

Inside-Out

Sophia Tabatadze, performance, installation, videos

Are human intestines good enough for wallpaper? Artist Sophia Tabatadze turns the notions of “inside” and “outside” upside down. House facades as interior decorations, internal organs as apartment ornamentation, secret thoughts spoken out loud or Dutch private households on display behind transparent shields – all these offer revelations about what we are and what we appear to be. Ironic but not evil, her installations, video works, performances tell the sad truth trapped within the vicious circle or the “Caucasus Round Table” as the name of one of her pieces runs. Discrepancies between the form and the content, the meaning and the implication, between the facade and the interior, between thought and speech are a sad reality in a world of double standards, the world where Georgians happen to live, or the Caucasus peoples, or the globalized community at large.

Tabatadze’s pieces are not related to one specific location, be it her homeland, Georgia, or the lands overseas, her pieces remain relevant. The human condition in a global village, reduced to ornamental motives, reflected in architectural innovations, pieces of embroidery or snaps of phrases applies to anyone. The paradigmatic changes in society are traced here in the changes of facade decor, city posters message, contents of popular diets, linguistic metaphors. Figures of speech are paralleled by the figuration in art. The contents of Georgian toasts to love and to motherland pronounced over a bathroom sink, the national anthem sang by outcasts in the street or the popular characteristics that the neighboring Georgians, Armenians or Azeris secretly exchange between themselves – are an explosive mixture of the details that draw the whole picture, the pieces of a human jig-saw puzzle and the metaphor of ourselves from the inside and on the outside.

It takes particular courage to speak up when everyone is silent, or to reveal something everyone wants to hide. Sophia Tabatadze makes this attempt in an unobtrusive, artistic language of symbolic metaphors, chains of associations and subtle analogies. Her contribution to the Venice Art Biennial 2007 – “Human Undercorn” was a piece of architecture printed on scantily embroidered fabric – an ironic insight into the fabric of Georgian society. Or should it be necessarily Georgia? Architecture has always been an attractive facade for the unattractive backrooms and the differences in a globalized world are just skin-deep.

Sophia Tabatadze is currently selected as resident artist at “Kunstlerhaus Bethanien” /Art House Bethanien/ in Berlin. She graduated from Nikoladze Art College, Tbilisi, Georgia as well as from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy Amsterdam, participated in exhibitions in Georgia and abroad, including Art Biennales in Venice, and Turkey, her works were exhibited in Museum of Boijmans Van Beuningen in the Netherlands.

From May 30 till August 31, 2008 Tabatadze’s works will be shown in an exhibition “Voyage a Tbilissi” /Voyage to Tbilisi/ in the Museum of Fine Arts in Nantes, France, together with pieces from Mamuka Japaridze, Koka Ramishvili, Vato Tsereteli, Guram Tsbakhashvili and Iliko Zautashvili.

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