

WITH THE OCCASION OF HIS FIRST SOLO SHOW IN ROMANIA, AT CAMERA WE HAD A FRIENDLY TALK ABOUT ART AND HIS EXHIBITED PROJECT.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR VISION ABOUT YOUR ART, IN GENERAL. I SEE YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN OPEN SPACES. HOW DID YOU COME TO THIS? YOUR WORKS LOOK SCULPTURAL, THOUGH MANY OF THEM ARE 2D. HOW COME?

Well my vision about art... It's a long and complex story. I used to have an ambiguous feeling about autonomous art. Only recently I feel free as an autonomous artist. As a young guy I felt very much attracted by all kinds of art, visual art, music, performing arts. My father, who is an architect, wanted to prevent me from being an artist. I started my career as a graphic designer and made music with friends. Gradually I turned my graphic skills into artistic projects balancing between the functional and the autonomous using different media: graphic design, video, painting, installation, music, performance.

Even as an autonomous artist I like to have some boundaries, a context. I like structure and well considered projects.

Now I feel a lot of freedom in my work, focusing mainly on autonomous art projects, sometimes embedded in public spaces. I like the conflict between my aesthetics and the rubbish of daily life.

I am especially interested in sculptural and architectural aspects of shared spaces, showing traces of human behaviour, through objects, buildings, constructions, patterns, etc. The connection with daily life is important. I leaf through daily life environments all over Europe and dig as an archaeologist, look as an anthropologist, construct as an architect and compose as a musician. Starting with the content and possibilities of a subject I make spatial or two dimensional work. Mostly the material and sculptural aspects are valuable to me, even in flat works.

IF I AM NOT WRONG, THE WORKS FOR ANYTHING CAN B_A CAR ARE YOUR FIRST PAINTINGS. HOW DID YOU COME TO DO THIS?

In the past I did some acrylic paintings but they never turned out to be a satisfying piece of art. It was last year, after I worked for months on monumental works in concrete and steel, that I wanted to concentrate on small works for a while. My body was completely tired, I needed something tiny. My series of Anything Can B_A Car photos I gathered since 2011 was attractive to me but also frustrating me because I did not know how to present them. I felt that my collection became a kind of fetish, I was doing nothing with it except for collecting as many photographs as possible. I found that some of them had a pictorial quality. Without big expectations I bought some oil paint and I started painting them on pieces of leftover wood. I immediately felt that I was doing something right: I could step beyond the fetish, give attention back to the pictures, turn them from an anecdotic image into an intimate piece of art, emphasising colour, composition, material and light. I am not a splendid painter but I think that, by accident, I found the right format and material to paint them. It feels like a gift when I can spend hours on a small painting. I am very happy with it. Unfortunately I can't paint that much, I really need the right conditions, the ultimate energy and concentration. For this first exhibition of the series I selected eleven works.

CAN YOU TELL US A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PROJECT? THE STARTING POINT OF YOUR PROJECT IS DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY WHICH ENDED AS PAINTING.

In 2011 I started gathering self made pictures of the universal habit that people have: making small constructions on parking places to prevent others from parking there temporarily. Initially I just took the images in my daily life environment. After some months I participated to an art contest. I showed some of the images in the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK) - Ghent (Belgium) and made some obstructions, so other participants could not use the museum space around me. I disturbed the situation a bit. The jury did not really understand, and we started to have a big discussion. This whole circumstance was filmed and broadcasted on national television. Many spectators liked the project and started to send me photos they made in their personal environment. The collection grew and I did some other shows with the pictures and some constructions. The ACB_AC project kept on growing. The series now has more than two hundred pic-

tures from many places like Ghent, Brussels, Mexico, Japan, Serbia and Monterrey and shows honestly what people construct. Also the kind of personal street view is interesting. I never wanted to focus on the photography itself, I always wanted to concentrate on the sculptures themselves, on their anthropological value. I printed out the pictures on A4 office paper. They are documents, sheets of an archive, witnesses of a moment.

HOW DID YOU ARRIVE TO THE IDEA OF “HUNTING” THESE “PARKING” PLACES? I AM ALSO OFTEN LOOKING AT THE WAY PEOPLE MARK THE PARKING PLACE - WHAT THEY CAN CREATE IS FULL OF IMAGINATION. YOU COULD SIMPLY TAKE SOME OF THEM AND PUT THEM INTO A GALLERY AND THAN PRESENT IT AS A PIECE OF ART.

Yes indeed, the imagination and the feeling for balance and composition proves that we have an intuitive sense of constructing and sculpting. It is a pragmatic poetic phenomenon with a lot of political power. One can say “this public space is temporarily mine”. What I think is beautiful is that it is mostly respected by everybody even though there are no written rules, even though a car is a strong machine and holy for many people. It proves the power of imagination and social codes. Also it is a way of showing intimate objects, like an open air exhibition. People think well about the value and strength of the objects they use.

For me it was hard to decide how to translate this phenomenon to the gallery space. There, you have different codes. Putting lookalike objects into a gallery space doesn't feel right. That refers to readymade art etc. Of course you can't neglect this association. For me the gallery show is more a way to spread the idea of the collection, to travel, share and connect. Now it's the first time that I show 'real' pieces of art. These paintings are a sequel of the project. Next to that I want to craft some sculptural objects, out of found material on the way. To emphasise the sculptural element.

DO YOU ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE PEOPLE WHO MARK THOSE SPACES?

Yes, sometimes it is very funny to see how people put, for example, two chairs next to each other. When they are facing each other I always think the owners are two people loving each other, people who like to chat. When the chairs are directed with their back to each other, I imagine the owners will get divorced etc. Once in a while I start chatting with the owners. Recently one of them was really proud when I told him I liked his construction. He said his wife was an artist and he was influenced by her. In general I am more interested in the urban areas than in the individual persons. A couple of years ago I was in Zemun, a suburb of Belgrade in Serbia. There, I found the most beautiful constructions. There must be something in the air there...

DO YOU THINK THAT THESE IMAGES COULD CONSTITUTE THE START OF A SOCIAL STUDY? DO THEY VARY FROM A CITY TO AN OTHER? DID YOU OBSERVE ANY PATTERNS?

Yes I think you could, but I am more attracted to the similarities. It is like a common DNA we have. Of course there are local differences. What makes the most difference is the light in the streets and the architectural style. The ACB_AC building elements are quite universal: a stick, a chair, a box, a brick. Recently I was very much surprised that a construction I photographed in Zemun looked exactly the same as one someone sent me from Brussels. Like twins in two different countries.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SOMETHING MORE PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT OCCUPYING THESE PROPERTIES THAT DON'T ACTUALLY BELONG TO US?

They are public spaces, but people mark them as being their own. It is a way of exercising your power. It is political. People are claiming public space. But it is respected all over the world, even you don't have laws about it. That makes it beautiful. It's a purely relational code. A gentle occupation.

IN YOUR SHOW AT CAMERA, BESIDE THE INSTALLATION, YOU WILL SHOW FIRST PAINTINGS AND THEN YOU WILL CHANGE THE PAINTINGS INTO PHOTOGRAPHS.
HOW DO YOU SEE THE RELATION BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY, INSTALLATION AND PAINTING?
HOW DO YOU THINK THEY INTERACT?
WHY CONTINUING PHOTOGRAPHY WITH PAINTING?

First from 10th - 12th August, I will show 11 paintings and some found and local crafted objects. I want to highlight the purely artistic dimension of the project to step beyond the anecdotic but also as an experience. I am curious how spectators read the works if they go through the aesthetics. Because the pictures will be on show in Ghent, I decided to make a second show in Cluj of a hundred printed photographic pictures, sometimes replaced by a reproduction of the painting. Combined with one oil painting on the floor. The idea is that spectators can take one of these prints home, and send me a photograph of an ACB_AC construction in their environment. The images of the exhibition will gradually disappear. Just like the constructions are temporary and removed again by unknown people, the same thing will happen in the gallery. The images people send me will enrich ACB_AC project. In January 2018 there will be a gallery show in Ghent. The paintings will be for sale. I made a deal with the gallery-owner about the price of these paintings: the sender of a photograph that inspired the sold painting will earn 10% of the price. This way people who support the project become part of the economical aspect. This makes the project sustainable. I like to travel as much as possible with the project. At the end I aim to make a kind of world atlas with a global view on the phenomenon. The price for a painting is 3,36€ / cm². This refers to how real estate, living area gets sold. But it is also like a parking fee, the longer I have to work on a painting, the more expensive it is.

BRANCUSI IS ONE OF YOUR FAVOURITE ARTISTS; HOW WAS THE ENCOUNTER WITH HIS WORKS AND HIS ORIGINS IN SITU?
DID YOU GET SOMEHOW INFLUENCED IN YOUR ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT BY HIS WORK OR HIS IDEAS?

I like Brancusi's work very much. Of course I like his strong visual language. I find it very profound, almost tribal but elegant, rude but gentle, minimalistic somehow but also musical, rhythmical. I hope people connect these adjectives to my work as well. Of course I like the fact that his work can be seen both in an artistic environment and in public space. Although I prefer to experience his work in his atelier. I like the photographs where you can see Brancusi in the middle of his atelier in Paris. I often go and visit his reconstructed atelier nearby Centre Pompidou. What I like the most maybe is that the border between Brancusi's artworks and the shelves are blurred. The border between the functional and the artwork becomes very thin. His artworks come to life, they are real like tools, totems or daily objects. Or the other way around: everything becomes art, even his tools in his atelier. I'm happy to be invited to exhibit my project in Brancusi's backyard!