and emigrated en masse to other lands both in and beyond their own continent, movement from the opposite direction has now taken hold. Capital, goods and information circulate freely in the late-capitalist, globalized world economy. For people, however, mobility is arranged somewhat differently. Borders and territories are still the primary expression of national sovereignty, however multi ethnic populations may have become. For Europe - which permanently shifts between regulating, even attracting, and then repelling strangers - these are the outer borders, the so-called Schengenland regions. *No Place - like Home* (mark the hyphen) investigates how inner and outer space, how 'we' and 'they' maintain complex relations with one another and the frictions this generates.

The media, like tourism - a phenomenon that on the Italian island of Lampedusa vacillates with the refugee issue - have little to do with transparency. By way of the varying perceptions of 18 artists whose work focuses on the illegal refugees who are today's modern nomads, this exhibition hopes to help visualize an issue that cannot be summarized in black-and-white contrasts: an interwoven, variegated tale of migration networks and refugee trafficking, cartography and geographical military data, migration management and border infiltrations, international rights, lack of rights and lawlessness.

Today, illegal migration into Europe comes primarily from southeastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa. One exceptional focal point of the exhibition is the sanitary cordon being placed around that last continent. Peripheral locations such as the Strait of Gibraltar and a number of Sicilian islands, almost perpetually besieged by refugees, connect several contributions to the exhibition. Miguel Abad and Herman Asselberghs are showing images of Ceuta, the Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast, where Europe is establishing part of its migration policy outside its own borders. Pieter Geenen, Raphael Cuomo and Maria Lorio, Federico Baronello

and Takuji Kogo indicate how, on the Italian island of Lampedusa, the reality of tourism runs hand in hand with that of asylum seekers, being repatriated or otherwise, without the two worlds ever touching. In her comprehensive installation, *Sahara Chronicle*, Ursula Biemann highlights the sub-Saharan exodus to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. *Schengen, the Castle* by Xavier Arenós, charts how things move on from there. His work is not only a typology of the streams of mobility to Spain, but also reveals the underlying macro-economic space. Cartography is also found in the contributions of the Migreurop network and the magazine collective, *An Architektur*: on the one hand a map of all possible transit, relief or detention camps connected with European territory, and on the other hand as a specific analysis in the form of an architectural dissection of Polish refugee centres.

The fact that European political space is not consistent with European immigration is a subtext in the work of Erzen Shkololli, Yves Mettler, Herman Asselberghs and Thomas Locher, as is the question of what common value systems still mean on this continent from a cultural, historical perspective, once stereotypes are set aside. The paradox of an interior European space that defends its borders versus a world where nothing stops at national frontiers any more is evidenced in the photographic work of Armin Linke. His work draws attention to the most diverse effects of globalisation and serves as a kind of resonance chamber for the exhibition, as does an ironic installation by Pravidoliub Ivanov with some thirty different cooking surfaces and pots. What remains is the individual voice of the migrant, which is generally kept out of the media. Its tone is allegorical for Hans Op de Beeck, a naked testimony in the work of Ursula Biemann and in the participatory documentary, *Pour vivre, j'ai laissé*. In this last project, initiated and directed by Bénédicte Liénard, asylum seekers at the Petit Chateau refugee centre in Brussels take the camera into their own hands in an introspective document that does not lack humor and is made from a non-voluntary, and therefore powerful perspective, in a plea for a world as a place that can still be created by mankind.

Thinking about migration means making a close examination of oneself. With *No Place - like Home*, Argos lays claim to a trans-national political space. What public space, what identity stands counter to this? What and where is 'home'? These are questions that will be further investigated in a parallel programme of lectures and video presentations.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

01 METTLER, YVES (*1976)

Swiss artist who works with installations, drawings and new media. Mettler is concerned with communication and the experience of urban space. He evokes familiar places (stations, squares,...) in such a way that they lose their triviality, are artistically transformed and come to speak. He has also executed projects regarding the relationship between tourism, neo-colonialism and migration.

EUROPE SQUARE (BERLIN, BRUSSELS, LILLE & CALAIS)

POSTCARDS, STAND, 2008

Europe Square vormt een nieuwe ontwikkeling binnen het Europaplein. *Proje Europe Square* forms a new development within the *Europaplatz Projekt*, started by Mettler in 2003. This project reflects on the concept of 'Europaplatz' and the remarkable, current phenomenon that many cities create their own square as a way of affirming their connection with their new home land. These squares are usually situated around ports of arrival, transit and departure, such as train stations and transit areas. This enables the possibility of undertaking a journey in which the points of departure and arrival are the same, but located elsewhere.

Starting from the intersection between fiction (diary) and documentary (photos, interviews), Mettler went in search this time for the relationships between these squares. His journey also attempted to trace a star-shaped line from the centre (Berlin) to the edge (Calais). The starting point is 'Europaplatz' in Berlin, Mettler's home town, a square that was erected not long ago in a city that has recently started to connect global capitals in rapid succession. It is (proto)typically located at the back of the new central station. His next stop was 'Place de l'Europe' in Calais. As opposed to the other squares he explored up till now, he encountered an outer border this time. He came across two other squares along the way: one in Brussels, the capital of Europe as well as the location of the exhibition, and the other in Lille, squeezed between the new and the old station, and looking out on the modern urban district built by Rem Koolhaas. In these squares there is also a visible tension between the use of space and its representation. The trip is documented. On one hand we have the squares, as a form of urban planning, and as indications across the intersection between the real, the imaginary and the symbolical. On the other hand, there is the train journey itself, a movement from the centre to the edge and back. Photography, interviews, recordings on the premises are the media used by Mettler, complete with a diary which provides comments on Derrida's book *L'autre cap*.

The final mode of presentation is a series of post cards on a stand. They represent the squares and their immediate surroundings. On the back of the postcards is a text in light grey: diary fragments, greetings, thoughts located between home and elsewhere.

02 MIGREUROP (2002)

Migreurop is a European initiative of activists (NGOs, academics, private persons...) who reflect on, inform about and work around refugee camps in Europe, migration and asylum policy, as well as new projects concerning the exteriorisation of asylum. This network of basic movements wishes to oppose both the political shift towards the right and fort Europe. They publish an annual map of refugee camps located on the European territory and non-European border areas. By doing so, they wish to increase the visibility of camps and turning the public opinion against the creation of camps.

FOREIGNERS' CAMPS IN EUROPE IN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

WALLPAPER, 600X420CM, 2007

This updated version (2007) provides an overview and an analysis of the European imprisonment policy of so-called 'unwanted' migrants and asylum seekers. The network uses a very broad view of what a camp is: i.e. not just closed centers, but also transit and open centers which provide so-called assistance and accommodation, but where migrants have no other choice than to stay when they want to apply for asylum or get a life allowance. Between 2003 and 2007 the consecutive versions show an increasing number of camps and an expansion of imprisonment practices outside Europe. By using these mechanisms of exclusion Europe has brought about a permanent mobility: refugees being constantly on the move.

03 LOCHER, THOMAS (*1956)

German neo-conceptual artist. He studied at the academy of fine arts and at the university of Stuttgart. Since 2000, he has been living and working in Berlin; since 2008 he has been a professor at the Royal Danish academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Locher's work researches the complex relationships between words, images, language and their definition. He works with themes such as grammar, psychoanalysis, law and communication.

HUMAN RIGHTS / THE NEW SUBJECT

Thomas Locher exhibits two redefined versions of articles from the Rights of Man:

1. *Universal declaration of human rights / Article 5*
(2004, C-print, 180x236,5cm)

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

2. *Convention relating to the status of refugees / Article 33. Prohibition of expulsion or return* (2004, C-print, 230,8x175,8cm)

No Contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Locher comments on these fragments from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by underlining passages and adding notes by hand. In this way he indirectly refers to the existing atrocities due to the divide between the utopia expressed by the Human Rights and the reality experienced by the refugee. Forced repatriation, illegal incarceration, humiliating conditions in refugee camps are widely spread, although they are often denied in the media. The unconditional tone, represented typographically in the large type in which the Human Rights seems to legitimise their own justification, is questioned by Locher's hesitating notes (in small type). They criticise the European migration policy in which the stateless refugee no longer seems to be part of humanity and loses his claim on the basic rights guaranteed by the Human Rights. His interpretation also puts the finger on the Human Rights' weaknesses: the discrepancy between modernism's juridical subject and the human being: the naked individual which cannot be associated with any aspiration toward universality whatsoever. He can be associated with Hanna Arendt's criticism concerning the basic condition of Human Rights: "It is as though a person who is nothing more than a human being has precisely lost those characteristics which enable others to treat him as a fellow-man." A person who is not considered a human being (i.e. an illegal immigrant) will lose his basic rights.

04 SHKOLOLLI, ERZEN (*1976)

Kosovo artist, curator and co-founder of the Contemporary Art Institute EXIT (Peje). His works offer a reflection on events symbolizing the social duality of his country. His aim herein is to illustrate the background of these events. He is also interested in their relevance regarding Kosovo's ethnic, religious and political future, kinship with the Muslim community, Serbian nationalism and the ambivalent relationship with the European Union, which portrays itself as the protector of Kosovo. His work presents local customs, objects and elements from folklore, tainted by the recent past revisited.

HEY YOU

VIDEO, 4'31", 2002

Recording of a legendary musical performance by the Albanian singer Shkurte Fejza. Since the eighties her name has constantly been connected with national resistance. Between 1981 and 1983, her songs were banned by the

communist regime and afterwards she was imprisoned. She stopped singing after the fall of the regime. Her songs combine traditional folk elements with popular music. Dressed in traditional attire, Fejza directs her lamentation towards Europe. The lyric refers to her divided homeland, Albania, the Balkan war and the many refugees. It is a call for a home, a reunification of the double headed eagle, the coat of arms on the Albanian flag. It is a demand that many inhabitants of Kosovo share to this day. On the 17 of February 2008, the Kosovo parliament unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. Tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians celebrated this event by waving the Albanian flag.

05 AN ARCHITEKTUR (2002)

Berlin-based magazine which originated from the architects' collective for urban politics "freies Fach". Its members point out distinct problems concerning space and architecture in order to investigate their socio-political impact. Their critical questioning achieves its visual representation in maps, statistics, interviews, common and editorial contributions in single-theme publications. Conferences, exhibitions and architecture camps keep the debates alive.

EUROPEAN MIGRATION GEOGRAPHIES POLAND

MAGAZINE, 26,5X18,5CM EN 8 POSTERS, 200X137CM, 2008

In 2004-2005 An Architektur, in collaboration with the FFM (Forschungszentrum Flucht and Migration), carried out a study into the consequences of the expansion of the European Union on the border area between East-Poland and Belarus. The research focussed on the aspects of mobility, migration and border traffic and on the geography of specific zones where migration takes place or is regulated transit centres, border crossings, refugee camps, government agencies for migration and closed asylum centres. This resulted in an analysis of changing patterns of planned mobility. These patterns were drawn up using (aerial) photos, video material, sketches and conversations with the actors involved: (activists, governments, refugee organisations, asylum seekers) during local visits. Cartography maps out the actual building of camps and the border areas, and supplies information about the socio-spatial dimension of migration and its impact on our daily lives. This project provides a critical margin for the strategic organisation and regularisation of migration. More and more refugee camps are used as instruments of control, rather than as areas of rest and transition. An Architektur adds a spatial dimension to the political analysis of migration. By a zoom-in process, the eight maps in the exhibition space steer the visitor, from the starting point of a historical overview of the Polish-Belarusian border to the border camps of Bialystok, Czerwony Bór, and Debak and the closed asylum centre of Eisenhüttenstadt, seen as prototype on the German side. Until his attention is finally drawn to An Architektur 15 *European Migration Geographies, Poland*.

06 LIÉNARD, BÉNÉDICTE (*1965)

Belgian director. Liénard says the following about her socially committed way of working: "I place myself in relation to the world, the question of cinema comes afterwards". *Une part de Ciel* (2001) was born out of her experience with the prison system. With the documentary-installation *Acte légitime de prévention massive* (2001) Liénard wanted to rehabilitate the view and the testimony regarding Geert van Moorter's images. During the war in Iraq, this emergency doctor recorded images of wounded people being cared for. The same process is repeated in *Pour vivre, j'ai laissé* in which the asylum seeker does not only take place in front of, but also behind the camera. This project was realised within the framework of a video workshop in the centre for asylum seekers in Brussels. Liénard coordinated it, together with Güldem Durmaz (1971/Fr) and Valérie Vanhoutvinck (1968/Be).

POUR VIVRE, J'AI LAISSÉ

VIDEO, 30', 2004

The Petit Château in Brussels is the oldest and the first federal refugee centre for asylum seekers in Belgium. This open centre offers temporary accommodation, food, medical care and psychological support during the procedure of applying for asylum. Depression is a common phenomenon among the inhabitants who live in fear of being expatriated. Compared to all other works exhibited here, this document stands out: there is no question of an artist expressing an alternative view on the migration issue by voicing the migrants individual voice. In this project, the asylum seekers themselves take hold of the camera and each of them provides an image of themselves in their own way. They are not talking to the camera, they are talking to us. The focus is on the present, not on the past. Instead of giving a testimony or telling their story, they are filming their lives inside the centre. For Mr. Lapaji it is a life that cuts through the red tape, for others it is imprisonment, an empty existence filled with memories and dreams. "The beauty of this film is not its message, but the fact that people have framed their intimacy in a place where there is none." (Liénard).

07 ARENÓS, XAVIER (*1968)

Spanish artist and co-publisher of art magazine *Roulotte* (Barcelona). His architectonic prototypes of private spaces (shelters) and public places (pavilions) concede to a changed human profile: that of the modern-day nomad, displaced by non-utopian politics of architecture, who is constantly on the move. Arenos performs research into how ideas around territory, habitat, economy and politics form the basis of how we inhabit reality.

The different stages in the creation of his installations are widely documented and archived by means of sketches, photos, scale models, philosophical and literary sources. This occasions a critical reflection on the power mechanisms that are slowing down social progress.

At the moment, Arenos is working within the framework of a research project on urbanisation and the organisation of refugee camps in the Sahara and in Tinduf (Argelia).

SCHENGEN, THE CASTLE

WALLPAPER, 400X200CM, 2007

The Castle refers unambiguously to Kafka's unfinished novel of the same name. K., a land surveyor who has been summoned by the gentry of 'the castle', tries in many different ways to contact the castle, which remains out of reach, nevertheless painfully real. His attempts propel him into an absurd and toilsome adventure. The castle, a bureaucratic labyrinth with accountants, secretaries and under-secretaries, remains a distant stranger. At the end, K. finds himself further away from his goal than ever, having lost a substantial part of both his self respect and status along the way. He finally dies from exhaustion, without having achieved anything. According to Arenos, this typical Kafkaesque situation, in which an individual is left at the mercy of anonymous power structures in a non-transparent environment, without ever discovering the principle on which these are based, is similar to that of the modern day migrant. Confronted with a system which uses psychological as well as physical terror, the migrant is also lacking in power. The fort (i.e. Europe) symbolizes security, stability and order. In order to maintain these, there are strict rules concerning new citizens: only people with certain qualifications are welcome. Arenos' project maps out the different kinds of economy shaped within the border concept in a typological way.

The formal or linear economy (inside the walls) of migrants with a legal residence permit, the informal or circular economy, a commercial grey zone unbound by the laws of legality, and the illegal or invisible economy (outside the walls), run by the mafia, which abuses the despair of illegal immigrants. Here, the border symbolizes an enormous system of political and economic control in which people are treated as merchandise.

08 LINKE, ARMIN (*1966)

The Italian artist Armin Linke travels extensively around the world. Using the media of film and photography he wants to document the effects of globalisation, the transformation of cities into megalopolises and their social and political effects on the current conditions of human existence. His large scale photo prints scrutinize these contemporary landscapes, showing how our observation of space is changed by them. He especially documents situations in which the line between fiction and non-fiction becomes blurred or even invisible.

ASSEMBLAGE/NO PLACE - LIKE HOME

Three books (2008, 40x50cm) (combining 60 photos) presented next to each other, together with one suspended c-print *Maha Kumbh Mela, Allahabad*,

India (2001, c-print, 60x50cm), from the selection entitled *Assemblage/No Place - Like Home* which Linke created out of his photo work for this exhibition. These panoramic images of urban/natural landscapes betray the existence of migration systems because of the literal or figurative presence of migrants. The work therefore forms a perfect addition to the videos of Biemann, Cuomo & Iorio en Barello & Takuiji. The photos display an interaction between landscape and politics, the influence of migration on space and time. Linke's view is observant and possessing a sense of absurdity and irony. Linke's images become socially relevant, their loss of scale and proportion fascinating. In these landscapes man is often reduced to an insignificant object. It is as though Linke suggests that globalisation has grown over our heads.

09 IVANOV, PRAVDOLIUB (*1964)

"Only life is worth stopping at. Art itself is only cheap, visual material."

This provocative statement is typical of this Bulgarian artist's approach towards art and life. Ivanov's art does not retreat inside its own borders, but is aimed at reality. His installations are often a reaction to current political events and an analysis of 'otherness', of symbols, and the relationship between objects and their representation. For him, the challenge of art lies in provocation: to urge the viewer to think by making him wonder or worry.

TRANSFORMATION ALWAYS TAKES TIME AND ENERGY

INSTALLATION, 2008

In his usual way, Ivanov places common, daily objects in an alienating context. This adds something absurd to them. He makes sure, however, that they keep their dignity; fascinated by the ability of objects to express matters that touch upon human existence. Pots and pans borrowed from friends and relatives are simmering on electric hot plates which are too small and too low. The water does little more than warm up and create steam. The boiling point is never reached: it's all a waste of time and energy. The difficult, time consuming transformation refers indirectly to the changes faced by Bulgarian society as a consequence of the socio-political instability during the nineties. It is this invisibility of what occurs, well-known to us as the elementary household procedure and the laws of physics, that are converted into a metaphor for the eternal developments of political and social change. From the installation emanates a poetical tension, veiling a philosophical reflection on change and transformation: "the difference between change and transformation is that change does not exist. Only transformation occurs, which is too heavily burdened with and exposed to our expectations, dreams and even our daily needs. I would like to make the title and the work itself sound like an absurd mix of the law of physics and a somewhat naïve call for social tolerance..." (Ivanov)

10 BIEMANN, URSULA (°1955)

Swiss artist, theorist and curator. Biemanns artistic practice is aimed at the representation of gender and the identity of minority groups in the media and in peripheral and border areas. Her artistic practice confronts the issues of globalisation, such as free trade zones, virtual communication, mobility, migration and borders. In a series of video projects and books (*Geography and the Politics of Mobility* (2003), *Stuff it—The Video Essay in the Digital Age* (2003), *The Maghreb Connection* (2006)) she laid bare the gender dimension of refugee work, from smugglers at the Spanish-Moroccan border to migrants, put to work in the sex industry. Her experimental video-essays connect a theoretical macro-level with a micro-perspective on local political and cultural practices. Convinced of the fact that determining borders is of a spatial nature, rather than being fixed in advance by the powers in place, the research of *Geography and the Politics of Mobility* and *The Maghreb Connection*, about migration systems in North-Africa, and *Sahara Chronicle* (2006–2007), about trans-Saharan mobility, accentuates space and mobility.

SAHARA CHRONICLE

The Schengen Agreement involves free circulation of goods and people inside Europe, but brought also more rigorous controls at the outer borders. This new border regime affects the migration streams from North-Africa as well as the increasing stream from the sub-Saharan area. Europe increased the pressure on the Maghreb countries to slow down the stream of immigrants from the South. It exported its migration policy to a continent where the continental freedom of movement had been an obvious right for centuries. Biemann's video collection focuses on the most important ports of traffic, junctions and stopping places of the trans-Saharan migration network. Her renewed view on geopolitics, as a strategy which is not only used for economic profit by those in power but also applies to large clandestine migration networks, stresses the nomadic independence of these people. Her video collection frees the economic refugees of their role as victims. The different parts form a counterpart to the mantras of the mainstream media which focus mainly on human traffick and imprisoned boat refugees. By showing the successful practices of resistance and the efficient operation of semi-legal trafficking organisations, complete with stories from the other side, this social documentary offers a balanced, heterogeneous image of the problem.

For *No Place – like Home* a selection of this collection is on display:

01 *Desert Truck Terminal* (video, 13'00", 2006–2007): the employees and the infrastructure of the Sit Saharian Transport Company, who offer safe transport to Algeria and Libya against payment, are filmed and given their say.

02 *Desert Radio Drone* (video, 5'40", 2006–2007): the geographies of refugees in the Sahara are presented by means of audiovisual material, collected by observation planes of the Libyan military who were looking for 'irregularities' in the landscape.

03 *Interview Adawa* (video, 10'20", 2006–2007) former Touareg rebel leader, head of a clandestine transport company based in Agadez (Niger), 'capital' of the Touareg nomads and entry to the Sahara basin for the main migration routes from West-Africa.

06 *Iron Ore Train* (video, 7'10", 2006–2007) transports silver ore as well as refugees and their luggage to the Mauritian Atlantic terminal for the Canary Islands.

10 *Oujda Frontierland* (video, 7'10", 2006–2007): Algerian-Moroccan border patrols and their daily routine search along the hiding places which are popular among refugees.

12 *Deportation Prison Laayoune* (video, 5'46", 2006–2007): in this overpopulated refuge centre in a former colonial prison refugees await their repatriation.

Also exhibited are a *Wall Map* (wallpaper, 440x480cm, 2006–2007) and the *Sahara-Panels* (10 photo-text panels, 60x80cm, 2006–2007).

11 **OP DE BEECK, HANS** (*1969)

Belgian multi-media artist: model builder, sculptural installations, videos, multimedia work, photos and drawings. Op de Beeck builds and stages contemporary, fictional urban and domestic locations, situations and figures. His videos and installations breathe an alienating, desolate atmosphere. "What interests me is the alienation of a place, where all traces of life have suddenly disappeared", says Op de Beeck. His artistic practice urges the viewer to think, for instance about the presence or absence of humanity in public spaces and social environments which otherwise go unnoticed. In this way, the artist expresses the idea of individual man lost in society, confronting the viewer with himself and his own condition.

BORDER

VIDEO, 2'36", 2001

The life-size projection shows a small group of people in an anonymous and narrow space. Only heavy breathing and smothered Arabic voices provide evidence of their presence. The conversation and the image slowly reveal the fact that these people are in serious predicament. The outlines of a truck appear gradually around them. The given space confronts the viewer with the issues of refugees, borders and human trafficking. The dialogue renders these figures, reduced to luminescent forms, back into individuals. The work is an attempt to break out of the details of a specific situation into a universal dimension, a story about longing for home, and a better existence that we can all identify with.

12 ASSELBERGHS, HERMAN (*1962)

Belgian video artist, essayist and teacher at the film department of the Hogeschool St-Lucas (Brussels). He's a founding member of the production platforms Auguste Orts and Square. An explicit dialogue with the media is characteristic for his work. The focus of his research is on the contemporary relation between image and identity, between seeing and being. He takes great epic themes from the international press, as the Palestine question, migrants and terrorism, and provides them, usually in voice-over, with a subjective, cultural-philosophical comment.

CAPSULAR

VIDEO, 24', 2006

The Spanish enclave *Ciudad Autonoma de Ceuta* is an autonomous city with its own parliament and president. Formerly governed by the Spanish province Cadiz, along the Moroccan coast, Ceuta is now part of the European Union. This vanguard of European neo-liberal and xenophobic refugee politics acts as a modern day version of the 'Iron Curtain'. As a tangible construction, this wall between Europe and Africa presents a dubious example of an extended industry of banishment/security. As a symbolical break line between North and South, between inside and outside, this enclave represents both the hard reality of Africans seeking a better future and the European phantasm of a Europe threatened and under the siege of barbarians. By means of its 'outer border' politics Europe is literally exporting its asylum system to the immigrants' countries of origin and to transit countries. Not only does it hand out its border and identity controls to third parties, but almost forces the Africans to wage war on illegal immigration. The presence of centres for asylum seekers bordering, or even on the African continent, expands the outline of Europe's borders far beyond its actual coordinates. At the same time, Europe also moves the refugee issue well out of our sight. *Capsular* reflects on the relevance/irrelevance of images, on the camp as a symbol, as a symptom. In this video work, Asselberghs searches a way to oppose the mainstream media and to comment on them.

13 ABAD, MICHAEL (*1966)

Miguel Abad is a Spanish video artist producing documentary short films. He appreciates the genre's formal liberties but does not believe that documentaries are synonymous with 'objectivity' and 'non-intervention.' In his eyes, many so-called objective documentaries offer a false representation of reality. That is why he prefers to speak of his work as being non-fiction or essay film. The thematic guideline within his work comprises the artificial life, as produced by internet and hyper reality, simulation and imitation. Abad takes reality as a starting point, while adding his personal view. "To film is to see": a study of awareness about the complex relations underlying the human condition and life

itself. Fascinated by the many faces adopted by reality, he is fond of collage techniques: cut-up television images, images from webcams and security cameras are stripped of their original text or sound, or shown with other texts. In this way, the surplus of meaning within these images comes to light.

THE MIX-UP

VIDEO, 3', 2007

The nights of September 28 and 29, 2005: the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla, situated in Morocco were assaulted by a massive influx of immigrants. Thousands of Africans used make-shift ladders to climb the three-metre high iron fences. About ten of them were killed in the ensuing fights with frontier guards. Both Spain and Morocco deny any form of involvement in this tragic event. The controversial reports surrounding this incident of these last days of September moved Abad to point out the seemingly neutral recording of Spanish security cameras (the emblem of the Guardia Civil, in the bottom left corner of the screen, seems to act as a token of authenticity). The nocturnal stream of immigrants is reduced to mute slapstick: no sooner had the fortune seekers arrived with their ladders than they had disappeared again. Their assault of 'fort Europe' seems little more than a quick leap into a better future. For Abad this leap into the unknown comes down to abandoning the life they have known, leading to a cultural uprooting that will leave a gaping wound: "a wound of confusion, signs of incomprehension and mix up". The fence hereby acts as a concrete symbol of the artificial divide between the first and the third world, generated by global capitalist economy. The anonymous grey zone, resulting from the mediocre picture quality in which the incident was recorded, suggests the media's dehumanising and de-individualising view on the whole event. Registration is the misleading modus of our existence. We are transformed from active participants into passive viewers. The vagueness of *The Mix-up* leaves room for thought making it possible to participate in the debate.

14 GEENEN, PIETER (*1979)

Belgian video artist. His eye for detail leads to audiovisual impressions of physical space – in a strong relation to time and duration. The framed landscapes, public spaces and everyday fragments create the illusion of a representation of exhibited space but are rather a reference to the abstraction of this.

NOCTURNE (LAMPEDUSA - FORT EUROPA)

VIDEO, 28', 2006

Night time recently received a tragic connotation on the Italian island of Lampedusa. This pile of rocks (no more than 20 km²) south of Sicily is the part of Europe which is closest to North-Africa. *Nocturne (Lampedusa - Fort Europa)* frames the schizophrenic and tense atmosphere on the island. An infrared camera

registers different places on and around the island, in search of traces. The dark, abstract and suggestive landscapes reflect the island by night: they focus on the small airport, the town and the port, the refugee centre, the coastal area, military and other heavily guarded zones. Human presence is reduced to a few anonymous, unidentifiable, luminescent points or represented by the suggestive black spaces in between. Originally a fishermen's town, this fascinating and isolated island has recently grown into a holiday resort. The constant stream of clandestine boat refugees (up to 20 000 in 2006) from Africa, Asia and the Middle East has only just added a new chapter to the history of Lampedusa. The refugees intercepted by the coast guard are usually brought to land at night, far from the eyes of tourists and local inhabitants. Because the local centres are already dealing with overpopulation, the refugees are deported from there by plane to centres located on the Italian mainland or camps in Libya. The switch between a brief atmospheric moment and the eternal, almost filmic moment in this video work gives rise to a particular feeling of the flow of time. This work asks of the viewer to complete the vague image, decipher the spatial ambiguities, discern presence and add what has been left out.

15 CUOMO, RAPHAËL (°1977) EN IORIO, MARIA (°1977)

Swiss visual artists. Both are researchers connected to the postgraduate institute Jan van Eyck Academie (The Netherlands). Cuomo and Iorio explore the classification in time and space which gives rise to our modern day society, and the advantage of the visible therein by means of photography and video. Their main project *Südeuropa* researches tourism and migration between North and South and focuses on the areas where both movements overlap, such as Lampedusa. The artists are currently working on *Orient Palace*, as an addition to their project. This video-work is to be executed in Tunisia in 2008.

SÜDEUROPA

VIDEO, 40', 2007

Cliffs filmed from above, recordings from a television program about regional folklore on the 'Italian Canale 5 Mediaset' are the introduction to this video. In the background, a woman's voice represents the TV presenter's ode to this ideal holiday resort with its beautiful panorama, Mediterranean sea and fantastic landscape. Later on we discover that these coast line images give also proof of the constant surveillance of the island. Filmed in close collaboration with the government, the cameras follow in fact the trajectory of patrol helicopters used by the army and the police. These guard the Italian (European) border and see to it that the Tunisian and Libyan boat refugees cannot enter the island unnoticed. The video points out the local implications of European and Italian migration policies. This policy constitutes an intervention in space, time and the island's daily life. On one hand, *Südeuropa* gives a face to the migrants from before the Schengen

Agreement. Hotel personnel, beach boys and kitchen staff lead the viewer behind the scenes of the local tourist industry. In addition, the work stresses the presence of many undocumented migrants by pointing out their places of arrival, seclusion and repatriation. These refugees are picked up by the police and coast guard when they are still far out at sea. Locked away in camps, they live a secluded life. Both the fact that the authorities make the refugees invisible on the island and their omnipresence in the European media are rendered as problematic by reinterpreting fragments from various political discourses. Production of visual material and articles about states of emergency are also commented on. Police workers neatly pile the bodies in a row next to each other in front of the camera. Journalists and cameramen complete the cliché image of the “clandestine immigrants on the southern borders of Europe” with their sensationalist reports. These forms nurture our prejudices about invasion and support a western, visual culture that constructs the other by capturing him on film.

16 BARONELLO, FEDERICO & KOGO, TAKUJI
KOGO, TAKUJI (*1965)

Japanese founder and curator of *Candy Factory*, a collaboration of like-minded web artists, sociologists and musicians, which acts as an online institute and publishes its collaboration projects on the internet, participating in biennales and exhibitions. Takuji uses the internet to explore the different aspects of globalisation. He is especially interested in the spatial remnants of a failing contemporary economy and architecture. His practice as an artist is aimed at recognising (textual/material) fragments from the media, the cultural industry and politics as potential works of art. In principle, every subject and form of expression is suitable for consideration. They only serve as a representation of a specific existing social or political situation. That is why he is always in search of the most effective way to communicate their aesthetics. Junk mail, blog messages, government propaganda, publicity – drawn away from their original context – are re-publicised in the way of promotional music clips. The texts are underplayed with music and read out by an artificial voice. By working with enlarged images his videos point out the material's pixel reality.

BARONELLO, FEDERICO (*1968)

Sicilian artist. Member of *Candy Factory* and of the *Multimedia Research Group Ethical Bros*, who also executes solo projects. His artistic activity is always embedded in the complex context of cultural industry. Hence the mix – wherever possible – of commercial and artistic work, such as his most recent *Candy Factory* project, *Silvar Bars*, a historical documentary about Sicily's modern industry, produced by the Catania Museum of Sciences.

HOW TO REACH LAMPEDUSA

SHOCKWAVE FLASH MOVIE, 2005-2007

Lampedusa is Italy's most southern holiday resort-island. In recent years there has been a massive, non-stop stream of North-African refugees trying to illegally reach the island/Europe by boat. The CPTA (Centro di Permanenza Temporanea e Assistenza) is an expatriation centre close to the airport. It functions as an arrival hall for tourists, as well as a departure hall for repatriating rejected asylum seekers to Libya. Part of the island's cemetery is reserved as a final resting place for refugees who do not survive the Mediterranean crossing. In their work both Kogo and Barello resist the temptation of ideological criticism, looking instead for the best possible way to express the existing reality. All of the political messages which spring from this must be seen as inherent to the original material and the cultural situation. Their art is rather a testimony of a realistic, or ideological picture of the future.

This work shows the discrepancy between the idyll of Lampedusa as a holiday resort and the raw reality of the island as a final destination for the bodies of African boat refugees. By arranging alternating images of both, formerly 'innocent' ideas of beach and sun, usually associated with easygoing fun, are given a wry undertone. The existence of another landscape (nameless crosses) urges the viewer to think things over. Therefore the island can also be seen as a prototype of an all but apolitical leisure industry. *How to reach Lampedusa* indicates the transformation of Lampedusa from a fishermen's island to a port of migration for refugees and tourists, the signs and the change in the landscape brought about by their transition. The images were recorded during a visit to the island in 2005. The music is also their own composition. The lyrics of the song are from a commercial the artists found on the (no longer existing) website of the Associazione turistica pro-loci di Lampedusa, an organisation run by a few owners of local bureaus for tourism.

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NO PLACE - LIKE HOME

PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION IN EUROPE

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