

ABOUT MATTHAEI & KONSORTEN

Alice Fischer

Since 2000, some 50 works of diverse orientation have been created under the name “matthaei & konsorten”.

In addition to productions for the stage, installations and discourse productions, the development and continuing evolution of new formats for urban landscapes has been a focal point of the work for several years.

Productions of matthaei & konsorten are therefore to be found in all the places that are also frequented by their players or spectators in their own lives:

From the 19th century institute for the blind through the courtyards, kitchens and living rooms of affluent or financially precarious inhabitants of the inner-city to the nearly abandoned, over 600-year-old village right next to the airport noise protection barrier; from a pathological institute built in the days of the city’s rampant growth to the residence for asylum-seekers at a nearly Balkan industrial harbor and on to the abandoned and dilapidated theme park of a former political system; from the cellar, attic and boxes of an old theater to the faded suites of a 1950s luxury hotel from the days when kings and politicians still checked in here; from swingers’ and line-dancing clubs to streets lined with villas and back to the clearly designated art spaces of theaters and cultural institutions.

The works of matthaei & konsorten thus draw a map of the present upon which each project exposes and registers a specific location. Coordinates are derived by zooming in on individual lives and the diversity of their habits, the beauty of the particular and the surprising ramifications of the subjective – at the point of intersection between external circumstances and the general narrations within which society seeks reassurance.

Portraits on different levels are a recurring element in the many diverse formats: First, portraits of the players themselves or of absent narrators, altered by fake details or represented by doubles, so that the essential elements of their accounts are made more clearly perceptible. This micrologic view of the individual – as a body, a voice, an account of the self – gives way to the image of a larger context, a portrait of the social environment and the period in which it is grounded.

Documentary is thereby crossed with fictions and lies, spawning a hybrid bastard full of shifts and consolidations who is reintroduced into the realities from which his own constituent parts were derived. Spectators are invited to join the resulting multilayered interventions in the form of voyages, trips or games where they quickly find themselves every bit as involved as the players

themselves, where the lines between production, prepared material and reality can become as blurred as the distinction between player and spectator.

Here, the production is not a studied scene that can be repeated for an audience but rather a situation that is presented to the observing fellow traveler. The further he or she decides to go in, the more facets of the situation are revealed, thus opening up new possibilities for all participants in the midst of the real: the social codes and the rules of a place are

interrupted, exposed, shifted and can be re-written. Rather than as the depiction of realities or a self-referential praxis, this approach could perhaps best be described as “engineering situations”, whereby the relatively long duration of the projects, usually ranging from several hours to several weeks in length, contributes a reality effect of its own: A certain share of one’s lifetime is actually spent in these rooms, on these journeys, in these stories, and they in turn become part of one’s own reality.

One might occasionally encounter actors in these projects, but more often dancers and musicians or artists from other disciplines, along with a great number of various players, depending on the focus of the work in question: from tree specialists with no fixed address to theoreticians of post-human worlds; from the transvestite art student who worked in the red light district while still in high school to the East European beauty consultant who has clients brought out of the country for less expensive procedures; from illegalized immigrants from all over the world who, as coaches and motivational trainers, teach natives the rules of the game, to the narcotics agent and lodge chairman who initiates candidates into a secret society and spastic persons who dream of sex; from the kids of immigrant parents who take mainstream visitors to see truly exotic places in their neighborhood, as long as they have faith, and on to the trainers of the most effective knockout, workers who read history and former female bank managers.

The result is a mosaic of the totally normal contemporary world in which we move every day, as it defines us, undiluted by would-be understanding and with all of the productive potential of that which is foreign.