

About the SPACES Public Programme in Chisinau, Moldova **„ Chisinau Civic Center – beyond the red lines “**

Conference, workshops, lectures, screenings and public space programme

September 4th – 22nd, 2013, Chisinau



How did the role of art and of the artist evolve during the last two decades, after a new societal model driven by a market economy and neo-liberal ideology replaced the authoritarian regimes in our region? It is well known that art in Soviet Union was a powerful tool of criticism, which fact made the state determined to keep it under control by putting in place a system of creative unions, cultural institutions, state commissioned works and through widespread censorship. In fact it accomplished this by clearly outlining its area of action (in line with the interests of the party) and by isolating art and artists from various other processes that were taking place in the society. The question is: Has art preserved its critical potential today, two decades later, and have artists been able to offer an alternative to the newly established order? How - through research, urban planning, architecture, activism and art - can we make our cities more inclusive and democratic, in order to resist the neo-liberal transformations that produce so much inequality and alienation?

In the context of the ongoing debate about the radical transformation of public space in Chisinau under the impact of transition and the need of its protection (public space as an important piece in the democratic infrastructure, crucial for the exercise of rights and liberties) one of the current issues that was raised by the artistic and architecture community in Chisinau was the Cantemir Boulevard, designed in the 70's by Soviets, but never built - not yet. What makes us believe that it could be built is that this boulevard still exists on the official Chisinau General Urban Plan, 22 years after Republic of Moldova proclaimed its independence from Soviet Union and its consequent dissolution. Taking this as a starting point, as a leading thread, we have invited artists, architects and researchers to Chisinau, to participate in a residency program and in a conference, and contribute to a publication – to work on this issue and to share similar experiences that could enrich our understanding of this particular situation and reveal new forms of criticism and protest. The result of this collaboration will be a series of participatory works involving Chisinau inhabitants that are opening new public spaces for culture and civic engagement in the areas where Cantemir Boulevard was planned to be built.

Chisinau Civic Center – beyond the red lines: This project gives continuity to a process that the Oberliht Association initiated several years ago by inviting artists, curators along with architects, social scientists, historians and others interested in urban development as well as professional groups who joined later, to research and intervene in the existing context determined by unequal distribution of space and resources, specific for any new post-soviet state.

The project questions the way in which urban plans designed in the 20th century are being taken for granted, as their implementation half a century later is not questioned anymore.

The other question is how public money is being spent on public projects and if these projects address the needs of the citizens? In fact, what is a *public project* if compared to any private investment? Was there any attempt on behalf of public administration to involve the local inhabitants and what were the methods the administration made use of?

Finally, what kind of alternative can we offer today to a functionalist type of city that prioritises the individual car traffic over public transportation, luxury housing over social housing, newly built hotels and office buildings over historical and architectural heritage sites, parking lots over green areas, new soviet style monuments over friendly designed public places?

The current invitation developed in collaboration with SPACES partners is addressing active citizens involved in culture, but also in urban and social development, to look back at their activity and projects through such tools as criticism and protest, to think of the public role that art could have in post-soviet societies. We would also like to examine the potentiality of art in bringing a change by organizing participatory art events in Chisinau and making use of available public spaces for that purpose.

The project „Chisinau Civic Center - beyond the red lines“ started on August 26th with the KIOSK artist in residency program that encourages creation of new work in relation to the local context and reality. It offers the opportunity to explore various issues that relate to Moldova’s situation in general and to analyze the processes that shape Chisinau’s public space today.

The public programme starts on September 4th and lasts until September 22nd, 2013. It includes a regional conference with participating researchers from Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland and Ukraine, a residency programme for artists and architects that will result in a series of interventions in Chisinau, city tours, film and video screenings, workshops, awareness raising campaigns, presentations, parties and community work among others.

The project takes its inspiration from the results obtained during the Mapping of public space in Chisinau workshop coordinated by Eugen PANESCU [RO]:
<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/atelier-cartografiere/>

The previous edition of CHISINAU CIVIC CENTER – project for open air cinema took place in August 2012 and its results can be consulted here:
<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/centrul-civic-cinema/>

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